Who Protects the Guards?
The Facts Behind G4S in Southern Africa

Findings of a Global Fact-Finding Team
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“We visited the homes of workers who can’t afford electricity, running water or proper furniture, who can’t pay for their children’s medical or school bills and whose daily meals, if they are lucky, consist of tea and bread.”

—John Logan, International Centre for Trade Union Rights, United Kingdom
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Executive Summary

A fact-finding team provided with evidence that Group 4 Securicor (G4S) frequently violates the national labour laws of the countries in which it operates and refuses to respect the ILO’s core labour standards travelled to Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa April 16-20, 2007. The fact-finding team interviewed G4S guards, their family members, union leaders and government officials about the security company’s practices.

Major Findings

The fact-finding team found serious and ongoing violations of labour laws concerning overtime and time off as well as behaviour that have consigned workers to a hand-to-mouth existence.

Allowing racist behaviour to go unchecked

• “Kaffirs” and “Monkeys” Workers allege that G4S supervisors refer to guards at the Johannesburg airport as “kaffirs” and “monkeys.” SATAWU, the union representing guards at the airport, had to petition for their removal. The company took no corrective action of its own.

• “Whites Only” Toilets According to SATAWU, a G4S manager in Pretoria provides white guards with keys to the company toilet. Black guards are forced to use the toilet in a nearby mall.

Maintaining policies that keep guards in poverty

• In Blantyre, Malawi, guards’ salaries are so low they are forced to live in some of the area’s poorest housing—homes with no running water and no electricity. Guards said their families frequently don’t have enough to eat and their children’s school fees go unpaid. Tea, in a country where tea plantations dot the land, was considered by the wife of one G4S guard to be an unobtainable luxury item. Guards in Malawi could earn more because they work enormous amounts of overtime. Instead of increasing their hourly pay for the four hours of overtime they typically work each day, Group 4 Securicor reduces their wages by half.

• In both Malawi and Mozambique, guards report they are not allowed to take paid leave. One guard from Blantyre, Malawi, reported that he had worked an entire year with only a single paid day off. He was allowed the day off to attend a funeral.
• In Mozambique, the company has refused to fully pay back pay owed to guards who were never compensated for their overtime hours.

• In Mozambique, guards owed redundancy payments when the company’s contract with the United States Embassy in July 2006 wasn’t renewed are still waiting for the company to act. Meanwhile, in a country with no public safety net, these guards struggle to survive.

Conclusions
• Group 4 Securicor should take immediate steps to remedy the problems investigators found in Southern Africa.

• Group 4 Securicor should ensure its operations across the globe abide by local laws, provide workers with living wages and family sustaining benefits, and allow workers who want to organise unions to do so.

• The best way for Group 4 Securicor to demonstrate it is worthy of trust is to sign a global agreement with UNI Global Union in which it commits to pay a living wage, provide social protections, and recognise workers’ freedom to form unions.

Take Action
Urge organisers of the London Olympics and the South Africa World Cup to withhold any favourable consideration of the company as a contractor until it commits to change its practices and improve its global track record.
Racing To The Bottom

Security workers are so ubiquitous in Africa that one can conclude Africans have turned to private solutions to meet their security needs. The private security industry has grown tremendously in recent years. Its growth is both a product of privatization and a response to its consequences. Public budgets in some African nations were slashed as a requirement for loans from international donors. All sorts of public services—including police—declined. The resulting unemployment and increased economic insecurity fueled an increase in crime. Private companies stepped into the void and created thousands of security jobs. Unfortunately, these jobs are characterized by poor working conditions, low wages, and rampant casualization. These jobs are important to workers and valued by them as a crucial source of income. However, with a ready pool of unemployed labour, and industry competition for contracts based largely on cost, some companies take the view that their workers are dispensable.

At the centre of the action is the British multinational Group 4 Securicor (G4S) — the world’s largest security provider. It operates in more than 100 countries with approximately 470,000 employees.

G4S has a huge footprint in Africa. It is the single largest multinational corporation operating on the continent, with more than 82,000 employees. It has operations in 18 African nations. It is hard not to overstate its importance in

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We all want to see greater investment in Africa but not at any cost. It’s not too much to ask that multinational firms like Group 4 Securicor follow the law.

