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The President

The Republic of Zimbabwe

H. E D Mnangagwa

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23 September 2020

Dear Mr President,

Zimbabwean workers are not terrorists - respect labour and human rights

I am writing on behalf of African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (www.ituc-africa.org), representing 17 million working women and men in Africa to strongly condemn the continued harassment of trade unionists in your country and the labelling of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) as a terrorist organisation by the ruling party ZANU-PF of which you are the 1st Secretary.

ITUC-Africa has been following recent developments in your country about violations of human rights and we note that your government has intensified its crackdown on trade unionists, workers and other voices of dissents. We are worried that dissent is being criminalised and prosecuted contrary to the dictates of participatory democracy. Some examples of this worrisome trend are that:

- The ZCTU president Mr Peter Mutasa was put on the Police wanted persons' list in July 2020 for exercising the right to free speech.
- The military and police often clampdown on dissenting voices as happened during the 31 July 2020 protest action in which the security forces sealed up the country and ordered people to stay at home.
- Protesters who came out were arrested, detained, intimidated and judicially persecuted. Some of those perceived to have played a role in mobilising for the protest actions were abducted and tortured by security forces for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association provided in the Zimbabwe Constitution.

Mr President, we are also concerned by the low wages and high cost of living situation that the workers and people of Zimbabwe are experiencing. We would like to remind you that when you took office in November 2017, the workers of Zimbabwe were earning a minimum wage of about US\$500.00 per month but in your 2 years in power, their wages are now a paltry US\$30.00 per month.

Your government introduced a mono-currency regime, the Zimbabwean dollar in June 2019 under the pretext that it was equivalent to the United States dollar (USD). That has proven to be false. While your government now allows most goods and services to be charged and sold in USD, wages have remained stagnant and pegged in Zimbabwean dollars that are seldom accepted for transaction given the very weak value and circulation challenges. Also worrisome is the fact that inflation is now above 800% and rising. These dire socio-economic developments are combining to confine and condemn workers to poverty despite their hard labour.

Again, the COVID-19 pandemic has weakened an already ailing economy and worsened economic hardship. To contain the pandemic, most governments are mobilising their resources and personnel, especially their healthcare workforce and professionals to offer dutiful service. In Zimbabwe, on the contrary, government

actions and omissions have pushed doctors and nurses to be on strike since 6 June 2020 demanding better wages and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). It is disturbing that your government has chosen to hound their leaders, throw them into detention and slapped criminal charges against them for engaging in a legitimate industrial action to press home their demands.

Further, we have observed that your government is now taking advantage of COVID-19 emergency laws to clampdown on voices of dissent. Persons that exposed corruption in the procurement of COVID-19 test kits and vital medicines who should be commended for their patriotic gestures together with others exercising the right to freedom of expression are being treated as dissidents. Sundry reports from Zimbabwe show that dissent is officially considered as criminal. This is contrary to the tenets and principles of participatory democracy.


We strongly affirm the need for a political solution to the crisis in the country and call for your government to take urgent steps to establish a new social contract with the people of Zimbabwe that allows the country to function properly.

We, therefore, strongly urge your government to urgently take genuine steps to address the concerns raised, including the following:

1. Stop the continued arrests, abductions, intimidation, harassment, torture and judicial persecution of the trade unionists, their families, civil society organisations and opposition supporters and stop labelling them terrorists;
2. Respect human rights and the rule of law and allow citizens to exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including the right to strike;
3. Implement in full, the recommendations of the ILO Commission of Inquiry of 2009
4. Pay workers with a valuable currency linked to the poverty datum line.
5. Allow mediation from the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the ILO to expeditiously facilitate and mediate an all-inclusive dialogue to resolve the socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe.

ITUC-Africa assures you that it shall continue to act until your government addresses the above concerns.

Yours faithfully,



General Secretary
Kwasi Adu-Amankwah

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