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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

## ITUC OnLine

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### ILO Commission of Inquiry on Zimbabwe Confirms Allegations of Severe Trade Union Rights Violations

Brussels, 26 March 2010 (ITUC OnLine): A special Commission of Inquiry of the International Labour Organisation has, in its findings being presented to the ILO Governing Body this week, confirmed that the Zimbabwe's government is responsible for serious violations of fundamental rights, in particular concerning freedom to organise trade unions and to collective bargaining, the right to strike, and protection of trade unionists from discrimination.

As a testimony to the grave nature of the violations, this is the first time in the history of the ILO that both trade unions and employer organisations have filed a complaint against a government, leading to the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry in 2008. The Commission travelled to Zimbabwe and heard testimony from workers, as well as meeting government and employer representatives.

The Commission found the violations to be both systematic and systemic and highlighted that it "sees a clear pattern of arrests, detentions, violence and torture by the security forces against trade unionists that coincide with ZCTU nationwide events, indicating that there has been some centralized direction to the security forces to take such action." It also concludes that "there was another clear pattern of control over ZCTU trade union gatherings, be they internal meetings or public demonstrations through the application of the POSA" and that "detentions and targeted violence have been used to intimidate both leaders and rank and file members of the trade union in a systematic and systemic manner." The POSA, or Public Order and Security Act, has been used regularly as a pretext for anti-union action by the Mugabe regime.

The COI report also details violations of other fundamental human rights against trade unionists, including freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, and the right to "security of the person". Many Zimbabwean trade unionists have been severely beaten by security forces and others acting at the behest of the regime over the past several years.

"We are very concerned that, even with a more inclusive government now in Zimbabwe, those aligned to President Robert Mugabe are still encouraging and authoring acts of intimidation and violence against trade unionists. This important report should strengthen the determination of the international community to keep up the pressure for the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights in Zimbabwe," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

The Commission issued seven recommendations that the government has to implement to ensure the full implementation of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and collective bargaining, and which could contribute to the process of national reconciliation.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 155 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>  
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