—Fackson Shemanda, UNI Africa
the security industry which, according to ILO analysts, is the largest sector of employment in the formal, non-agricultural economy of Africa.

Group 4 Securicor is not only large, it is growing. It has amassed its strength and market dominance by purchasing other security firms in Africa. In 2006, it purchased a security firm in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Defense Systems Africa S.P.R.L. In February 2007, it announced it was purchasing a stake in a South African firm, Fidelity Cash Management Services, with operations in Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa. In March 2007, G4S acquired Alfa Security Services, a Mozambique security firm. The company’s closest multinational rival, the Swedish security provider Securitas, has no presence anywhere on the continent.

Given its dominance, G4S’ employment practices are of great concern not only to workers and their advocates, but to all of us interested in seeing greater prosperity for Africans. As some have described Africa as the “last frontier” in terms of corporations who want to cash in on developing markets, we are deeply concerned about the prospects for workers as African nations increasingly court multinational corporations to spur development and create jobs. Ensuring that G4S is an example for other corporations to follow on the continent was a chief and driving motivation for the fact-finding team.

This focus on the company’s operations in Southern Africa was spurred by several events:

- A case referred to the South Africa Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration in which workers allege that Group 4 Securicor managers at the airport in Johannesburg refer to guards as “kaffirs” and “monkeys.”

- A study by a Malawian academic revealed that G4S’ guards are not properly compensated for their overtime hours.

- Police broke up a rally in Maputo where guards had gathered to protest the company’s failure to pay back-wages owed to guards.

In order to gain a greater understanding of how G4S guards in Southern Africa are treated, a fact-finding team was assembled by UNI Property Services Global Union. The delegation spent one week in Southern Africa—in Johannesburg, South Africa; Maputo, Mozambique; and Blantyre, Malawi—interviewing guards and their family members, as well as union leaders and government officials. The picture that emerged was deeply troubling: a wealthy multinational corporation with wealthy and influential clients—banks, embassies and factory owners—and guards who work 12 hours, seven days a week and who walk an hour or more to their posts from homes with no running water or electricity. We discovered a company that picks and chooses which laws are convenient for it to follow and which ones it will ignore. We met workers who have to make some calculations of
their own when they are hungry or have to use the toilet. Do they risk abandoning their post—a punishable offence—or wait it out, hoping the hunger will pass. Remarkably, the guards we met were resilient and upbeat and believed in the possibility of change. In the following pages, we summarize our findings and present recommendations for changing the company’s behaviour.

**Major Findings**

**Low Pay Takes It Toll On Families**

G4S is a profitable enterprise. Last year its profits worldwide were £277 million. Its African operations contribute significantly to the company’s bottom line. In 2006, G4S’ security services revenues from new markets, which includes Africa, amounted to £152.6 million (US $301.3 million). Group 4 Securicor’s security services profit margins from new markets are almost 40 percent larger than profit margins in Europe and North America. With its resources and power, we would expect that G4S guards would be able to provide for their families, live in decent housing, and pay their children’s school fees. What we found, however, was just the opposite.

**Typical Monthly G4S Salaries**

Malawi 3,850 kwacha (£13, US $27)
Mozambique 1,620 meticais (£31, US $63)

**Key findings from University of Malawi Professor Thokozani James Ngwira**

In February 2007, University of Malawi Professor Thokozani James Ngwira interviewed guards employed by Group 4 Securicor in three cities in Malawi—Blantyre, Lilongwe, and Mzuzu.

- 95 percent of the guards surveyed said their pay barely covers rent and food.
- Group 4 Securicor only pays guards an overtime rate of 50 percent of their base pay rate instead of the required rate of one and one-half times their base pay.
- Beginning December 2006, G4S required guards on the night shift to work 84 hours per week. Not only does this arrangement violate Malawi law concerning time off, guards should have been, but were not, compensated for overtime on days off at a rate of twice their base rate of pay.
- Guards are prevented from taking annual leave. Nor does the company allow them to be paid for any unused leave. Group 4’s terms and conditions say, guards are entitled to 15 days of annual leave.
  - 87 percent of the guards surveyed did not take annual leave in 2006;
  - 80 percent of guards did not take annual leave in 2005;
  - 78 percent of guards did not take annual leave in 2004; and
  - 70 percent of guards did not take annual leave in 2003.

