

PUBLIC

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UA 126/08 Fear of torture and other ill-treatment

ZIMBABWE Lovemore Matombo (m), President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
Wellington Chibebe (m), Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

Leading trade unionists Lovemore Matombo and Wellington Chibebe were arrested on 8 May, and are in grave danger of torture. They were severely tortured in police custody in September 2006.

Lovemore Matombo and Wellington Chibebe are respectively President and Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). They were arrested on 8 May after they handed themselves in to police after police had looked for them at their homes. They were brought before a magistrate on 12 May, and charged with "communicating falsehoods prejudicial to the state," in connection with speeches they made during May Day celebrations in Harare on 1 May. The magistrate refused them bail, and remanded them in custody until 23 May. They are held at Harare Central Remand Prison.

Amnesty International considers them prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrests of Lovemore Matombo and Wellington Chibebe are part of a wider crackdown on human rights defenders, trade unionists, lawyers, journalists, election observers and opposition activists, in the wake of the parliamentary and presidential elections of 29 March. The results of the presidential election were announced on 2 May. No candidate won the 50 per cent plus one vote required to win the election. According to the Electoral Act, a run-off between the two highest scoring candidates, President Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai from the Movement for Democratic Change, should be held within 21 days of the election. However, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has not yet set a date.

Zimbabwe is a state party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which guarantee the rights of freedom of expression, association and assembly.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the Minister of Justice to release trade unionists Lovemore Matombo and Wellington Chibebe immediately and unconditionally, as they have been detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- calling on him to ensure that they are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, but are treated in compliance with human rights standards governing the treatment of detainees, including those contained in Article 7 and Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Zimbabwe is a state party;
- urging him to ensure that Lovemore Matombo and Wellington Chibebe have access to their lawyers, their families and any medical attention they may require;

APPEALS TO:

Justice Minister

The Hon. Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs

Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs

New Government Complex

Cnr Samora Machel/4th Street

Private Bag 7751

Causeway

Harare, Zimbabwe

Fax: +263 4 790901

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

PO Box 3549

Famona

Harare

Zimbabwe

and to diplomatic representatives of Zimbabwe accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 May 2008.