

Geneva, 10 October 2012

His Excellency Mr. James Manzou
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Chemin William Barbey 27
1292 Chambésy

Ongoing worker and labour rights violations at ZESA

Dear Ambassador Manzou

I am writing as General Secretary of IndustriALL Global Union, representing 50 million industry workers in 140 countries. I have come to your office this morning to seek an urgent meeting regarding ongoing labour rights violations at the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) that suspended 135 workers on 17 July 2011 for allegedly threatening to strike. We do not have a scheduled meeting as you and your office have ignored our requests, written and otherwise to meet.

The affected ZESA employees are members of IndustriALL's affiliated Zimbabwe Electricity Workers Union (ZEWU). Whilst some workers have had hearings and been reinstated, more than half are still waiting for hearings to take place. Whilst these workers have returned to work after being suspended for more than two months, the outcome of their hearings will determine whether they will receive pay for their suspension period. Three workers, facing the same charges as the rest, have been dismissed.

Whilst one leader of the Zimbabwe Electricity Workers Union (ZEWU), Dennis Mukote remains suspended, we are outraged that IndustriALL Global Union executive committee member and the President of ZEWU, Angeline Chitambo has been dismissed without a fair hearing. ZEWU has served a notice of appeal to the company on the basis that the disciplinary hearing was improperly constituted as notice was issued 4 hours prior to the hearing and not 3 working days as required by law. Chitambo was dismissed after a hearing that took place in her absence and in the absence of her legal and union representatives from the national and global levels.

ZESA also continues to disregard an arbitration ruling, which entitles workers to a fair wage increase and is central to the current labour issues at ZESA. ZESA's further challenge in court of the impartiality of the arbitrator is a transparent attempt to undermine the arbitration process in an attempt to nullify the wage increase that has been awarded to workers.

ZESA is in violation of hard won worker and trade union rights that we find unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged. As a state owned enterprise, the actions of ZESA also reflect badly on the Government of Zimbabwe and contribute to growing concerns of state repression of the rights and freedoms in that country.

We expect you to convey our serious concerns to your government as a matter of urgency. We strongly urge the Zimbabwean government to exert influence over ZESA to engage the union to resolve these issues in a fair and just manner; reinstate all suspended and dismissed workers; respect the arbitration award and give workers the wage increase due to them; and discontinue anti-union activities, including the victimisation of union leadership, with immediate effect.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'JR' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Jyrki Raina
General Secretary