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“A Mozambique worker with a family needs 2,886 meticais monthly to meet the family’s basic needs.”

—Francisco Mazoio, Mozambique Trade Unions
• **G4S guards live in homes without electricity and running water.** One former guard from Maputo, Manuel, lived with his wife and five children in a home he built himself. He had dug a pit latrine for his family to use the toilet. Another former guard from Maputo, Arocelio, showed us the home where he, his wife, and two children sought shelter. Their home was a house that Arocelio had built himself. However, it was only half-finished. He began constructing the house in 2002 but ran out of money to complete it.

• **Guards struggle to feed their families.** One former guard, Joao, whose home the fact-finding team visited in Maputo, described how he, his wife, and five children survive on the family’s meagre earnings. “We have tea and bread in the morning. In the evenings we have rice and dried fish.”

• A number of guards reported that the only reason they had enough to eat is because they worked for generous clients who often give them food. Not every guard is this lucky. The wife of one G4S guard who had moved to Blantyre from the countryside said, “My husband is a good man who works hard, but really we might as well go back home. Here, we barely have enough to live on.”

• **Paying for their children’s school uniforms and textbooks is often impossible on guards’ meagre salaries.** While primary education is free in Malawi and Mozambique, parents are required to pay for students’ uniforms and books. Guards in Maputo said a typical uniform costs 500 meticais (£9, US $19). Buying uniforms for five children would equal more than a typical guard’s monthly salary. The cost of secondary school in Malawi is 15,000 kwacha (£55, US $110) per child. Parents were keen to send all their children to school but the fees are a real and present constraint on their salaries from G4S.

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**Shadreck Makwinja**

Shadreck has worked for G4S Malawi for 12 years. He lives with his wife and five children on the outskirts of Blantyre. He walks one and a half hours to reach his post in Blantyre and another one and a half hours to return home each day. He leaves for work in the dark around 4 a.m. each morning to reach his post before his shift starts at 6 a.m. Shadreck’s shift lasts 12 hours. Until last year, he had worked a total of an entire twelve months without a day off. His day off was to attend a funeral.

Shadreck’s salary goes to support his wife and five children. He rents his mud home for 850 kwacha (£3.13, US $6.23) a month. G4S provides guards with a housing allowance—480 kwacha a month (£1.76, US $3.52)—as every employer is required to do. However, it is not enough to cover the rent payment. Shadreck’s wife, Magret, was there when the delegation made its visit: Magret said, “The life that we undergo is very pathetic, and what normally happens is that when my husband goes to work, I have to make sure that I find a piecemeal...”

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“What you should know is that I would like to bring a chair for you to sit down, but as you see for yourself—I don’t have a chair or anything for you to sit on.”

—Shadreck Makwinja
job from those people who are well to do … just to help my husband to find some maize and some flour we can use to cook with. And talk about tea? To drink tea out of this house—that is unheard of.”

Across Malawi, there are tea plantations where tea is grown and factories where it is processed.

**Compulsory Overtime And Little To Show For It**

 Guards in Malawi could provide more for families if it were not for a particular company practice related to overtime. G4S requires guards to work 12 hours a day at least six days a week. Instead of increasing the hourly pay for the four hours of overtime each day, G4S reduces their wages by half for every hour after eight. Group 4 claims this is allowed under Malawi law— but nevertheless it violates the company’s own agreed-to terms and conditions of employment. When we met with workers in Blantyre, this issue was first and foremost on their minds. Workers said if they received the overtime payments they were due they would use the money not for anything extravagant, but to meet their basic needs to make their rent payments, buy more food, or pay for their children’s school fees.

