



23 September 2020

His Excellency E. D. Mnangagwa
President
Office of the President and Cabinet
Munhumutapa Building
Corner Sam Nujoma/Samora Machel Avenue
Harare, Zimbabwe

Email: info@opc.gov.zw

Re: Zimbabwean workers are not terrorists: respect labour and human rights

Dear Mr President,

I am writing on behalf of the *International Lawyers Assisting Workers (ILAW) Network*, which unites over 500 workers' rights lawyers, academics and advocates in over 60 countries, to strongly condemn the continued harassment of workers and trade unionists in Zimbabwe. This includes the recent decision by the ZANU-PF, of which you are the First Secretary, to label the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) as a terrorist organisation.

Despite consistent international criticism, your government has only intensified its crackdown on workers, trade unionists and other critics. On 31 July 2020, the military and police clamped down on a protest action sealing the borders and ordering people to stay at home. Those who came outside were intimidated, arrested and detained, and judicially persecuted while those who were perceived to have played a role in mobilising the protests were abducted and tortured. In the run up to the protest, the police put ZCTU president Mr Peter Mutasa on a wanted-persons list and continues to surveil him. This is despite the fact that the right to peaceful assembly and association is guaranteed under the Constitution and the international instruments that Zimbabwe has ratified.

We are also deeply concerned by the low wages and high cost of living for workers and the people of Zimbabwe generally. When you took office in November 2017, workers earned a minimum wage of about US\$400.00 per month. Two years later, their wages are now a paltry US\$30.00 per month. Inflation is now above 800% and continues to rise, relegating workers to poverty despite their hard labour.

Finally, the government's failed response to the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already existing economic crisis. For example, while many countries have taken measures to support their health services, Zimbabwe's doctors and nurses have been forced to strike since 6 June 2020 to demand necessary personal protective equipment and decent wages. Instead of negotiating in

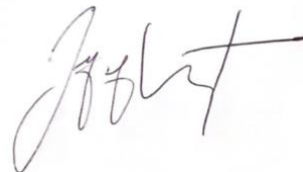
good faith, the government instead levelled criminal charges against them for their action. The government is also taking advantage of COVID-19 emergency laws to clamp down on dissenting voices that have exposed corruption in the procurement of COVID-19 test kits and medicines.

Mr President, we call on your government to talk the following measures as soon as possible:

1. Respect human rights and the rule of law, including to allow citizens to exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including the right to strike;
2. Implement in full the recommendations of the ILO Commission of Inquiry of 2009;
3. Cease the arrest, detention, intimidation, torture and judicial persecution of trade unionists, civil society organisations and opposition supporters;
4. Pay workers a living wage with a valuable currency;
5. Allow mediation from the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the ILO to resolve the socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe.

The ILAW Network will closely monitor the situation to ensure that your government addresses the above concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Jeffrey Vogt
Chair, ILAW Network

cc: African Union Commission: chairperson@africa-union.org
SADC: registry@sadc.int
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: mfa@zimfa.gov.zw
Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare: labourpd@gmail.com
Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions: info@zctu.co.zw