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your correspondent :

R. Lamas

The President
The Republic of Zimbabwe
H. E. E D Mhangagwa
Office of the President and Cabinet
Munhumutapa Building
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Zimbabwe
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Dear Mr President,

I am writing on behalf of F.G.T.B. (Belgian General federation of Labour) which represents 1.550.000 workers in Belgium to strongly condemn the continued harassment of trade unionists in your country for carrying out their legitimate trade union activities in their demand for socio-economic justice caused by the austerity measures adopted by your government.

One year on, after the release from jail of Peter Mutasa and Japhet Moyo (ZCTU President and Secretary General) respectively, we remain concerned by the ongoing persecution of trade unionists including Dickson Chaeruka and 18 others arrested by your government in Mutare in October 2018 following a ZCTU protest action against the introduction of the transaction tax on money transfers. The 19 ZCTU members have appeared in court more than 11 times and are set to appear in court again today.

We are also concerned by the continued persecution of 8 union officials from the Energy Sector Workers Union of Zimbabwe (ESWUZ), an affiliate of the ZCTU arrested in March 2018 during a hearing at the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA). Although the 8 unionists have been reinstated to work following your intervention, they remain labelled criminals. Mr Thomas Masvingwe, the General Secretary of the National Energy Workers Union of Zimbabwe (NEWUZ) is also facing criminal charges since March 2018 for leading a strike against ZESA. Furthermore, the ZCTU 2nd Vice President Mr John Chirenda remain dismissed by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) for representing workers at that workplace.

Mr President, we also remain concerned by the continuing deteriorating cost of living of the workers and the people of Zimbabwe due to failed austerity measures adopted by your government. Already the path chosen by your government makes it difficult for your country to fulfil its obligations under the UN sustainable development goal No. 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and your government is also in defiance of the recommendations of the ILO's Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2019.

The F.G.T.B. hereby demands that your government take the following measures as a matter of urgency;

1. Amend all pieces of legislation including the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act, the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act, the Labour Act, the Public Service Act, the Health Services Act to comply with UN standards on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, taking into account the recommendations of the UN Joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the proper management of assemblies, 2016 (A/HRC/31/66);
2. Align legislation and putting into practice the principles of the ILO conventions on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948 (C87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, 1949 (C98);
3. Implement the recommendations of the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2019, including accepting an ILO Direct Contact Mission to assess progress in this regard;

4. Embrace a culture of social dialogue in the development of socio-economic policies through the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF)
5. Respect for the rule of law and human rights;
6. Accept United Nations (UN) intervention or mediation in settling the internal political problems of Zimbabwe with the participation of labour unions and civil society broadly to agree on the way forward for the country.

Our federation would like to assure you that - in solidarity with the ZCTU and Zimbabwean workers - it will continue to closely follow your government's actions to improve respect of labour and take further action accordingly.

Respectfully

Robert Vertenuel
President

cc: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: mfa@zimfa.gov.zw
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Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions ZCTU: info@zctu.co.zw