

Akiko Gono

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HE Mr. Umaro Sissoco Embaló

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Luc Triangle

Acting General Secretary
Geschäftsführender Generalsekretär
Secretario General en Funciones
Secrétaire général par intérim

HTUR/ZM

05 May 2023

ITUC denounces the attack and seizure of UNTG-CS offices

Dear Mr President,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 200 million workers in 168 countries, including Guinea-Bissau, strongly denounces the forced closure and seizure of the offices of the UNTG-CS by a former trade union leader and his group.

The ITUC is informed that, with the support of your government, Laureano Pereira da Costa held a parallel Congress in the name of the UNTG-CS from 28 April to 29 April 2023, despite a court order that had already validated the UNTG-CS's 5th Congress held on 22 October 2022. Mr. da Costa and his grouping then held an inaugural meeting on 03 May 2023 in which they threatened to take over the offices of the UNTG-CS by force the following day.

The UNTG-CS was forced to close its offices to avoid confrontation and violence and sought police intervention. However, Mr. da Costa's group broke into the premises of the UNTG-CS, changed the locks and took control of it, despite a police presence. Mr da Costa's group alleges that it has permission from the Ministry of Interior, which lies under your remit, and therefore the local police could not prevent it from breaking in.

These actions are contrary to your government's obligations under the *ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* regarding freedom of association. It also disregards article 45(4) of the Constitution of Guinea Bissau which provides for "...adequate protection to trade union representatives against any form of restriction on the legitimate undertaking of their functions".

We recall that the inviolability of trade union premises is a civil liberty protected under the ILO principles of freedom of association and, therefore, your government has an obligation to protect locations such as these in circumstances where an organized group has seized the premises. In this regard, protecting trade union premises and upholding the court order that endorsed the UNTG-CS's 2022 Congress, would be in line with your government's obligations to respect civil liberties and the rule of law which are essential to the exercise of trade union rights.

We urge an immediate investigation into allegations that officials in the Ministry of Interior were behind the forced closure and seizure of the offices of the UNTG-CS, and assurances that normal trade union activities can resume in the offices without further delay and that the premises will not be violated in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luc Triangle', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Luc Triangle
Acting General Secretary