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Outcome UA: 66/23 Index: AFR 46/7947/2024 Zimbabwe of May 8, 2024

ZIMBABWE CHARGES AGAINST STUDENT PROTESTORS DROPPED

On April 5, Zimbabwean authorities dismissed the "malicious damage to property" charges against six University of Zimbabwe students: Benjamin Watadza, Emmanuel Sitima, Comfort Mpofu, Lionel Madamombe, Darlington Chigwena, and Gamuchirai Chaburumunda. They were previously detained and charged after participating in a peaceful protest in Harare on May 15, 2023.

The six students were arrested in May and June 2023 after their peaceful protest at the University of Zimbabwe on May 15 in Harare. They were calling for an end to the persecution of opposition leaders and the release of Citizens' Coalition for Change parliament member, Job Sikhala. They were charged with "malicious damage to property" because similar calls were spray-painted on government buildings the next day. However, no evidence connected them to the graffiti.

After their arrest, the students were held at Harare Central Prison. Gamuchirai Chaburumunda received bail on July 4, 2023. Emmanuel Sitima, Comfort Mpofu, Benjamin Watadza, and Lionel Madamombe were granted bail on July 17, 2023, while Darlington Chigwena was released on July 24, 2023, after 62 days in detention. Authorities claimed they were "capable of causing more trouble for the State." Their detention caused them to miss their exams because the University of Zimbabwe wouldn't arrange "special exams," only available under extraordinary circumstances like illness or bereavement.

The Urgent Action helped amplify the case regionally and globally, supporting local calls for justice, especially from student movements.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.