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Zimbabwe: Killings and Torture Continue as Trade Unions Call for ILO Commission of Inquiry

Brussels, 13 June 2008 (ITUC OnLine): Trade unionists from across Africa and from around the world have called today in Geneva for an official ILO Commission of Inquiry into Zimbabwe, as more reports of torture and murder of trade unionists by security forces and thugs linked to the Mugabe regime emerge from the country.

Sheperd Chegwu, a member of the PTUZ teachers' union and principal of Katsukunya High School, was abducted from his home on 3 June, and his body, showing signs of severe torture and a gunshot wound to his neck and head, was found nearby two days later. Chegwu had previously been interrogated by "war veterans" and militia about actions taken by PTUZ members at his school to protest at the governments' actions in the lead up to the re-run of the presidential election. There are no signs that the police are taking any action to investigate the murder.

On 12 June, Edward Dzeka, an official of the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ), was kidnapped by ZANU-PF militia and is believed to have been taken to a torture base near the town of Chegudu. Dzeka is also the local Chegudu chairperson of the ITUC-affiliated ZCTU. A report was made to the Chegudu police; however, it is understood that no effective action is being taken by them.

"These continuing attacks on trade unionists are clearly part of the generalised campaign intended to terrorise anyone standing in the way of Robert Mugabe and his cronies holding on to power. Governments, especially those in southern Africa, need to stand up for the rights of the people of Zimbabwe, rather than accommodating a brutal and thuggish regime, as some of them are still doing," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

Trade union delegates to the ILO's International Labour Conference from Angola, Botswana, Guinea, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland and a range of other countries including ILO Workers' Group Chairperson Sir Roy Trotman have today attacked Zimbabwe's appalling record on trade union rights and lodged a formal complaint under Article 26 of the ILO Constitution, which could lead to the establishment of an ILO Commission of Inquiry. This procedure is the strongest investigative measure which exists under the ILO's supervisory mechanisms.

"We feel obliged to lodge this complaint, and call upon the ILO Governing Body to propose measures to make sure that the Zimbabwe government fully respect ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association, the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining," said South African trade union delegate Alina Rantsolase.

The move by the trade union delegates follows a strongly-worded condemnation of Zimbabwe's trade union rights record by the Committee on the Application of Standards at this years' ILO Conference. Employer

representatives and governments joined with trade unions in criticising the government on its record and on its failure once again to come before the committee to put its case.

Links to IUF Protest at: <http://www.iuf.org/den5110>

and BWI Protest at: <http://www.bwint.org>

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: www.ituc-csi.org

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