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PRESIDENT
Sharan Burrow

SECRETARY
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Ref: SB:dd

21 September 2006

H.E. Mr Robert G Mugabe
President
Causeway
Harare
ZIMBABWE

Fax: +263.4.70.38.58

Call for immediate dropping of all charges against unionists

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) which represents some 2 million workers, I am writing to condemn in the strongest possible terms the violence directed at trade union leaders and activists throughout Zimbabwe on 12 and 13 September 2006 and since.

On 15 September the ACTU wrote to you representative in Canberra, Australia, to protest at the brutal repression of the protest marches of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).

Information has since confirmed the severity of the injuries caused to the senior leaders of the ZCTU. We are reliably informed that ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo has a broken arm and has bruising and swelling all over his body. First Vice President Lucia Matibenga has whip marks all over her back and buttocks. Her neck is swollen and her ear drums have been damaged so much her hearing is impaired. Secretary General Wellington Chibebe has serious cuts to the head, three broken bones, and severe bruising and swelling all over his body. Doctors' reports for other ZCTU council members show that others have also sustained bone fractures, severe bruising and swelling, and cuts.

These details will be included in a complaint by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), of which I am the global President, for submission the International Labour Organisation (ILO), to illustrate the extent to which your government holds in contempt the internationally recognised labour standards it claims to uphold, namely ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, and ILO Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining.

The ACTU has been informed that the 30 ZCTU activists arrested in Harare have all been charged with public order offences (under Section 37 of the Criminal Law Act), and have been released on bail of 20,000 Zimbabwe dollars each. They are due to go to trial on 3 October.

The ACTU seeks your intervention to ensure that the authorities drop all charges, against the ZCTU activists, immediately and unconditionally, and that no further legal action be brought against them in connection with the 13 September protests. We hope to see respect for internationally recognised rights of workers and trade unions upheld in Zimbabwe.

I hope to receive your urgent and positive reply to these matters.



Sharan Burrow
ACTU PRESIDENT