

HE Colonel Christian Katsande
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe House
429 Strand
WC2R 0JR

15 October 2018

Dear Ambassador

Oppression against the ZCTU

I write on behalf of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) representing over 5.5 million workers in the UK to denounce the actions of the government of Zimbabwe of blocking the peaceful demonstration organised by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the subsequent arrest of leaders of ZCTU. The peaceful demonstration of the ZCTU was held in response to the recently announced economic measures, which will increase the number of already burdened workers of Zimbabwe and their families.

Despite the prior notification and peaceful character of this trade union activity, police violently cracked down on the ZCTU last Thursday morning to prevent the protest from proceeding. On that day, more than 150 police officers with trucks and water cannons surrounded ZCTU offices to stop the legitimate exercise of the constitutionally guaranteed right of peaceful protest. ZCTU president Peter Mutasa and secretary general Japhet Moyo had been beaten up and arrested and 39 people were arrested in Mutare, Mavungo and Harare. In addition, 26 people including ZCTU staff members were kept under siege at ZCTU offices in Harare and the police cordoned off the ZCTU offices until 7pm. While the 26 people were released, ZCTU President and General Secretary remained in custody together with 27 ZCTU members.

We deplore and strongly condemn the excessive use of violence and harassment against trade union members in retaliation for legitimate demands made as part of a peaceful protest.

The government of Zimbabwe is obliged to ensure that workers can exercise their right to freedom of association in a climate that is free from violence, pressure or threats of any kind against their leaders and members. In targeting the ZCTU for violence and oppression, the government has not only breached article 59 of its Constitution but also the provisions of ILO Convention No 87 on Freedom of Association that it is bound by.

We urgently ask you to call on your government to immediately and unconditionally release all union leaders and members and to initiate an investigation into the excessive

and undue violence that took place. It is our expectation that those found to be responsible for the violence will be effectively prosecuted and that the victims of violence and harassment will be provided with adequate remedies.

We request to be kept informed of the action taken in response to our letter.

Yours sincerely

FRANCES O'GRADY

General Secretary

CC: Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe in Geneva
Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, London