

Trade unionists at risk in Zimbabwe

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Amnesty International is concerned that activists from the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) are at risk of being arrested, beaten by police and tortured while in police custody. The union has organised a job "stay away" action on 3 and 4 April 2007 to protest against the government's failure to address the declining economic situation in Zimbabwe.

It is feared that the police will use excessive force to disperse demonstrations organised by the ZCTU as has been in the past. Two ZCTU officers, Gilbert Marembo and Michael Kandukuti were assaulted by members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police on 13 March 2007. The police had arrived at the ZCTU offices with a search warrant allowing them to search for and seize all "subversive material" found on the premises.

The officers were from the Law and Order Section of the Criminal Investigations department based at Harare Central police station. The assault was witnessed by lawyers from the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. Police later seized fliers on the job "stay away".

Amnesty International has documented several cases in the past when activists exercising their right to peaceful protest have been arrested, detained for prolonged periods and at times tortured. Police often beat peaceful protesters with truncheons, batons and metal bars resulting in victims suffering broken limbs.

One of the torture methods often used is called *falanga* (beating underneath the feet). This torture method leaves the victim with walking difficulties for life.

For more information, please see:

Zimbabwe: End harassment, torture and intimidation of opposition activists (Press Release, 28/03/2006) <http://news.amnesty.org/Index/ENGAFR460072007>

Harassment of activists continues in Zimbabwe (Feature, 22 March 2007)
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/zwe-220307-news-eng>

Take action: Stop harassment of activists in Zimbabwe
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/zwe-220307-action-eng>