

ICFTU ONLINE...

Release of Zimbabwean trade unionists followed by arrest of another 18/8/2006



Brussels, 18 August 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions today welcomed the release from prison on August 17 of M. Wellington Chibebe, the General Secretary of its affiliated organisation, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).

M. Chibebe was arrested at a roadblock on August 15 and detained at Waterfalls Police station. 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. He was released on bail of ZIM \$ 2,000 (\$US4) and is set to appear in court on the 4th of September.

However, the same day Chibebe was released, another trade unionist, ZCTU National Organiser, Leonard Gwenzi was arrested carrying ZIM \$200,000 (\$US200) upon his return from a series of trade union workshops throughout the country. He was on his way back to the ZCTU offices to deposit the money. He was later released, however, after the Zimbabwean Reserve Bank acknowledged, on the basis of receipts and vouchers held by Gwenzi, that he was in fact carrying ZCTU funds. He was released uncharged and the money was returned to him.

Guy Ryder, the General Secretary of the ICFTU said today:

"These latest arrests just add to the long history of harassment and repression of Zimbabwe's independent trade union movement. On a broader level, the idea that confiscating citizens' possessions is a way of addressing the root causes of Zimbabwe's dramatic economic situation is illegal and dangerous."

"We welcome both unionists' releases, but demand the dropping of charges against Wellington Chibebe. The international trade union movement will continue to act at the UN's International Labour Organisation and elsewhere to bring about an end to this government's repressive tactics against the ZCTU, its members, activists, leaders and sympathisers," Ryder concluded.

[For an interview with Wellington Chibebe, released by the ICFTU in June 2006](#)

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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