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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Burundi: Judicial Proceedings against Trade Union Leader

Brussels, 17 June 2009 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation has strongly protested against the judicial proceedings against Mr. Juvénal Rududura, vice president of the union of non-judicial staff of the justice ministry, SPMJB, affiliated to the confederation of trade unions of Burundi, COSYBU, which is an affiliate of the ITUC.

Arrested on 15 September 2008 by the Director of Public Prosecutions of the Anti-Corruption Court following statements made to Radio-Television Renaissance regarding corruption in staff recruitment at the Justice Ministry, Rududura has still not been released. The various appeals against his arrest have been successively rejected by the Anti-Corruption Court and the Judicial Chamber of the Supreme Court. Moreover, the Director of Public Prosecutions ruled on the substance of the case without checking the legality of his detention in custody, which lasted seven months instead of the 48 hours usually required.

Mr Rududura risks a prison sentence of five years, despite the fact that the Justice Minister has not, thus far, filed a complaint. He is clearly the victim of his outspokenness and his trade union activities. The numerous attempts made by representatives of the ITUC-affiliated Belgian trade union confederation, CGSLB, to visit him, have been thwarted.

In a letter http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/20090616165901-Microsoft_Word_-_Mock_trial_against_M_Rududura_15-06-09.pdf to the Burundi authorities, the ITUC has urged President Pierre Nkurunziza to take every step necessary to ensure the release Mr Rududura and the lifting all charges against him, given that they would seem to be solely motivated by his trade union activities.

"These practices demonstrate the lack of respect for freedom of expression and freedom of association in Burundi," said Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC. "These fundamental rights are enshrined in the country's Constitution. Moreover, Burundi has ratified Conventions 87 and 98 of the ILO. It is high time that it respected them," he added.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries.
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