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His Excellency Mr. Robert G. Mugabe,
President,
Causeway,
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Zimbabwe

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TUR/JS

20 March 2008

Nine PTUZ leaders and activists tortured

Dear Mr. President,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) wrote to you only a month ago to protest against the violence against nine Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) leaders and activists, including the President Takavafira Zhou, and the General Secretary Raymond Majongwe on 19 February 2008. We have now learned that the assault was so brutal and despicable that it amounted to torture.

We have fully reliable evidence that nine PTUZ leaders and activists, **President Takavafira Zhou, General Secretary Raymond Majongwe, Treasurer Ladistos Zunde, National Co-ordinator Oswald Madziva, activist Muhwandarikwa, activist Shoko, activist Linda Fumphanda, activist Hillary Jana and Information and Publicity Officer Harrison Mudzuri** were abducted by Zanu PF militias in the morning of 19 February when distributing flyers on the crisis in the education system in Harare.

They were taken to Zanu-PF headquarters, where they were subjected to severe beating and to sexual abuse that amounted to torture. We understand that the militia men threatened to kill them and were trying to force iron rods into the private parts of the women activists, according to testimony gathered by the ITUC. The beating lasted for 2 and a half hours and was so brutal that five had to be hospitalized, two with serious fractures. Six of them were released after 4 days detention and the remaining three activists were detained for 7 days.

The ITUC condemns in the strongest possible way all torture and violence by the ruling party against peaceful trade unionists. Torture is strictly forbidden under the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, which Zimbabwe has ratified. Furthermore, the government of Zimbabwe is under an obligation to respect legitimate trade union activities protected under ILO Convention 87, also ratified by Zimbabwe.



Torture against any citizens - including workers activists - is a disgrace to your country, and we strongly urge you to order an immediate investigation into the brutal torture of peaceful trade unionists to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. I also urge you to ensure that there be put a stop to the escalating use of government approved violence in your country.

The strong-handed approach and intimidation of all dissenting voices and the despicable torture of trade unionists just before the upcoming elections does not leave much optimism for a fair and impartial election in Zimbabwe.

The international community, including the international trade union movement, is paying close attention to the shameful human rights abuses in Zimbabwe, and the ITUC has asked its affiliates in all countries around the world, including Africa, to protest at the abhorrent torture against the PTUZ leaders and activists.

The ITUC hope that you will pay proper attention to this very serious matter.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary

Cc: The Embassy of Zimbabwe to Belgium_