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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Zimbabwe: Election controversy spills over into union repression

Brussels, 9 May 2008 (ITUC OnLine): Arrested for mentioning in May Day speeches the election controversy and the ensuing violent intimidation campaign, the President Lovemore Matombo and General Secretary Wellington Chibebbe of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) are feeling the wrath of the Mugabe regime.

Since May Day, police have been looking for the two leaders, and on 6 May heavily armed police came to their homes. Yesterday on 8 May they were detained by the police and charged with "inciting people to rise against the government and reporting falsehoods about people being killed." They are now detained at Harare Central Police Station.

Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the ITUC said: "Freedom of speech is a vital to trade unionists. The detention of the ZCTU leadership is extremely worrying given the brutal beatings they suffered during their detention in September 2006 and the widespread use of violence and torture against detainees in Zimbabwe."

The violence inflicted upon the people of Zimbabwe is a matter of the outmost concern to the international trade union movement, and last month, the ITUC, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and their affiliates took action to prevent an arms shipment destined for Zimbabwe from being unloaded (*).

The ITUC has asked the ILO to intervene with the government of Zimbabwe to release the two leaders with no further delay. It will also complain to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association against these unjust arrests.

"The government of Zimbabwe must release the leadership of the ZCTU immediately and drop all charges against them," said Guy Ryder.

Link to the protest letter sent to President Robert G. Mugabe:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Arrest_of_ZCTU_leadership_-_May_day_-0-05-08.pdf

(*) Zimbabwe: Arms Ship "Returns Home", 24 April 2008:

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1997>
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The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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