THE REASONS BEHIND MISHANDLING OF THE STRIKING STAFF AND THEIR UNION LEADERSHIP BY THE KENYA PORTS AUTHORITY

Members of the press, fellow Kenyans, ladies and gentlemen, the Trade Unions Congress of Kenya (TUC-Ke) has been closely following and critically analyzing unfolding events at the Port of Mombasa following the recent general strike called by the Labour Centre against irregular NHIF deductions.

Our extensive and thorough investigations have revealed that the decision to summarily dismiss the Dock Workers Union leaders and brutally evict them from their residential houses with a view of weakening the Union had been made long before the strike was called.

The Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) Management envisaged that the Port of Mombasa which makes an annual gross profit of more than Kshs. 8 Billion will only be privatized and reduce its workforce from 7,138 to only 2,000 with a weakened Union (KPA Strategic Plan of 2009, pages 9 & 10).

The private operator targets to earn a colossal sum of more than Kshs. 15 Billion once this is achieved. However, the Union fully aware of this, has been and is strongly opposed to Port privatization since the exercise will lead to massive job losses.
It is therefore crystal clear that KPA management together with unscrupulous private operators hell bent on privatizing and selling Kenya’s God-given and natural heritage wakenya wapende wasipende hatched the plot to intimidate and unprocedurally dismiss workers representatives. Kenyans led by TUC-Ke will not pander to such corrupt and selfish whims.

Similarly, having studied in depth the events at the Port, TUC-Ke supports the well informed decision taken by the Ag. Cabinet Secretary of Transport to reverse the dismissals. Regrettably however, KPA Management overruled the ministerial order and upheld the dismissals. This has left workers and the Kenyan public to wonder whether it is in order for executive appointees to disobey and overrule their appointing authority. What example does this provide to the youth of our country?

TUC-Ke, implores the government to immediately step forward to address these excesses that are otherwise putting a doubt on the executive’s ability to manage our natural resources and heritage.

Signed:

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Dr. Charles G. Mukhwaya
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