Mr President,

I write to you on behalf of Education International (EI), the Global Union Federation of education unions, to express EI's condemnation of the beating and arrest of dozens of teachers in the aftermath of the 29 March presidential election.

EI is concerned by the political violence targeting teachers, students and education communities allegedly perpetrated by security forces, youth militias, war veterans and gangs of supporters of both the ruling ZANU-PF party and the MDC.

EI has been informed that so far at least 250 schools in 23 districts throughout the country have been affected by some forms of violence in the period between 3 and 9 May. Hate against teachers is being propagated and according to our sources, in some instances teachers have been beaten in front of pupils and community members. Sixty seven teachers have been hospitalised in Harare, Kotwa, Karoi, Rusape, Bonda, Howard, Guruve, Marondera and other clinics; 139 teachers had to flee their schools; 213 teachers' houses have been looted. An undisclosed number of teachers have fled into neighbouring countries and are likely not to return. EI continues to collect facts.

EI strongly condemns these attacks and supports the resolution adopted by its affiliate, ZIMTA condemning the violence affecting teachers and asking protection for affected teachers to make sure there is no disruption of teaching and learning programmes.

In addition, EI has been informed by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) of the detention of the President and General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions in connection with speeches made on May Day.

EI condemns such blatant violation of basic human and trade union rights and urges the authorities of Zimbabwe to ensure, in all circumstances, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. EI also urges respect for the physical integrity of all citizens, in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Zimbabwe.

Sincerely yours,

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary

cc: Minister of Home Affairs, Fax: +263 4 726 716
Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe to the United Nations in Geneva, fax: + 41 22 758 30 44
Embassy of Zimbabwe in Brussels, Fax: + 32 2 762 96 05
ITUC - EI Regional Office Lomé
FIDH : + 33 1 43 55 18 80
ILO