

Ayuba Wabba

President
Président
Präsident
Presidente

Sharan Burrow

General Secretary
Secrétaire générale
Generalsekretärin
Secretaria General

H. E. E D Mnangagwa

The President
The Republic of Zimbabwe
Office of the President and Cabinet
Munhumutapa Building
Corner Sam Nujoma/Samora Machel Avenue
Harare
Zimbabwe
By email

HTUR/ZM

14 January 2022

ITUC condemns state brutality against protesting teachers in Zimbabwe

Dear Mr President,

I am writing on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) representing 200 million workers in 163 countries including Zimbabwe to strongly condemn the brutal arrest and unlawful detention of teachers belonging to the Amalgamated Rural Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) for carrying out their legitimate trade union activities.

The ITUC is reliably informed that on 12 January 2022, ARTUZ members engaged in a protest action at NSSA building where the National Joint Negotiating Council (NJNC) meeting was taking place between the government and trade unions. The demonstrators were demanding the restoration of their salaries to 2018 levels, prior to your government's implementation of its austerity measures. During the demonstration, The Zimbabwe Republic Police pounced on them, severely brutalised the demonstrators and arrested and detained 16 unionists including ARTUZ President Obert Masaraure.

Prior to your government assuming power from the late former President Robert Gabriel Mugabe, teachers were earning a salary of US\$540.00 per month and now only earn about US\$200.00 per month. Teachers wonder whether this is the new dispensation that you promised. Furthermore, teachers and other civil service employees continue to earn in Zimbabwean dollars while goods and services are mostly priced in United States dollars. This has resulted in their income severely diminishing through the unfavourable exchange rate of the US\$ and the Zimbabwean dollar. Your government has dismally failed to contain the rising cost of living. The ill-conceived economic policies have failed, hence the appetite by your government to resort to violence as a means to silence those speaking out about the worsening conditions of employment.

His Excellency, we would like to remind you that when you assumed power in November 2017, you described yourself as a listening President but we wonder whether you are still listening or have since closed your eyes. The teachers and the rest of the workers in your country have a very clear message -they want to be paid their salaries in United States dollars as was the case prior to October 2018. They are not demanding more, and it has already been proven that your government cannot go beyond what Mugabe left - instead we see a reverse if not the worst conditions.

The ITUC would like to remind your government to respect the rights of workers to freedom of association as provided for in the Zimbabwe Constitution, the ILO Conventions on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise and other international human rights instruments which guarantee the rights to freedom of association and expression to which Zimbabwe is a party. We reiterate that your government has an obligation to fulfil the UN sustainable development goal No. 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and its policies should ensure the realisation of this goal.

The ITUC hereby makes the following demands of your government:

1. The unconditional release from police custody of all the detained members of the ARTUZ
2. Immediately cease the harassment of unionists by state security forces and judicial persecution of the same.
3. Investigate and bring to justice the police officers who brutalised the ARTUZ members
4. Respect for the rule of law and human rights;
5. Embrace a culture of social dialogue in the development of socio-economic policies through the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF)
6. Give effect to the recommendations of the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2019 and 2021.

The ITUC would like to assure you that - in solidarity with the Zimbabwean workers - we will continue to speak out about your government's disrespect of its international obligations and will, accordingly, take the necessary action at international level.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary

cc:

Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions ZCTU

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

African Union Commission:

Amalgamated Rural Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ)

Ambassador Timo Olkkonen - EU Delegation to Zimbabwe