

# Zimbabwe update

This month's update focuses on the tribute given to Zimbabwean trade unionist Lovemore Matombo by the International Labour Organisation in recognition of his longstanding commitment to defending and promoting workers' rights in the country.

This issue also looks at the trial of four members of the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU), the International Labour Organisation investigation on worker and trade union rights abuses and the end of the strike launched by doctors demanding better pay to the government. We also highlight the collapse of a cabinet retreat and the proposal for a new law relative to citizenship and integration.

You can find more details about all of the stories covered on the [ACTSA website](#).

## ZCTU leader honoured for his courage

The President of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU), Lovemore Matombo, was honoured with the 2009 Courage Award by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The international award is a tribute to Matombo's courage in defending the rights of workers in the face of arrests and torture at hands of the police. In 2006, he was badly beaten by the Zimbabwean police, while leading a protest for higher incomes and more medicines to fight HIV/AIDS. At the award ceremony, attended also by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, Matombo said "on behalf of ZCTU, I am encouraged and humbled by the award recognising the efforts of the ZCTU in pushing for decent salaries and respect for the workers rights. ACTSA sent a message congratulating Lovemore on the well deserved award and praising his commitment, dedication and humility.

## Doctors' strike ends after two weeks

A nationwide strike was called off on August 26 by Zimbabwean doctors. The action lasted two weeks, with doctors calling for their salaries to be increased from \$170 to \$1,000 a month. Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, whose government started paying health professionals in US dollars, had urged doctors to stop the strike, pledging to improve their working conditions. Brighton Chizhande, president of the Hospital Doctors Association, said "the government has no money, and we have heeded calls by the Prime Minister. Although we have called off the strike we are giving government a one month ultimatum that they give us housing and vehicles allowances." Chizhande also said doctors returned to work "on humanitarian grounds" to avoid a health crisis, following the report of the first case of swine flu in the country.

## Ministerial meeting collapses

A ministerial retreat, organised to review the first 100 days of government, was cut short after Zanu-PF ministers left the meeting room in reaction to the remarks made by Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara, who is also the leader of MDC-M. Mutambara attacked last year's elections as "fraudulent, a nullity and a farce," causing the protest of Zanu-PF members. Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa led the walk out and said "Zanu-PF ministers will not take that in future," adding that the inclusive Government was not in danger though.

## News in Brief

- Twelve new cholera cases were reported last week in the rural east of the country, amid fears of a new outbreak of the water-borne disease. However, a report issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Zimbabwe states "samples taken from [...] five cases tested negative for cholera." According to the report, food poisoning from local beer might be the cause of the diarrhoeal illness
- South Africa's President Jacob Zuma is visiting Zimbabwe after meeting Tsvangirai earlier this month in Johannesburg. Zuma, the current Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), is expected to discuss the progress of the coalition government in Harare as well as an investment pact between the two countries

## ZINASU students on trial

Four members of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) were arrested on August 5 and then released on bail after two nights in prison. The four students, including the ZINASU president Clever Bere, were arrested while attending a meeting on university issues and are being charged under the Criminal Law Act for "participating in a gathering with intent to promote public violence, breach of peace or bigotry." Their lawyer, Jeremiah Bamhu, asked for all charges to be dropped during the remand hearing in Harare. ZINASU have thanked ACTSA for successfully campaigning for their release and its ongoing campaign to get the charges dropped, requesting they "keep it up." Find out how you can support the campaign at the bottom of the page.

## ILO in Zimbabwe to probe rights abuses

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has officially opened a commission of inquiry into alleged worker and trade union rights violations in Zimbabwe. A team of ILO investigators, led by a senior judge at the International Court of Justice, arrived in Harare on August 11 for a two-week long probe. ZCTU information officer, Khumbulani Ndlovu, said "the ILO team has started its work following complaints raised by the ZCTU ..., mostly based on labour issues." The probe team is also expected to investigate into the assault and torture which occurred in September 2006, when leaders of ZCTU were brutalised by the state security agents.

## A fruitful discussion with PM Tsvangirai

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has recently held an informal meeting with the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the ZCTU and the ZINASU to discuss the controversial constitution-making process. Tsvangirai is said to have agreed in principle with the three organisations' request to amend the clause of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) that gives the government the right to lead and control the process. ZCTU secretary general, Wellington Chibhebhe, NCA spokesperson, Maddock Chivasa and ZINASU president, Clever Bere, each referred to the meeting with the Prime Minister as "fruitful".

## Zimbabwe victim of recession

The current recession in South Africa, due to the global economic downturn, is predicted to hit Zimbabwe particularly hard. Zimbabwe's economic recovery is likely to be severely affected since South Africa is the country's largest trading partner. Kingdom Stockbrokers, a leading market-watcher in Zimbabwe, stated that "the challenges the economy of South Africa now faces are going to negatively affect the nation's capacity to invest meaningfully in Zimbabwe." The economic relationship between the two countries is a central issue of President Zuma's visit to Harare.

## ZINASU ACTION

Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) President, Clever Bere, and three others were released on the 7<sup>th</sup> August. following their arrest at a university meeting.

Whilst the three have been released on bail it is important that we get the charges dropped.

Please write to the Minister of Justice, Patrick Chinamasa, urging him to drop the charges

Take action and [write to the Zimbabwean Minister for Justice now](#)



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## Education

Seventy five students have recently graduated from a business-training program run by the International Organisation for Migration and the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau. "The programme was established to save the lives and address the humanitarian needs of mobile and vulnerable populations affected by man-made and natural disasters," Erin Foster, media spokesperson for IOM Zimbabwe, said

## Rights

The Office of the Prime Minister is working to review the controversial law that bars dual citizenship in Zimbabwe and denies the right to vote to people who were once citizens of other countries or whose parents were once foreigners. "We are working on a policy document that is going to increase the participation of Zimbabweans in the diaspora in the economy and other spheres," Gordon Moyo, the Minister of State, said

## Students

A group of ZINASU members organised an extraordinary meeting of the union, attempting to dismiss its president, Clever Bere. According to Blessing Vava, a ZINASU spokesperson, "the meeting was illegitimate."