

## ETF condemns flight diversion by the Belarussian authorities and calls upon the EU Institutions and European countries to ensure aviation safety and security

The Executive Committee of the European Transport Workers' Federation which represents around 5 million transport workers Europe-wide, among them approx. 370,000 aviation workers from all sub-sectors including airlines, airports, service providers and air traffic management, at its meeting on 26 May 2021:

Noted that:

- The Belarussian authorities took actions on 23 May 2021 which led to a forced landing of the Ryanair flight FR4978 from Athens to Vilnius to Minsk in order to arrest an opposition journalist Roman Protasevich and his companion Sofia Sapega;
- The basis of the diversion was a deliberately falsified report of a potential improvised explosive device (IED) on board the aircraft;
- An EU registered aircraft, which is subject to separate civil jurisdiction, was diverted in order to detain a person exiled in the EU;
- The workers, passengers, as well as an airline company were effectively subject to an act of 'piracy' with individuals subject to extrajudicial rendition.

The ETF Executive Committee:

- **Strongly condemns** the forced landing of a flight between EU countries in a third country where flying 'freedoms' and international civil aviation law and protocols have been accepted;
- **Understands** that such action is in breach of long standing and established international law and protocols;
- **Has significant concerns** over that integrity of safety and security protocols in relation to deliberate and false warnings on possible IEDs by governments and the compromise of associated air traffic management systems;
- **Expresses its full support** and solidarity with the aircrew members affected by this dramatic event;
- **Calls** on the European Commission and the Council to carry out a thorough security assessment and to take necessary steps to ensure the safety of all flights within and between the EU, thus ensuring safety of all aviation workers, passengers as well as the general public;
- **Fully supports** the ban on all flights to, from and over Belarus airspace until such a time that safety of flights within Belarus can be ensured;
- **Calls** on the EU leaders to come up with a prompt solution to hold Belarus accountable for their unlawful actions and ensure the safety and security of the operation of civil aviation aircraft;
- **Demands** Belarussian authorities respect the rules of aviation security and safety and guarantees to do so prior to any recommencement of activity.