



4 February 2026

Aleksandar Vučić, President
Republic of Serbia
Andrićev Venac Street 1
11 000 BELGRADE
Serbia

Re: Labor Exploitation at the Ling Long Tire Factory

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the International Lawyers Assisting Workers (ILAW) Network, which represents over 1400 worker rights lawyers in over 100 countries, I am writing to you concerning ongoing labour abuses at the Ling Long tire factory in Zrenjanin. In particular, there are credible reports that migrant workers from Bangladesh have been subjected to forced labour and trafficking. *We expect the government to immediately ensure that the rights of all workers at Ling Long are fully protected and that any and all unpaid wages and benefits to which they are entitled are paid in full. Further, the government must take measures to ensure that these abuses do not continue.*

We have been informed that a group of 42 Bangladeshi workers have been engaged at the Ling Long tire factory under conditions of forced labour. Indicators include the confiscation of passports, debt bondage, threats of deportation, and intimidation. According to consistent statements from workers, passports were confiscated immediately upon arrival in Serbia in June 2025 and remained inaccessible to them. Further, their employment contracts do not comply with Serbian labour law. For example, they contain numerous unlawful clauses including payment of illegal deposits, restrictions on leaving the employer, unclear contract duration, extremely low hourly wages, and provisions transferring all migration-related risks onto the worker.

Although a third-party company is formally listed as the employer, the workers in practice performed regular, production-related tasks inside the Ling Long factory for its benefit. The workers were recruited through agencies in Bangladesh, paying fees of up to USD \$10,000 and thus placing them in debt bondage. They worked excessive overtime and without days off, sometimes for up to 15 consecutive days. Wages were delayed and not paid in full. Workers had no effective access to healthcare or sick leave. Their accommodations are inhumane and unhygienic, consisting of overcrowded container housing without adequate heating, beds without mattresses, and insufficient sanitary facilities. Workers were sometimes left without food. These conditions clearly violate fundamental international labour rights set forth in the ILO Convention 29 (forced labour).

We understand that one of the workers requested payment of his wages and the return of his passport earlier this month. Following this request, police were called to the workers' accommodation by a Chinese manager. Only after the worker informed them that he had contacted a lawyer did the supervisors desist in their attempt to have him arrested, instead promising that his wages would be paid and his passport returned. On 26 January, passports were returned to approximately 40 workers.

However, the two workers who reported the case did not have their passports returned. This selective withholding of identity documents is clearly retaliatory.

Workers have also consistently reported that when they protested low wages or the confiscation of passports, they were told that Chinese companies are more powerful than Serbian institutions and that seeking protection from national authorities would be futile.

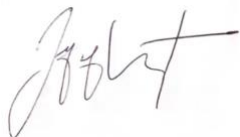
Ling Long has faced serious allegations for several years, including forced labour, human trafficking, passport confiscation, debt bondage and other severe labour-rights violations involving migrant workers. In 2023, an ILO Governing Body accepted for review a representation filed against Serbia concerning the forced labour of Vietnamese migrant workers in the construction of the Ling Long facility. This case is still pending. Most recently, the US has imposed import restrictions on goods from Ling Long due to forced-labour concerns. Despite promises, the present situation demonstrates a continuation of the same practices and constitutes an alarming failure to protect the fundamental rights of migrant workers in Serbia.

In light of the above, I urge you to ensure:

1. Immediate protection of all affected workers, including guarantees against retaliation, detention, or deportation;
2. The immediate return of all confiscated identity documents;
3. Independent, prompt, and effective inspections and investigations into labour conditions, trafficking indicators, and employer practices at Ling Long and associated entities;
4. Accountability for all individuals and entities responsible for violations of Serbian law and international obligations; and
5. Concrete measures to ensure that labour-rights defenders and those assisting migrant workers can act without intimidation or reprisal.

I trust that you will treat this matter with the urgency it requires. The credibility of Serbia's commitment to the rule of law, fundamental rights, and international labour standards is at stake.

Respectfully,



Jeffrey Vogt
Chair, ILAW Network