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Elections "neither free nor fair" says Zimbabwe Trade Union Congress, as Attacks on Unionists Continue

Brussels, 30 June 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC Zimbabwe affiliate ZCTU has declared the presidential run-off "neither free nor fair" and has deplored continuing violence and threats against trade unionists. Ruling party activists and security forces have orchestrated a national campaign of intimidation in order to ensure that Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party remains in power, with trade unionists amongst the principal victims of the attacks.

The ZCTU chairperson for the district of Chivhu, Tinashe Murau, was seriously beaten by Zanu PF militia just before the 27 June Presidential Runoff. His hand was broken and he is currently seeking medical attention. He was beaten after the militia questioned why he wears ZCTU t-shirts and attends ZCTU meetings.

Forty-six members of the General Agriculture Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ), an affiliate of the ZCTU, have sought shelter in Harare after being harassed and beaten up by youth militia. A number of children are amongst those in shelter. The ZCTU and GAPWUZ are currently providing them with food. Indications are that more farm workers will be displaced.

The Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), also an affiliate of the ZCTU, has closed its office after its officials were harassed by unknown people since the start of the Presidential Run Off. Two carloads of thugs visited the home of PTUZ General Secretary Raymond Majongwe, but fortunately he was not at his home at the time. Others threatened the wife of the PTUZ Treasurer, claiming that they wanted to take her to 'a funeral'.

ZCTU councilor Rebecca Butau, based in Chegutu, was also seriously beaten and had to seek medical attention. Her attackers said they were looking for David Zunde, another union official from the food industry. Zunde is currently in hiding.

"The actions of Robert Mugabe and those who have taken part in this vicious campaign have resulted in a huge set-back for Zimbabwe. The challenge is now before the international community, and in particular the leaders of all Southern African countries, to refuse to recognise this illegitimate election sham. They need to make it totally clear to Mr Mugabe and ZANU-PF that nothing except full respect for democracy and the rule of law can be accepted", said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

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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