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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Anti Union repression is back in Zimbabwe

Brussels, 16 August 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions condemns in the strongest possible terms the arrest yesterday, 15 August 2006, of M. Wellington Chibebe, General Secretary of its affiliated organisation, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). It has also reported the case to the International Labour Office for appropriate action.

M. Chibebe was arrested at a roadblock and detained at Waterfalls Police station as he was travelling by car from Masvingo with his family. He was stopped at a roadblock near Waterfalls, where the Police demanded to search his car, supposedly in order to look for cash. The Government is currently campaigning to prevent currency speculation while it is conducting a major monetary reform purportedly aiming at fighting hyperinflation, which currently stands at over 1000%.

At first, Chibebe was accused of resisting a police search. According to ZCTU legal sources, however, the police later deliberately changed the charges to common assault against a police officer so as to make the issue more serious, given his profile.

The ICFTU strongly condemns this arbitrary arrest, which is the latest in a continuous pattern of harassment and repression of Zimbabwe's independent trade union movement. In addition, it also deplores the methods chosen by the government to address the country's financial crisis, which victimises workers and other citizens by confiscating their possessions instead of addressing the root causes of Zimbabwe's dramatic economic situation. Such confiscations are of course illegal and are in the process of being challenged in the courts.

In a letter to President Robert Mugabe, <http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991224921&Language=EN>, the ICFTU has called for an intervention by his Government in order to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Wellington Chibebe and the dropping of all charges against him. It also called on the authorities to order an immediate cessation of repressive measures against the ZCTU, its members, activists, leaders and sympathisers.

Meanwhile, the ICFTU has also written to the Director-General of the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO), asking him to intervene personally with the Zimbabwe Government in order to secure Chibebe's release.

As of today, 16hrs CET, Chibebe was still detained at Waterfalls Police

Station.

Here you will find an interview of Wellington Chibembe released by the ICFTU in June 2006:

http://www.icftusurvey.org/audio_video/clips/zimbabwe_en.htm

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers in 241 affiliated organisations in 156 countries and territories: <http://www.icftu.org> ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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