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The xenophobic attack in Zambia: a sad reminder that much more needs to be done to address accountability and human rights deficits

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) received with utter shock news about the recent xenophobic attack in poor settlements in Zambia's capital city of Lusaka.

Reports suggested that the attacks were sparked by the rumour that some foreigners were involved in the spate of ritual killings in the country. Thus, fellow Africans, notably Rwandans and later others from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other places were attacked, their shops and properties looted and destroyed. No doubt, these affected persons, most of who are refugees in Zambia, are further traumatized by this attack.

ITUC-Africa condemns these avoidable attacks even as we struggle to come to terms with them against the backdrop of the historical reputation of Zambia as being a safe haven for persecuted Africans. It is on record that more than 50,000 people who have fled wars and political persecutions in countries such as Angola, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo are seeking refuge in Zambia. Political exiles including those from the Apartheid South Africa era, notably African National Congress members, were sheltered in Zambia.

Commendably, reports show that the Zambian government moved swiftly to bring the situation under control and has not made any attempt to rationalize these attacks. Furthermore, the government has since offered apologies to the victims of these attacks and has solemnly pledged to bring the perpetrators to justice.

ITUC-Africa lauds government's efforts and urges the Zambian government to ensure that perpetrators of these actions are effectively brought to account and that victims are adequately compensated.

We salute also the responsiveness and empathy of the St. Ignatius Roman Catholic Church Parish which unreservedly offered shelter to those who fled to it for refuge. We call on the Zambian government and the international humanitarian management fraternity to come to the aid of these victims through the provisions of essential food, health and sanitation supplies, etc.

Furthermore, ITUC-Africa urges African governments to urgently and consciously scale up effort towards Africa's integration. Citizens' awareness and consciousness through public enlightenment and education campaigns on the essence of Pan-Africanism, *Ubuntu* and the values of the African people must be promoted and sustained.

Finally, ITUC-Africa calls on African governments to ensure that the culture of impunity is effectively reined in by promoting the Rule of Law in ways that make public justice administration to work for all. Importantly, the Police and the courts must be empowered to investigate, prosecute and sanction persons who undermine public laws.

We wish the victims well and reiterate our call for support to victims as they struggle to recover.

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