**Never-Ending Work**

 Guards are impoverished in another way. They never get to take time off. So as one guard put it, their lives seem to them a “never-ending stretch of work.” In its terms and conditions, G4S says guards are entitled to 15 days of annual leave. Malawi law requires companies to allow workers to take leave within six months of the entitlement becoming due. But guards reported they are not allowed to take annual leave because of alleged short-staffing, nor are they allowed to receive cash instead of the leave or carry over leave from one year to the next. As a result many guards receive no leave or payment for leave whatsoever.
John’s story (This guard asked that his name not be revealed)
John has worked for G4S since 1999. His post is at a cash machine at one of the country’s leading banks. He works the night shift. At the end of each week, he logs a total of 84 hours on the job. G4S pays him K 3,800 a month (US $27.50, £14). His monthly housing allowance is K 400 (US $2.93, £1.47) but his rent costs K 2,100 (US $15.41, £7.73). When one of his sons was selected to go to a secondary school, John was unsure how he would afford the fees and the uniform. However, since he had accumulated leave for four years, he decided to ask to be paid for the leave he was due but had not taken. If he could be paid for his unused leave, he could afford the K5000 (£18.41, US $35.71) fees. He enlisted the school’s headmaster to help. The headmaster wrote to G4S to document the money John needed, but G4S rejected his request.

Key findings of Professor Beata Mtyingizana
In April 2007, Beata Mtyingizana, a lecturer at the University of the Witswatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, surveyed guards in Maputo employed by Group 4 Securicor.

- 25 percent of guards earned Mozambique’s minimum wage 1,443 meticais (US $56, £30) per month.
- 35 percent of guards reported that they have been working for the company for more than five years and had never taken paid leave.

Harsh Treatment
While guards suffer from all the indignities that come from not being paid enough to provide for their families, they also told investigators how they’re often disciplined for the smallest infractions such as going to buy food (guards are not allowed breaks). Guards in Blantyre gave several examples of the company forcing guards to pay for items stolen while they were at their post. G4S guards who handle dogs are often forced to work 18- to 24-hour shifts. Guards in Blantyre described how supervisors will often travel to a guard’s site to provide food for the dog but nothing for the guard.

Elliot’s story (This guard asked not to be identified by his real name)
Elliot was guarding a client’s home in Blantyre when intruders broke in. They roughed him up and stole the battery from the client’s car. (Car batteries are quite valuable, as people use them to power their homes.) When the police arrived,
they accused Elliot of having been involved in the robbery. He was arrested and jailed despite his protest. He was eventually cleared and released. However, the company required him to reimburse the client for the cost of the battery. Elliot protested that he was being unfairly punished. G4S “loaned” him the cost of the battery and monthly deductions were made from his paycheck until the loan was paid off (until the car battery was paid for). On his meagre salary, it took two years to pay for the battery.

David’s story (This guard asked that his real name not be revealed)
David was assaulted by a client for allegedly delaying locking a gate. He sustained a deep cut to his leg, a swollen right arm, and a red eye. He radioed his supervisor at G4S about the beating he had received. He asked the supervisor to send a replacement to his post and for transportation to the hospital. Instead of helping the guard, the supervisor instructed another guard that was working close by to exchange duty stations with him. David was not taken to the hospital for treatment but was instead made to work at a different location. He went for treatment the next morning having struggled with pain throughout the night shift. When David confronted the night supervisor for failing to provide him with transportation to get medical care, he was charged with insubordination and brought before the company for a disciplinary hearing.
Racism: Alive And Well
Few events in Africa or in the world have been as dramatic as South Africa’s transformation to a multiracial democracy. Other structures and relationships are changing as well. South Africa’s corporations are under pressure to conform to the new era. Under the apartheid regime, corporations were allowed to maintain different pay rates for black workers and white workers; consign black workers to the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs; and could basically act with impunity toward blacks. Randall Howard, general secretary of SATAWU, one of South Africa’s largest unions representing security workers at a variety of companies, describes Group 4 Securicor as a company that has “not transformed.”

A number of incidents helped Howard arrive at this conclusion. SATAWU was forced to refer a case to the South Africa Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration in which workers allege that white company managers at the airport in Johannesburg refer to guards as “kaffirs” and “monkeys.”

A second case related to investigators involved “Whites Only” toilets at the company’s Pretoria Branch. Guards allege that G4S managers give white guards keys to the company toilet. Meanwhile, black guards are forced to use the toilet in a nearby mall.

According to Howard, G4S will not deal with incidents such as these in a forthright manner, preferring instead to sweep things under the carpet. When challenged about whether managers are allowed to engage in racist behaviour, it prefers to point to its Black Empowerment Partnerships as proof that it is racially tolerant. The Black Empowerment Partnerships are now a prerequisite for any firm that wants work with the South African government.

