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Zambia: Charges Dropped Against Two Chinese Supervisors

Brussels, 6 April 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Outrage in Zambia. The prosecutors in charge of the case against two Chinese supervisors who shot 13 miners in October 2010 have decided to drop the charges against them. The ITUC firmly condemns this decision, which violates the rights of the miners attacked and wounded.

The incident, which took place on 15 October at the Collum coal mine run by Chinese private investors, provoked outrage among many Zambians, whose opposition is growing to China's huge economic influence over their country. China invests over a US\$1 billion a year in this mineral-rich country of southern Africa.

The shootings, none of which were fortunately fatal, occurred when hundreds of Zambian miners held a protest march at the mine. Their working conditions are very extremely harsh and the wages are often no more than four dollars a day. The Chinese supervisors speak very little English and nothing of the local languages. They would not therefore have understood the miners' demands.

"It is unacceptable that the mine managers should send supervisors that cannot communicate with the employees," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. "It is only logical that there are accidents and misunderstandings as a result and, in this particular case, that panic sets in."

The Zambian government had promised that the shootings would be thoroughly investigated and that a full and fair trial would be held. According to the ITUC, the decision to drop the charges is questionable and casts doubt on the independence of the Zambian judiciary when private foreign investors are involved.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>
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