

Zimbabwe: Leaders of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)

Concern: Torture, ill-treatment, freedom of expression

On 13 September in Harare, Lovemore Matombo, – President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), Wellington Chibebe - ZCTU Secretary General, Lucia Matibenga - First Vice-President of the ZCTU and 12 other ZCTU and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) activists, were arrested while attempting to engage in peaceful protest about deteriorating social and economic conditions in Zimbabwe.

They were taken to Matapi Police Station where they were systematically tortured. Their injuries were consistent with beatings with blunt objects, heavy enough to cause fractures to hands and arms and severe multiple soft tissue injuries to the backs of the head, shoulders, arms, buttocks and thighs. The ZCTU and MDC activists were transferred to Harare Central Police Station on 14 September before being released later that day. Medical care was only provided after protestations from the lawyers.

Other ZCTU members were also arrested and detained in Harare, Beitbridge, Bulawayo, Mutare and other urban centres on the day of the protests. The day before on 12 September, in an apparent pre-emptive action, police had also reportedly arrested a number of ZCTU leaders at their homes and offices in Rusape, Gweru, Chinhoyi and Kariba. Amnesty International understands that they were detained as a consequence of exercising or attempting to exercise their right to peaceful demonstration. By 15 September, they had all been released.

Please write to the authorities:

- Calling on the authorities to publicly condemn the torture and ill-treatment of the 15 ZCTU and MDC activists at Matapi Police Station on 13 September 2006.
- Calling for an investigation into allegations of torture, ill-treatment, unlawful arrest and detention and, if sufficient evidence is established, prosecute the suspected perpetrators. The results of such an investigation should be made public.
- Calling for an end to human rights violations by the police and other law enforcement officials at Matapi Police Station and ensure that they abide by the highest standards of professionalism and respect for human rights. Detainees should not be subjected to torture and ill-treatment while in police custody.
- Lovemore Matombo, Wellington Chibebe, Lucia Matibenga and the other 12 activists should be assured of their right to an effective remedy, including access to justice, restitution, compensation and rehabilitation

Please send appeals to:

Officer Commanding Police – Harare Province
P O Box CY 154, Harare
Zimbabwe

Officer in Charge – Matapi Police Station
P O Box CY 154
Harare
Zimbabwe