

Authorities in Zimbabwe on Sept. 12 arrested more than 250 trade unionists and other civilians, including approximately 100 women and several infants, following peaceful protests throughout the country. According to press reports, several of those arrested during the protest in the capital city of Harare are in need of medical attention. Please help us gain their immediate release by sending a letter to the Zimbabwe ambassador in Washington, D.C.

The Associated Press reports that Wellington Chibebe, secretary-general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and recipient of the AFL-CIO's 2003 George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award, is in "very serious" condition with a broken arm and hand and cuts on his head. Chibebe is quoted as saying the labor activists were "indiscriminately beaten all over their bodies" by police. Our most recent information is that Chibebe has been hospitalized but is still in police custody (see [news story](#)).

On Sept. 18, the AFT joined an [AFL-CIO-led rally](#) outside the Embassy of Zimbabwe in Washington, D.C., to demand the immediate release of Chibebe and all the imprisoned trade unionists and others who participated in the protest. "These unprovoked arrests and harassment are a continuation of your government's failure to abide by internationally recognized human rights and labor standards," said AFT president Edward J. McElroy in a letter to Zimbabwe Ambassador Machivenyika Mapuranga. "We strongly condemn the arrests and beatings of these labor leaders and demand that you take immediate action to secure the release of Mr. Chibebe and his colleagues."

AFT members can help in this effort by sending a letter to Ambassador Mapuranga demanding that the Zimbabwe government release Wellington Chibebe and his colleagues. Your letter could be as simple as this: "I am writing to urge your government to release all of the trade union leaders and civilians arrested during peaceful protests this week in Zimbabwe. Your government must respect the human rights of your country's people and abide by internationally recognized labor standards. Please take immediate action to release Wellington Chibebe and his colleagues who have been unjustly imprisoned by your government."

Letters should be addressed to:

Ambassador Machivenyika Mapuranga
Embassy of Zimbabwe
1608 New Hampshire Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20009

There is no e-mail address for the embassy, but letters can be faxed to the ambassador at 202/483-9326. Please send an e-mail to Gregory King at gking@aft.org to let us know that you have sent your letter.