“Whites Only” Toilets Spark Protest at Embassy
In 2005, black G4S guards frustrated with the company’s response to managers preventing them from using the same toilets as whites took their concerns to one of the company’s top clients—the United States Embassy—believing they would finally listen to their concerns. Sixty-one guards marched to the embassy in Pretoria and presented officials with a petition. The company’s response was to criticize guards for taking their concerns to the embassy. To date, the issue remains unresolved.

Bullying Government Officials
It’s a given that the resources and powers at the disposal of multinationals such as G4S can outweigh those of poor African states. This imbalance encourages companies such as Group 4 Securicor to follow some laws and ignore others. In Mozambique, G4S has been involved in a very public battle with the country’s
G4S in Southern Africa Fact-Finding Mission

labour minister over her attempts to hold the company accountable. The company failed to pay overtime for more than a decade—from 1994 to 2005—and has spent the last two years coming up with ways to avoid paying what it owes.

According to Mozambique journalist Paul Fauvet, who has reported on the case extensively, G4S guards who alleged the company had not properly compensated them for their overtime took their claims to a Mozambique arbitration panel. In the course of the panel’s investigation, G4S admitted it had routinely required workers to work unpaid overtime since 1994. The arbitration panel found in favour of the workers. A commission was set up to determine the amount of money the workers should be awarded. The company disputed the amount the commission concluded it owed. It also claimed that workers, whose rights it had violated but who had since left the company, were not owed a settlement. Mozambique’s Labour Minister, Helena Taipo, ordered the company to pay all the workers and yet it has refused to do so.

Yet another case from Mozambique provides evidence of the company’s arrogance and how it thumbs its nose at laws designed to protect workers’ living standards. G4S lost a contract to provide security at the United States Embassy compound in Maputo, where more than 300 guards were employed. Under
Mozambique law, the guards are entitled to severance pay. The company called a news conference where it told reporters that “it was under no obligation to pay anything, and any worker who did not like the company’s behaviour should take it to court.” Taipo, who recognised the Labour Ministry’s authority was being undermined, told Group 4 Securicor’s top manager Jon Mortimer he was no longer authorized to work in Mozambique. Mortimer was forced to return to his home country, South Africa. Later, an administrative panel overturned the Labour Minister’s order, although she is appealing that ruling. None of the workers laid off have received severance payments.

**Struggling For A Voice**

Poor workers employed by security companies around the world have managed to improve their conditions by uniting with their co-workers to form strong unions. Security workers are creating unions or joining existing ones all over Africa largely in response to the industry’s poor working conditions and their desire for self-determination.

Guards we interviewed in Malawi and Mozambique voiced a strong desire and belief in the power of collective action. As a testament to their desire for union representation, thousands of Malawi workers pay dues to the union even though G4S has not officially recognised the Textile, Garment, Leather and Security Services Workers Union as the legitimate voice for guards.

Investigators met with eight African unions that represent security workers in countries where Group 4 Securicor has operations. Only three of the unions have collective bargaining agreements to which G4S is a signatory—Zambia, South Africa, and Uganda. The unions told us G4S prefers to deal with “worker committees” with no legal standing or yellow unions—unions that don’t have the interests of workers at heart. It can then avoid negotiating with or acknowledging the existence of independent unions. Although SATAWU in South Africa has been recognized by G4S, the company constantly threatens to withdraw recognition.

**Squashing collective action**

G4S guards from Maputo reported that in February they decided to launch a strike to persuade G4S to comply with Mozambique’s redundancy laws. The strikers picketed the company offices and successfully shut down the offices’ operations. However, the company struck back with a vengeance. Police officers told the striking guards the company had agreed to negotiate and that they should accompany the police to the place where the talks were to be held. Guards believed the overtures were real, went with the police, and were promptly thrown in jail. There were no negotiations, of course. And with the arrests, 15 of the most influential strikers were behind bars.
In Malawi, G4S fired 30 strikers who walked off the job to protest the company’s refusal to pay workers for unused leave. The workers are contesting the firing since the Malawi Constitution protects workers’ right to strike.

**Next Steps**

As Africa’s largest employer, Group 4 Securicor is in a position of great responsibility and trust. Multinational corporations such as G4S have an important role to play in Africa’s development by creating good jobs that can help lift people out of poverty.

Group 4 Securicor can improve the situation of guards in Southern Africa and around the globe by focusing on a few key areas.

**Protect Human Dignity**

Group 4 Securicor should ensure its managers adhere to its own Business Ethics Policy as well as all laws designed to ensure workers’ living standards are decent. G4S must justly compensate guards with a living wage that allows them to secure decent shelter and food, and pay for their children’s school fees.

**Enable and Embrace Workers and Their Organisations**

Group 4 Securicor should recognise the right of workers to join a union of their own choosing. If it did so, G4S would have willing partners to address a range of problems—some it has created, and some plaguing the entire security industry.

**Prove It Is Worthy of Trust**

The best way for G4S to demonstrate it is worthy of trust is to sign a global agreement with UNI Global Union. The agreement with UNI would commit G4S to paying a living wage, providing social protections, and recognizing workers’ freedom to form unions.

**Take Action**

**Persuading G4S to Change**

G4S considers itself a brand leader in the security industry and seeks high-profile contracts to enhance its reputation. It has set its sights on two events that could bring it worldwide attention, the South Africa World Cup 2010 and the London Olympics 2012. Until it demonstrates it is committed to human rights, it ought to be left on the sidelines of global sporting events.
World Cup 2010
The next FIFA World Cup games are due to be held in June and July of 2010 in South Africa. This will constitute the first time one of the world’s premier sporting events will be held on African soil. The games have generated a lot of excitement in South Africa and throughout Africa. South Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki has said, “The World Cup should be for the entire continent, not only for South Africa.” Carrying out a World Cup contract is a privilege and will be quite lucrative. **Take Action:** Urge FIFA officials to withhold any consideration of G4S as a contractor until it respects its workers in Southern Africa and around the world.

London Olympics 2012
Security contracts will be among the most valuable contracts awarded by Olympic officials. Clearly, and especially since the terrible atrocities London suffered in July 2005, ensuring security arrangements meet the highest standard will be a key priority. The Olympic Development Authority has adopted guidelines to favour contractors which honour human rights. **Take Action:** The Olympic movement represents international co-operation and a commitment to fair play. Urge London Olympic organisers to withhold favourable consideration of the company as a contractor until it commits to change its practices and improve its global track record.

There are undoubtedly other high profile contracts that G4S seeks. Their treatment of workers in Africa and around the globe ought to figure into the evaluation of the company’s fitness to carry out this work.

African Workers’ Rights Now
Recently, UNI and the International Centre for Trade Union Rights established a legal aid fund, the first of its kind, for workers employed by cleaning and security firms in Africa. Seed money for the fund, African Workers’ Rights Now, came from cleaning and security workers around the globe. The aim of the fund is to ensure workers have the tools to bring multinational corporations into compliance with national laws regarding wages and workers’ rights. G4S guards and others like them who want to seek justice in the courts but lack the financial resources necessary to bring a lawsuit are just the kind of workers the fund was designed to help. **Take Action:** Support African Workers’ Rights Now with a donation.
Sources of Evidence

In the course of this investigation, the fact-finding team gathered evidence from the sources listed below. G4S management in Malawi and Mozambique refused to meet with investigators.

- Interviews with G4S guards in Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa
- Interviews with family members of guards in Malawi and Mozambique
- Interviews with union leaders and staff from SATAWU (South Africa); the Malawi Textile, Garment, Leather and Security Services Workers Union; the SINTRAVESP in Mozambique; Kenya Union of Commercial Food and Allied Workers; Hotel, Food, Service and Commercial Workers of the Democratic Republic of Congo; Commercial and Service Sector Workers of Cameroon; Zambia Union of Security Officers and Allied Workers; Uganda Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union
- Interview with Linda Mti, chief security official for South Africa World Cup 2010
- Interviews with Professor Thokozani James Ngwira, University of Malawi
- Interviews with Beata Mtyingizana, University of the Witswatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- Interview with Mozambique Labour Minister Helena Taipo
- Interview with Mozambique’s Interior Minister Jose Mandra
- Interviews with staff of Malawi’s Ministry of Labour
- A review of dozens of documents including worker pay stubs, court documents, newspaper articles, photographic evidence, and other materials