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INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine...

Trade unionists tortured in latest act of Mugabe regime's brutality

Brussels, 15 September 2006(ICFTU online): The Zimbabwean authorities must immediately release the members of the Zimbabwean Council of Trade Unions (ZCTU), more than a dozen of whom have been tortured and injured following their arrest on September 13, 2006.

Mr Wellington Chibebe, General Secretary, Mr Lovemore Matombo, President, and Ms Lucia Matibenga, First Vice President of ZCTU are amongst those tortured by Zimbabwean authorities. Mr Chibebe has had his arm broken and both him and Mr Matombo were beaten, sustaining cranial/facial bruising and other head injuries. Ms Matibenga and other prisoners have also reported being beaten on the soles of their feet, having their heads bashed against prison walls and being stamped and kicked in the head.

They were amongst 250 trade unionists and other civilians, including approximately 100 women and several infants, arrested nationwide following a peaceful protest calling for decent wages, action on Zimbabwe's 1000 per cent inflation rate and better access to life-saving anti-viral drugs for AIDS sufferers.

"These latest reports of brutality must be condemned by the entire international community, and the world trade union movement will do everything within its power to mobilise international pressure to put a stop this reign of terror," Guy Ryder, the General Secretary of the ICFTU said today.

"History has shown time and time again, that such brutal treatment of people trying to exercise their democratic rights will simply backfire. With each act of repression the Mugabe regime is further isolating itself from the international community and those who continue to pay the price are the Zimbabwean people," he continued.

"We call on the Zimbabwean government to stop its continuing campaign of harassment and abuse of trade unionists. Yet again, the Mugabe regime has failed to fulfill its responsibility under the international obligations it is party to, namely the ILO Core Labour Standards on Freedom of Association," Ryder added.

At the latest count, 92 trade unionists remain in custody. They finally received access to medical attention today despite the fact that some of them have had eating and hearing problems resulting from their injuries for the past two days.

Yesterday afternoon, colleagues from the ZCTU and the International Labour Office in Zimbabwe attempted to visit the prisoners, but were denied access.

The ICFTU and a number of its affiliates have written to the Zimbabwean government urging them to release the prisoners and fulfill their legal

obligations. To view the letter visit

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991225020&Language=EN>.

The ICFTU has also written to the ILO Director General urging him to intervene. To view the letter visit

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991225019&Language=EN>.

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

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