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Mr. Kayode Egbetokun

Acting Inspector General of Police

Nigeria Police Force

Nigeria Police Headquarters

Shehu Shagari Way

Central Business District

Abuja, Nigeria

28th September 2023

Dear Mr. Inspector General,

Request to Cease Partisan Persecution of Trade Union Leaders

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) representing over 17 million workers in 51 African countries, including Nigeria, extends cordial greetings to you and brings to your attention a matter of great concern.

Our affiliates in Nigeria, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), have expressed grave concerns regarding the increasing abuse of workers' rights, particularly through actions taken by the Nigeria Police Force under your watch. The nature, frequency and intensity of these abuses present a troubling pattern and point to actions taken to appease vested interests.

ITUC-Africa is deeply troubled by the systematic assaults carried out by the police against workers and their legitimate organisations and leaders. These actions are a disturbing intrusion of the police into the realm of industrial relations and amount to a blatant disregard for internationally recognized labour standards.

Under the pretext of maintaining law and order, the Nigeria Police Force is orchestrating the unwarranted persecution of workers' leaders and their trade union organization. On August 28, 2023, the Nigeria Police Force forcefully occupied the offices of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), an affiliate of the Nigeria Labour Congress operating in the road transport sector. Reports indicate that the police unlawfully expelled duly elected leaders of NURTW and imposed their proxies to oversee the union's affairs. This forceful invasion disregards industrial relations norms, civil conventions and democratic processes, and deserves unequivocal condemnation.

It is regrettable that when the democratically elected leaders sought to reclaim their rightful offices, they were met with excessive and deadly force from the police, resulting in the tragic loss of a worker's life. This police action constitutes a blatant violation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to which Nigeria is a signatory. Specifically, Articles 10 (freedom of association) and 11 (right to free assembly) of the Charter were egregiously violated.

Additionally, the police-led takeover of NURTW by a government-favored faction constitutes a violation of the fundamental right to peaceful assembly and association as enshrined in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 87, to which Nigeria is again signatory. ILO Convention No. 87 protects the freedom of association and the right to organize, including

the right of workers to form and join trade unions and choose their own leaders. Similarly, ILO Convention No. 98 safeguards the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining.

Mr. Inspector General of Police, African workers are deeply concerned about the excessive use of force by a publicly funded institution, which is meant to serve the interests of all Nigerian taxpayers, including workers who are in the majority. The misuse of the police force to undermine civil liberties, the rule of law, and the sanctity of democracy is unfortunate and regrettable.

ITUC-Africa calls upon you to release the legitimate leaders of the NURTW unconditionally. We also demand that the police cease aggravating what should be a straightforward industrial relations matter and allow the relevant agencies, mandated to handle such issues, to facilitate resolution. The Nigeria Labour Congress, as the parent body of the NURTW, is actively involved in resolving the internal impasse, and the police's interference only serves to complicate the conciliation process.

We anticipate a positive change of approach by the police in this matter, leading to the unconditional release of the detained legitimate leaders of the NURTW.

Please accept our assurances of the highest regard.

Yours sincerely,



Kwasi Adu-Amankwah
General Secretary

Cc:

- i. Director General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- ii. General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
- iii. National Employers' Consultative Association (NECA)
- iv. Senate President, Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- v. Speaker, Federal House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- vi. The Nigerian media community