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Second UA: 66/24 Index: AFR 46/8395/2024 Zimbabwe of August 7, 2024

## ZIMBABWE END CRACKDOWN ON ACTIVISTS AND OPPOSITION

As Zimbabwe prepares to host the 44th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community on August 17, the government is tightening its grip on dissent. In a sweeping effort to silence critics and prevent protests, police and security forces have arbitrarily arrested over 160 people.

Those targeted include activists, political party members, student union leaders, and civil society representatives. The charges against them range from disorderly conduct to criminal nuisance and plotting to incite protests.

Disturbingly, some of those arrested were subjected to severe torture, leading to injuries that required hospitalization. The government's actions are a clear attempt to intimidate and suppress any opposition ahead of the summit.

### Write to the President of Zimbabwe urging him to:

- Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all individuals detained for exercising their rights during the recent crackdown on civic space.
- Drop all charges against those detained, as they are being held solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.
- Provide urgent medical attention to Robson Chere, pending his release.
- Conduct an effective investigation into the torture of Robson Chere.
- As you assume the position of SADC Chairperson, respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of everyone in the country, including the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

### Write to:

Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs  
Honorable Ziyambi Ziyambi  
Mgandane Dlodlo Building (New Gvt Complex)  
Cnr Samora Machel Avenue & Simon Vengesai  
Harare, Zimbabwe

Emails: [pr@justice.gov.zw](mailto:pr@justice.gov.zw); [justice@justice.gov.zw](mailto:justice@justice.gov.zw)

X: @MoJLPA

Salutation: *Dear Minister,*

**And copy:**

His Excellency Cecil Toendepi CHINENERE  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe  
332 Somerset Street West  
Ottawa, ON K2P 0J9  
Tel: (613) 421-1242 Fax: (613) 422-7403  
Email: [zimfaottawa@gmail.com](mailto:zimfaottawa@gmail.com)

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

On June 27, Zimbabwe's President addressed the ZANU PF Central Committee with a strong warning. He cautioned against "rogue elements" in opposition parties spreading falsehoods and inciting disorder, especially before, during, and after major events. The President promised that such actions would be dealt with "decisively." The following day, the Minister of Information issued a similar warning. He targeted "criminal and opportunistic elements" within the opposition and civil society. The Minister emphasized that law enforcement would arrest those who cause chaos and disrupt justice.

Since these warnings, around 160 people have been arrested, including opposition members, activists, and human rights defenders.

- June 29: Five members of the National Democratic Working Group were arrested in Harare for holding a private, unsanctioned meeting. They were discussing financial support for vulnerable families.
- July 3: Police arrested six members of the Community Voices Zimbabwe media organization in Gokwe, located in Zimbabwe's Midlands province.
- July 24: 44 students from the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), including their leader Emmanuel Sitima, were arrested during a general council meeting. They were beaten and later released after paying fines for "disorderly conduct." The students maintain their innocence and plan to challenge the charges.
- July 31: Activists Namatai Kwekweza, Robson Chere, Samuel Gwezi, and Vusumuzi Moyo were forcibly removed from a plane and detained for eight hours without legal access. Robson Chere, leader of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), was severely tortured during this detention. The activists were charged with "disorderly conduct" for protesting peacefully outside Harare Magistrates' Court, demanding the release of 76 CCC members. They were denied bail, and Robson Chere's serious injuries put him at risk of kidney failure and death without proper medical care.
- August 1: Kariba MP John Houghton and 13 others were arrested in Kariba for protesting the continued detention of opposition leader Jameson Timba and 74 activists. On the same day, Bulawayo councillor Bruce Moyo and Senator Gideon Shoko were also arrested for allegedly protesting against the government.
- August 2: Several arrests took place, including Bishop Kevin Nyamakanga in Harare for allegedly plotting public violence during the SADC summit. Opposition leader Jacob

Ngarivhume was arrested in Mutare, charged with unlawful gathering and disorderly conduct. Eleven Mutare residents were also arrested for allegedly plotting violence to disrupt the SADC summit.

- August 3: Brian Nyoni was arrested in Hwange and released after two hours without charges. Tineyi Munetsi was arrested for participating in the January 2019 anti-government protests.
- August 4: Opposition MP Daniel Molokele and Councillor Ellen Zulu were summoned to Hwange Police Station for questioning about alleged protest mobilization for the SADC summit. They denied the accusations and were warned against organizing protests.

The Zimbabwean government's crackdown on dissent continues, with arrests targeting a wide range of individuals. These actions are part of a broader strategy to intimidate and silence opposition voices ahead of significant regional events. The situation remains tense, with further arrests and repression likely as the SADC summit approaches.

***Please take action as soon as possible until December 10, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***