

To the Embassy of Zimbabwe to Belgium

Brussels, 23 June 2008

The ITUC has repeatedly written to the government of Zimbabwe to express its utmost concern at the level of anti-trade union repression taking place in your country.

Today the court hearing against Lovemore Matombo, president of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), and Wellington Chibebe, general secretary of the ZCTU, is taking place.

They are charged with “inciting people to rise against the government and reporting falsehoods about people being killed” for having mentioned, in their 2008 May Day speeches, the political crisis that resulted from the long postponement of the announcement of the election results and the ensuing wave of violent intimidation of opposition supporters.

The two men have repeatedly been targeted and brutalised in the past for engaging in other legitimate trade union activities, as have many of their fellow trade union activists. The government of Zimbabwe has clear obligations under international law to respect the exercise of legitimate trade union activities in accordance with ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948, a convention ratified by your government.

The international trade union movement also has serious concerns regarding the violence that is currently taking place in your country ahead of the second round of the presidential election. The violence carried out by supporters of the ruling party has also resulted in several murders. Most recently, four MDC supporters were found dead on 19 June, including the wife of the newly elected mayor of Harare. Sheperd Chegwu, a member of the Progressive Teachers’ Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) and principal of Katsukunya High School, was abducted from his home on 3 June and found dead two days later. His body showed signs of severe torture and a gunshot wound to the neck and head. Mr. Chegwu had previously been interrogated by “war veterans” and militia about actions taken by PTUZ members at his school to protest at the governments’ actions in the lead up to the re-run of the presidential election.

On 12 June, Edward Dzeka, an official of the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers’ Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ), was kidnapped by ZANU-PF militia. He was taken blindfolded to an unknown location somewhere near Chegutu, where he was interrogated. He was finally released on 18 June. Mr. Dzeka is also the local Chegutu chairperson of the ITUC-affiliated ZCTU.

The ITUC calls upon the Zimbabwean authorities to ensure that the charges against Mr. Matombo and Mr. Chibebe are withdrawn, and that the murder of Mr. Chegwu and kidnapping of Mr. Dzeka, as well as the numerous other crimes committed against trade unionists be fully investigated and the perpetrators of these vicious acts be brought to justice. We further call upon the authorities to cease all harassment,

intimidation and violence against trade unionists and others seeking to express their views, in accordance with the fundamental rights enshrined in international law.

We trust that you will communicate this correspondence to the appropriate authorities in Zimbabwe.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary