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H. E. Emmerson Mnangagwa

President of Zimbabwe

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Harare – Zimbabwe

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August 03, 2020

Dear Mr President,

Protest against the labelling of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions as a terrorist organisation and persistent harassment and persecution of trade unionists

We write on behalf of the The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org) to condemn the labeling of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), our affiliate, as a terrorist organisation by ZANU-PF, the ruling party of Zimbabwe.

We have learnt that on 27 July 2020, in a televised press conference whose footage has since gone viral, Mr Patrick Chinamasa, the Acting Spokesperson of ZANU-PF attacked and labelled the ZCTU and the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (a civil society organisation) as “Trojan horses” of the MDC which was itself branded as a terrorist organisation.

It appears to us that the spokesperson of the ZANU-PF launched this attack on the ZCTU and its allies to prepare the grounds for attacking and silencing the ZCTU leadership and their members. Planting the terrorist tag on the ZCTU and the other organisations is to make them fair game to be hunted down by those who are ready to do everything to stifle democratic expression and the right to protest in Zimbabwe.

Earlier this month, we drew attention to the incessant threats and attacks on trade union leaders and activists in Zimbabwe. In particular, we highlighted the recent attempt to abduct and harm Mr Peter Mutasa, the President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and his family. We recall also that earlier this July, Mr. Obert Masaraure, President of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) had his home broken into by armed persons in the middle of the night, ostensibly to harass and harm him and his family into silence. Again, on June 6 the government detained 12 out of 13 striking nurses and their leaders and dismissed them from employment after charging them with criminal offences. These were nurses who had been actively involved in the COVID-19 containment and treatment efforts in the country and had withdrawn their services in protest against the non-provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as poor remuneration and motivation for their work.

We note also, that contrary to the COVID-19 guidelines issued by the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, the ZANU-PF Government has been using the fight against the spread of COVID-19 as a pretext for

enacting and imposing decrees that impede the enjoyment of civil liberties, especially the rights to association, assembly and expression.

ITUC-Africa is deeply concerned about the continuing loss of space for free expression and peaceful protest in Zimbabwe. We consider it unacceptable that the party of the ruling government can label the ZCTU, one of the recognised social partners in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF), as a terrorist organisation. We must remind government that its engagement with the TNF is one of the images they have been presenting to the international community as basis for the removal of sanctions against it.

In the light of the foregoing, ITUC-Africa joins the ITUC in calling on your government to:

- publicly dissociate itself from the ZANU-PF claim that the ZCTU is a terrorist organisation and confirm the ZCTU as a legitimate social partner your government has been engaging with in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum Meeting;
- stop hunting down trade unionists who are doing their work in raising the issues facing workers for the attention of government and employers;
- stop the persecution of all democracy activists and release all those who have been arrested for exercising their rights to free expression, association and assembly.

ITUC Africa will continue to support her affiliate, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and Zimbabwe workers. We shall continue to monitor and act on the situation in Zimbabwe in the hope that your government will act in ways that allow the realization of the rights of the workers and people of Zimbabwe in the achievement of their well-being and the progress of the nation.

Yours truly,



Kwasi Adu-Amankwah
General Secretary, ITUC-Africa

CC:

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