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Crisis Coalition statement on the arrests of ZCTU President, Mr. Lovemore Matombo and four other ZCTU activists

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition condemns the arrests of Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) President, Lovemore Matombo and four other workers' rights activists, Michael Kandukutu, Percy Mcijo, Dumisani Ncube and Nawu Ndlovu in Victoria Falls on Sunday 8 November 2009 under the infamous Public Order and Security Act (POSA). The five are still being held with no charges laid against them more than 48 hours after their arrests.

Sunday's incident comes barely two weeks after the same police arrested two civil society leaders, Dadirai Chikwengo and Cephas Zinhumwe under POSA for holding a civil society leaders' summer school in Victoria Falls without police clearance despite the fact that the summer school was not a political gathering. The incident also comes fresh off the heels of a depreciating political environment punctuated by the abduction and subsequent arrest of MDC Transport Manager, Pascal Gwezere under terrorism charges, the attempted kidnap of MDC Security Administrator, Edith Mashayire and the raid of General Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) Secretary General and Crisis Coalition Vice Chairperson, Getrude Hambira's home.

The continued arrests of civil society activists, abductions and raids, are a reflection of the heinous state of the political situation in the country. Despite assurances in the Global Political Agreement that measures would be taken to ensure that fundamental freedoms, particularly the freedom of association, are upheld, little has changed and events subsequent to the 15th of October 2009 disengagement by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) point to a nation which is regressing back to political disorder. The levels of political intolerance and state repression are a clear sign of the insincerity of the ZANU PF side of government and the failure by the co-Minister of Home Affairs, Giles Mutsekwa to

reign in errant and unruly elements within the police force who continue to deprive the people of Zimbabwe their fundamental freedoms.

The inclusive government itself has failed to reform critical state institutions including the police force to ensure that they operate in a non-partisan and transparent manner. In addition, government failed to repeal repressive legislation used to suppress operations of campaigners for democracy.

Crisis Coalition therefore demands the following;

- The immediate release of the five activists as their continued incarceration is unwarranted
- The inclusive government should take decisive action against the co-Ministers of Home Affairs, Kembo Mohadi and Giles Mutsekwa who have evidently failed to control the operations of the police services
- That the inclusive government takes immediate steps towards the reformation of critical state institutions including the police services so that they operate within the confines of the law
- Repeal of draconian laws including the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) which curtail fundamental freedoms

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