



Martha Tinny MOLEMA
President
Présidente

Akhator Joel ODIGIE
General Secretary
Secrétaire Général

Route Internationale d'Atakpamé
Centre FOPADESC Agoè – Nyivé
B.P. : 4401 – Tel.: 00228 22 25 03 90
LOME - TOGO

Email: info@ituc-africa.org
Web: www.ituc-africa.org

HE. William Ruto
President of the Republic of
Kenya
State House
Nairobi, Kenya

Lome, 26 June 2024

Dear President Ruto,

On behalf of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa: <https://www.ituc-africa.org/>), I am writing to express our deep concern regarding the recent protests against the Financial Bill 2024 and the manner in which they have been handled. The right to assemble and express opinions on government policies is fundamental and must be upheld, especially when these policies directly impact the lives of citizens and their communities.

Mr. President, we acknowledge your affirmation that Kenyans have the right to protest and express their views on various issues, including the contentious 2024 Tax Bill. However, it is crucial to emphasize that the voices of the protesters must be heard, and a responsive government must act accordingly.

The youth-led protests against the proposed tax measures have highlighted significant public dissent. Introducing new levies on essential commodities and the additional financial burdens proposed in the Bill have sparked widespread concern among Kenyans. While we understand the government's need to raise revenue, address the budget deficit, and repay debts, the proposed tax hikes are regressive and would hurt people experiencing poverty. They are exacerbating the already high cost of living situation, thus affecting the most vulnerable populations.

Mr. President, the tragic loss of lives and the numerous injuries sustained during these protests are deeply troubling. Reports of the use of live ammunition, violence, and abductions of peaceful protesters by the police are alarming and unacceptable. Such actions undermine the principles of democracy and the rule of law enshrined in Kenya's constitution, guaranteeing the right to peaceful protest.

President Ruto, we urge your government to take the following actions to address the situation:

- **Listen to the Protesters:** Engage in open and constructive dialogue with the protesters, especially the youth. Their concerns are valid and deserve to be addressed in a manner that respects their right to participate in the democratic process.
- **Proportionate Security Response and Investigation:** Ensure that the security forces respond proportionately and respect the rights of the protesters. The use of excessive force only escalates tensions and undermines public trust in the government. The violence meted out against peaceful protesters who instructed participants to shun stones but use their phones must be investigated and prosecuted, including alleged criminal elements that attempted to hijack the protests.
- **Seek Common Ground and Embrace Progressive Taxation:** Consider using the 2023 Finance Act as a temporary measure while a more acceptable solution is sought. This will allow for a more thorough and inclusive discussion on addressing the budget deficit without imposing hardship on the citizens. We encourage your government to consider cutting the cost of governance and focus on wealth and luxury taxes and progressive tax considerations.

- **Promote Civic Engagement:** Encourage civic engagement and respect the voices of all Kenyans, particularly the youth. Their active participation in public discourse is vital for the health of the democracy.
- **Reject the Bill in its Current Form:** Given the widespread opposition and the significant concerns raised, we strongly advise you to decline to assent to the Bill in its current form. This will demonstrate a commitment to listening to the people and acting in their best interest.

We welcome the statement by Chief Justice Martha Koome and are deeply concerned by the allegations of abductions and arbitrary detentions of protesters. All actors must respect, uphold, promote, and fulfil the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

In conclusion, we call upon you, Mr. President, to show leadership by addressing the citizens' concerns, ensuring their rights are protected, and finding a peaceful and constructive resolution. The future of Kenya depends on a government that listens to its people and acts in their best interest.

Yours sincerely,



Akhator Joel Afolabi Odigie
General Secretary
ITUC-Africa