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HTUR/JS

9 November 2009

President of the ZCTU arrested

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) representing 170 million unionized workers in 157 countries and territories, I am writing to condemn the arrests of ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo and staff members Michael Kandukutu and Percy Mciyo last night.

The ITUC has been informed by its affiliate the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) that three were arrested last night arrested in Victoria Falls, while Mr. Matombo was addressing members of the ZCTU Victoria Falls District. They were later transferred to Hwange police station.

The ZCTU President was on a tour of the country to meet ZCTU structures and the Victoria Falls meeting was the first stop on his tour.

Mr. Matombo, Michael Kandukutu and Percy Mciyo were clearly exercising legitimate trade union activity, which is protected under ILO Convention 87 on the right to freedom of association and the right to organise. The government of Zimbabwe has ratified this convention, and is under an obligation to refrain from any interference with trade union activities.

The ITUC has also been informed of the attack of a trade union leader's family on the night of 3rd November. Gertrude Hambira is the General Secretary of GAPWUS and a council member of the ZCTU. Although the origin of this attack is not clear, the government must ensure that trade unionists can operate in a climate free of fear.

The ITUC is especially alarmed at the unwarranted arrest of the President of the ZCTU and the many recent incidents of trade union rights violations despite the ongoing ILO Commission of Inquiry into violations of fundamental workers rights.

The ITUC had hoped that the creation of an inclusive government with a commitment to human rights reform would have made severe trade union repression become a thing of the past. Unfortunately, in view of the continuing repression and now the arrest of the President of the ZCTU, it is clear that elements within the government are not willing to undertake reform.

The ITUC will inform the Commission of Inquiry of this serious violation of ILO convention no. 87 on freedom of association and the right to organise, and it will alert its affiliates to the unwarranted arrest of Lovemore Matombo, Michael Kandukutu and Percy Mcijo.

I wish to remind you that all new incidents of trade union rights repression might influence the outcome of the ILO Commission of Inquiry negatively.

The ITUC strongly urges you to immediately release Lovemore Matombo, Michael Kandukutu and Percy Mcijo.

The ITUC hopes that you will pay prompt attention to this very serious matter and looks forward to your immediate action.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Guy Ryder". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

General Secretary

Cc: Prime Minister
The Embassy of Zimbabwe to Belgium
ILO Commission of Inquiry.