

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

ITUC OnLine
030/260210

Zimbabwe: Trade Union Leader Arrested

Brussels, 26 February 2010: (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC, together with its regional organisation the ITUC-Africa, has condemned and strongly protested against the arrests of Assistant General Secretary Gift Muti and President Manjemanje Munyanyi of the General Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union (GAPWUZ). They were clearly arrested because of their trade union activities.

According to the information received by the ITUC, on 25 February the police visited GAPWUZ offices and arrested the two trade unionists. The police said they wanted information on the video and the report, *If Something is Wrong*, which is an account of the atrocities committed during the government-driven, chaotic land reform since 2000. It documents farm workers' testimonies of murder, torture, and violence perpetrated by the state.

Gift Muti has been released, but Munyanyi is still in police custody. The police interrogated GAPWUZ General Secretary Gertrude Hambira some days ago, and have been again hunting for her; however, she has managed to avoid capture for the time being. Hambira has been threatened and harassed on several occasions in the past, also due to her trade union activities.

Persistent violations of trade union rights over the many years have led to a decision in 2008 to launch an ILO Commission of Inquiry, one of the strongest measures the ILO can take, into the lack of respect of freedom of association and collective bargaining in the country.

"It is extremely regrettable that these new violations are taking place just as the ILO prepares to examine the report of the Commission of Inquiry on 22 March. The ITUC had hoped that the creation of an inclusive government would have made anti-union repression a thing of the past. Unfortunately, it is clear that elements within the government are not willing to undertake reform," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder..

In a letter sent to the authorities, http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Hambira_hiding_President_arrested_26-02-10_4_.pdf the ITUC urges President Mugabe to release GAPWUZ President Manjemanje Munyanyi immediately and stop further harassment of GAPWUZ staff. It also urges President Mugabe to stop further investigation of Ms. Hambira in connection with her legitimate activities as the general secretary of the GAPWUZ and the production of the report *If Something is Wrong*.

"We will monitor developments in this case very closely and will of course consider bringing these latest violations to the ILO supervisory mechanisms" added Ryder.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 312 national affiliates. <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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