

10 Years of LabourStart campaigns in support of workers' struggles in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Georgia – 2003-2013

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Kazakhstan: The Zhanaozen oil workers' strike, 2011-12

From May 2011, oil workers in Western Kazakhstan went on strike for higher wages and safer working conditions. This strike lasted until the end of the year, when police attacked a demonstration in Zhanaozen, killing at least 17 people.

The strike prompted **three separate LabourStart campaigns**.

The first was launched in September in support of the striking workers and gathered **2,102** signatures.

The second was launched as an immediate response to the Zhanaozen massacre and reached **6,598** supporters.

The third, and largest, was launched the following summer in partnership with the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Kazakhstan, Russian Confederation of Labour, ITUC, and IndustriALL. The campaign was launched in response to the political trials of striking workers and opposition figures, which were roundly condemned by HRW. The campaign garnered **6,632** supporters, helping to focus a spotlight internationally on workers' rights abuses in Kazakhstan.

Russia: Free diamond miners union activist Valentin Urusov, 2011

In 2008 Valentin Urusov was arrested, supposedly for narcotics possession, just before a trade union rally he was co-organising. He was sentenced to six years in a penal colony. In 2010 the officer who arrested Valentin was found to have received money from Alrosa, the company which owned the mine in which he worked.

Valentin's cause was taken up not just by the Russian Confederation of Labour but also by the international trade union movement. In 2011, a LabourStart campaign for his release gathered **1,842** signatures.

Valentin was released from prison in March 2013 and won the Arthur Svensson Prize for International Trade Union Rights this year.

Georgia: Stop attacks on trade unions, respect labour rights, 2011

Throughout 2011 the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC) faced increasing state repression. Its members were arrested during strikes of metalworkers, and the government attempted to take over the independent teachers' union, in violation of ILO conventions.

A LabourStart campaign against government repression, in partnership with the GTUC and endorsed by the AFL-CIO, gathered **3,781** supporters globally.

Kazakhstan: Prominent workers' rights activist attacked, 2009

Late in the evening of September 22, Ainur Kurmanov, a well known workers' rights activist and organizer, was viciously attacked by unknown thugs at the entrance to his home.

LabourStart's campaign urging action against Ainur's attackers generated **3,151** supporters worldwide.

Repression continues against trade union activists but Ainur continues to organise, despite living in exile since October 2011.

Russia: Stop attacks on auto workers union, 2008

Alexei Etmanov, the leader of the Ford-Vsevelozhsk trade union and co-chairman of THE Interregional Trade Union of Autoworkers (ITUA), was attacked twice within a week and received death threats in November 2008.

The IMF and LabourStart launched a campaign calling for an investigation into these and other attacks on auto workers, which reached **2,183** supporters.

Etmanov and the ITUA continue to organise.

Russia: North Urals mining company refuses to bargain with workers after hunger strike, 2008

From March 27 to April 4 miners at North Ural Bauxite held an underground sit-in strike for a wage rise. When management refused to negotiate, dozens went on hunger strike. A LabourStart campaign with the Independent Miners Union generated **2,807** emails to the company demanding that they negotiate.

Russia: Ford workers strike – call for dialogue, not repression, 2007

Workers at the Ford factory in Vsevolozhsk, having won a collective bargaining agreement earlier in the year, downed tools calling for a pay rise in November 2007. A campaign by LabourStart and the IMF sent **2,561** targeted emails to the company.

In mid-December the workers called off their strike after management agreed to genuine negotiations. The union at Vsevolozhsk continues to be active, they were on strike again in June 2013.

Russia: Dockworkers leader stabbed, 2007

The vicious stabbing of dockers' leader Mikhail Chesalin in Kaliningrad in 2007 prompted two LabourStart campaigns. The first, showing international outrage at the incident, gathered **4,574** supporters. A second campaign was launched after the authorities called off their investigation into the attack. **1,433** emails were sent and the authorities subsequently restarted the investigation.

Russia: Union battles for recognition at GM-AVTOVAZ, 2006

In July 2006 workers at the GM-AVTOVAZ joint venture formed a new union to protest their \$1.25 p/h basic wage. Union members were immediately subjected to company harassment.

The LabourStart campaign generated **3,428** messages of support.

Russia: Siberian oil workers appeal for support, 2005

The Russian Oil and Gas Workers' Union organised a strike and protest in the town of Megion. After the protest was held, the chair of the union and his family were turfed out of their company house, and other union members suffered similar treatment.

Russia: Support hunger-strikers at 'Norilsk Nickel,' 2003

In February 2003 Norilsk Nickel workers began a rolling hunger strike for a 14% wage rise and paid holidays. The hunger strike ended after 15 days without the workers achieving their goals.

The campaign generated **1,219** supporters.

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