

His Excellency Mr. Robert G. Mugabe,
President,
Causeway,
Harare
Zimbabwe

By Fax: + 263.4.70.38.58

4th December 2008

Dear Mr. President,

Re Arrest of Trade Unionists

On behalf of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association I am writing to condemn the arrest and assault on a large number of ZCTU leaders and members, including the arrest of Secretary General Wellington Chibebe.

The TSSA has been informed by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) that the ZCTU has organized peaceful marches to protest against the extreme financial crisis in Zimbabwe by delivering petitions to banks. Mr. Wellington Chibebe and ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo managed to hand over the ZCTU petition to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Governor.

Soon after handing it over, Chibebe proceeded to address workers but was arrested together with nine other people including Tonderai Nyahunzvi, Canwell Muchadya, Hillarious Ruyi, Cde Tarumbira and Joseph Chuma.

In Harare, the police heavily assaulted more people. These included Gideon Shoko (Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railway Workers Union - General Secretary) and Keneth Nemachena (Area Organising Secretary) as well as Getrude Hambira (General Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union - General Secretary), Angeline Chitambo (Zimbabwe Energy Workers' Union - President), Tecla Masamba (Communications and Allied Workers' Union of Zimbabwe), Martha Kajama (National Engineering Workers' Union of Zimbabwe) and Mirriam Katumba (Vice Chair Women's Advisory Council).

Meanwhile, Japhet Moyo (ZCTU Deputy Secretary General), Ben Madzimure (The Worker Editor), Fungayi Kanyongo (The Worker Intern), Raymond Majongwe (Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe - General Secretary),

James Gumbi (Zimbabwe Rural District Council Workers' Union - General Secretary) and Oswald Madziwa (PTUZ) were also arrested in Harare.

In Gweru, more than 25 people have been arrested. Amongst those arrested are the ZCTU Central Regional chair Charles Chikozho, Isaac Thebethebe (ZCTU Central Regional secretary), Moses Mhaka and Wilbert Muringani (both PTUZ) **and Benard Sibanda.**

In Zvishavane town, six people were arrested at the Barclays Bank. The six are Elinas Gumbo, Ndodana Sithole, Nicholas Zengeya, Isaac Matsikidze, Sarudzai Chimwanda and David Moyo. They are being held at Zvishavane police station.

In Bulawayo, PTUZ Matabeleland Coordinator Enoch Paradzai has been picked by the Central Intelligence Operatives and is being held at Magnet House on the 4th Floor.

In most parts of the country, workers managed to hand in petitions to the RBZ offices.

The TSSA is extremely concerned at the large number of arrests and the manhandling of some of the peaceful protestors. The brutal behaviour by police forces in Zimbabwe is unacceptable, and we call on your government to guarantee the physical integrity of all those who are being detained. Trade unions have a right to demonstrate peacefully against economic and social policies affecting their members. In a situation of dire economic hardship, food shortages and an evolving humanitarian crisis, trade unionists have no choice but to voice their protest against the economic policies that have led to this disaster.

The TSSA strongly urges you to immediately release all those who have been arrested, including Mr. Wellington Chibebe, and to make sure that no charges are made against them. In the meantime, we urge you to guarantee their physical integrity and well-being.

The TSSA hopes that you will pay prompt attention to this very serious matter.

Yours sincerely,

Gerry Doherty
General Secretary