Justice and Peace - You can make a difference!

When all the prisoners in a country are crushed underfoot,
When human rights are overridden in defiance of the Most High,
When someone is cheated of justice, does not the Lord see it?

(Lamentations 3, 34-36)

The "Justice and Peace" group from Our Lady of Peace and Blessed Dominic Barberi parish have chosen the following case from Amnesty International for our prayer and support this month. We hope you can join your prayers with ours and consider writing a letter or sending a fax to the appropriate authority which is listed below.

ZIMBABWE: On 13th March Gilbert Marembo and Michael Kandukuti, officers of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), were assaulted by members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police during a search of ZCTU offices. The police had a warrant to seize all "subversive materials" found on the premises. The assault was witnessed by lawyers from the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights who arrived to find the police officers searching the offices, having detained ZCTU staff and visitors.

Members of ZCTU have been systematically harassed by the authorities for several years. They have been arbitrarily arrested and detained and some have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated while in custody.

Lovemore Matombo, Wellington Chibebe and Lucia Matibenga, leaders of the ZCTU, were three of 15 members arrested in September 2006 while peacefully protesting against the deteriorating social and economic conditions in Zimbabwe. They were taken to Matapi Police Station where they were systematically tortured. The beatings were so severe that Lucia Matibenga suffered a perforated eardrum as a result. Medical care was only provided after pressure from their lawyers.

Doctors confirmed that the group’s injuries were consistent with beatings with blunt objects heavy enough to fracture hands and arms. Eight of the activists appeared to have been tortured by a method called “Falanga” (beating on the soles of the feet) which leaves a victim permanently unable to walk normally.

The ZCTU called on its members to stay away from work from 3rd to 4th April in protest at the government’s failure to take steps to address the economic meltdown and to provide basic services to the people of Zimbabwe. Although the actual protest was relatively peaceful, it is feared that in its aftermath, the authorities will target those who they believe organized and participated in it.

Please write, calling on the authorities to allow ZCTU members to exercise their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Call for an end to arbitrary detention and intimidation of trade unionists.

Send polite appeals to:

Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri (Salutation: Dear Police Commissioner)
Zimbabwe Republic Police
Police Headquarters
PO Box 8807
Causeway
Harare, Zimbabwe
Fax +263 4 253 212

Optional helpful tips on writing appeals are available at:
http://www.amnesty.org/campaign/letter-guide.html

You can check for updates on the status of previous appeals at:
http://web.amnesty.org/web/wwa.nsf/activebycountry

Thank you.

Your parish Justice and Peace group.