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HTUR/ZM

29 July 2020

Objection to the classification of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions as a terrorist organisation and the persistent harassment and persecution of trade unionists

Dear Mr President,

I am writing on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 207 million workers in 163 countries, including Zimbabwe, to strongly condemn the labelling of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) as a terrorist organisation by your political party, ZANU-PF, of which you are the First Secretary.

On 27 July 2020, we noted a press conference convened by your party in which the acting spokesperson, Mr Patrick Chinamasa, attacked and labelled our affiliate union a “Trojan Horse of the MDC-Alliance and a terrorist organisation together with the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition”, a civil society organisation, and others not mentioned. This follows efforts by your government and your party to disrupt a protest action against corruption in your country – an action called for by Transform Zimbabwe (a political party), whose leader, Jacob Ngarivhume, along with the journalist Hopewell Chin’ono, has already been incarcerated.

We have been following up on your government’s respect for human and trade union rights and have observed persistent attacks on workers’ rights and freedoms – these attacks in an attempt to silence critics who have justified demands. Day by day Zimbabwean workers are threatened, harassed and persecuted for demanding good governance of their country.

For example, on 6 June 2020, 13 nurses went on strike demanding better wages and personal protective equipment, and 12 leaders were arrested and are facing criminal charges. On 12 July 2020, the ZCTU president, Mr Peter Mutasa, had his home broken into during the night by armed personnel in an attempt to abduct him; when they failed to locate him, his car’s tyres were deflated by sharp objects, and no one has been arrested for that. On 17 July 2020, Mr Obert Masaraure of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union (ARTUZ) had his home broken into by armed personnel in the middle of the night, and nobody has been arrested. On 27 July 2020, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) issued a statement that they are hunting down the following persons: the ZCTU president, Mr Peter Mutasa; Mr Obert Masaraure and Mr Robson Chere of ARTUZ; and others with regard to the 31 July 2020 protest action.

In addition, we note that your government is abusing the COVID-19 crisis to pronounce decrees under the pretext of combating the spread of COVID-19 but with the intention of further stifling people’s freedom of peaceful assembly and association. This is contrary to the COVID-19 guidelines pronounced by the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association.

In as much as your government is attempting to re-engage with the international community to help build up a better Zimbabwe, we are surprised that its actions on the ground are contrary to its obligations prescribed in the human rights instruments adopted by the same international community through the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the African Union and others.

In view of the above, the ITUC urges your government to:

- publicly dissociate from the ZANU-PF claim that the ZCTU is a terrorist organisation and confirm the ZCTU as a legitimate social partner you have been engaging with in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum meetings;
- stop hunting down trade unionists who are doing their job to highlight and bring to your attention the plight of workers of Zimbabwe that you must address; and
- release all those persecuted for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

The ITUC wishes to assure you that, in solidarity with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and Zimbabwean workers, it will continue to closely follow your government's actions to improve the respect of human and labour rights and will take further action accordingly.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary

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