

Police break up ZCTU gathering

14 September 2009

Zimbabwean police forces have disrupted a peaceful march organised by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to commemorate 13 September 2006 when ZCTU leadership and activists were brutally assaulted while in police custody. The police had initially written to the ZCTU banning the gathering and accused the ZCTU of trying to scuttle the National Healing Process by commemorating the event. Three activists were arrested but were later released without any charge.

The ZCTU made an urgent High Court application on Friday 11 September after police had indicated that the commemorations could not go ahead. An Order was granted allowing the ZCTU to go ahead with the commemorations but police still went ahead and disrupted proceedings. The ZCTU has deplored the behaviour of the armed police who disrupted the gathering.

A ZCTU spokesperson said "This neglects the spirit of the inclusive government as barely two months ago the co-Minister of Home Affairs, Giles Mutsekwa announced that there was no ban on peaceful gatherings, marches or protests. The ZCTU also finds it odd that the powers that be are talking of National Healing but they do not want people to talk about their painful past experiences."

The incident comes just two weeks after the ILO Commission of Inquiry finished its two-week mission to Zimbabwe to probe trade union rights violations, specifically the Right to Freedom of Association and Assembly and the Right to Collective Bargaining. The Government had given assurances to the ILO Commission that no further violations were taking place.

A ZCTU spokesperson said "Today the ZCTU has been vindicated as we have been pointing out that what is happening on the ground is contrary to what the politicians are saying. The ZCTU demands that government stop the harassment of trade unionists and ordinary citizens and also demand that decisions made by the Judiciary are honoured and not disregarded as was the case with High Court Order."