



Int Dept/KT/gp

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Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Prime  
Minister of the Togolose Republic  
Prime Minister's Office  
Lomé  
Togo

### **Workers' rights violations in the export processing zone of Togo**

Mr. Prime Minister,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), representing 1.6 million members, to protest against the anti-union practices committed by the UK pharmaceutical company Sprukfield, which is unscrupulously exploiting the special legislation in force in the export processing zone located in Lomé.

To date, the working conditions at Sprukfield have been characterised by excessively long working hours, unpaid night work, no paid leave and no social security. Its employees are working on machines for over nine hours a day, six days a week, without being paid the corresponding overtime at the legally established rate; none of them have ever benefited from paid leave or maternity leave. They do not even have employment contracts and the employer refuses to recognise their trade union representatives. The company does not issue wage slips, does not take the appropriate safety measures and only makes contributions to the Social Security Fund for two percent of its employees.

In spite of all this, Sprukfield has always refused to respond to its workers' demands. On 2 November 2010, when the workers presented a strike notice for this same reason, the management refused to recognise the validity of the notice and decided, on the contrary, to dismiss the shop floor trade union representatives and to refuse the strikers access to the factory. The workers downed tools on 9 November, at the end of the strike notice period. The management then proceeded to ignore the strike and to hire new workers to fill the posts left vacant by the strikers.

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**The Swedish Trade Union Confederation**

The latter nonetheless remained on strike until 15 November, when SAZOF, the agency which manages the export processing zone, organised a meeting for negotiations between the two parties. Although the negotiations failed, the strikers decided to go back to work, but rather than welcoming this gesture of good faith from the workers, the management rejected it and called in the police to stop them from entering the establishment.

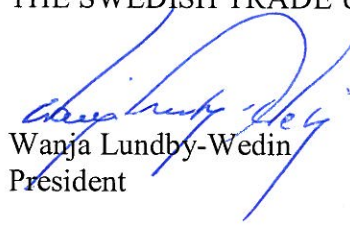
At the same time, Sprukfield requested SAZOF's authorisation to dismiss the three trade union representatives that the management was accusing of having initiated the strike and of having pushed the strikers to damage and sabotage machines at the factory, despite this being clearly impossible given that the workers had not been able to access the factory since the start of the strike.

SAZOF, in spite of everything, authorised the dismissal of the three trade union representatives and tolerated the suspension of the 117 other strikers who found themselves deprived of their pay, without even having been notified of their dismissal.

Mr. Prime Minister, the situation described above is a blatant and serious violation of several elements of Conventions 87 (on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise) and 98 (on Collective Bargaining) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which have both been ratified by Togo. The LO notes with consternation that Togolese workers are exposed to unacceptable working conditions and can only conclude that Sprukfield is exploiting, with no concern for its workers' plight, the conditions offered to it by the relevant legislation.

We would therefore urge you to intervene to ensure the reinstatement of the 120 Sprukfield employees, the payment of the wages for the months during which they were prevented from working, as well as consideration of their demands, thus guaranteeing respect, in Togo, for fundamental rights at work, including trade union rights.

Yours sincerely,  
THE SWEDISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION



Wanja Lundby-Wedin  
President