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Mister President,

I write on behalf of EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Workers, representing 8 million public service workers in all European countries and the European institutions.

The last few days, we have followed with great concern the alarming and dangerous situation faced by peacefully protesting workers including the leaders and members of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in retaliation for taking peaceful protest action against steep fuel prices that have worsened an already unbearable high cost of living in the country. The ZCTU called for a peaceful three-day 'Stay Away' from 14 to 16 January 2019 demanding an end to the economic crisis faced by the country and a reversal of the over 200% increase in fuel prices announced by your government.

Police and security forces violently attacked peaceful protesters by opening fire, injuring many, with reports of eight dead and over 200 arrested. The fierce crackdown further escalated with reports of heavy military and police presence on the streets and security forces arbitrarily assaulting citizens, including by entering homes to drag out and beat people in an effort to instil fear and to clampdown on dissent. Furthermore, cell and land-line communications, the internet and social media were repeatedly blocked days to prevent access to information and communication.

Today, we learned that the ZCTU General Secretary Japhet Moyo was arrested at the airport upon his return from abroad. He was processed at the Central Police station with a charge of subverting a constitutionally elected government. We were also informed that the police has indicated its intention to arrest the ZCTU President Peter Mutasa on charges of inciting violence and treason. Reportedly, his house was raided by police forces and his brother severely beaten.

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Workers have the right to express their views on the government's economic programs, including through peaceful demonstrations in an atmosphere free of fear, intimidation, coercion, repression and violence. We reiterate that the ZCTU had called for a peaceful stay away action for three days calling on people to stay away from work and to refrain from any violent conduct.

We, therefore, urge your government to restore a social climate that is free of violence and fear, to guarantee the safety of all protesters and to immediately and unconditionally release those arrested, including ZCTU General Secretary Japhet Moyo. Charges against those who have done nothing other than exercising their right to peaceful assembly and association should immediately be dropped.

In addition, an independent judicial inquiry into the excessive violence against protesters should be instituted without delay in order to punish guilty parties and prevent the repetition of such events. We call on your government to, as a matter of urgency, engage in good faith negotiations with the ZCTU leadership to agree on a peaceful and constructive way out of the current economic crisis with full respect for human and workers' rights.

We request to be kept informed of the action taken in response to our letter.

Sincerely yours,



Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary

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