

URGENT ACTION

END CRACKDOWN ON ACTIVISTS AND OPPOSITION

Ahead of the 44th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community in Zimbabwe on August 17, the government is systematically clamping down on dissent. In an attempt to silence critical voices and dissuade potential protests, the police and security forces have arbitrarily arrested over 160 activists, political party members, student union activists, and civil society members on charges relating to disorderly conduct, criminal nuisance, and plotting to incite protests. Some of those arrested were severely tortured and sustained injuries that required hospitalization.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Second Urgent Action 66.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

President of the Republic of Zimbabwe
His Excellency Emmerson Mnangagwa
Office of the President
Munhumutapa Building, Samora Machel Avenue,
Private Bag 7700
Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe
Email: info@opc.gov.zw (currently not working)

Embassy of Zimbabwe in the United States
His Excellency Ambassador Tadeous T. Chifamba
1608 New Hampshire Avenue, NW,
Washington DC 20009
Email: general@zimembassydc.org
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

His Excellency, or Dear Ambassador,

I am writing to express my grave concerns regarding the worrying trend of suppression of civic space; arrests of opposition members, human rights defenders, and activists; and threats against dissenting views in Zimbabwe ahead of the 44th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), scheduled to take place on August 17 in Harare, Zimbabwe. This crackdown includes the arbitrary detention of approximately 160 people, comprising of members of the opposition, activists and human rights defenders, some of whom have allegedly been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

On July 31, activists including Namatai Kwekweza, Robson Chere, Samuel Gwezi, and Vusumuzi Moyo were forcibly removed from a plane and arrested by state agents. The four were held for eight hours without access to their lawyer and have been denied bail. Robson Chere was tortured in detention, and his extensive injuries from the torture puts him at risk of kidney failure and death if he does not receive adequate medical care.

I urge you and your government to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained for exercising their rights in the recent crackdown on civic space and drop all charges against them as they are detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. I also strongly urge you to ensure Robson Chere, pending his release, is granted urgent medical attention; and ensure an effective investigation into his torture.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On June 27, Zimbabwe's President warned against "rogue elements in the form of opposition political parties bent on peddling falsehoods and instigating acts of civil disorder, especially before, during, and after regional and world state events" and said, "such acts would be dealt with decisively". On June 28, the Information, Publicity, and Broadcasting Minister issued a statement warning that law enforcement will apprehend those who "undermine the justice delivery through causing chaos and mayhem".

To date, approximately 160 people have been arrested including opposition political party members, activists and human rights defenders. On June 29, five members of the National Democratic Working group were arrested at a private residence in Kuwadzana, Harare for holding an 'unsanctioned' meeting. On July 3, police arrested another six people with the Community Voices Zimbabwe media organization in the town of Gokwe, in Zimbabwe's Midlands province.

On July 24, 44 Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) students including their leader, Emmanuel Sitima, were arrested during their general council meeting. The activists were beaten before taken into custody and later released after being forced to pay admission of guilt fines for 'disorderly conduct'. The students maintain that they committed no crime.

On July 31, activists including Namatai Kwekweza, Robson Chere, Samuel Gwezi, and Vusumuzi Moyo were forcibly removed from a plane and arrested by state agents. The four were held for 8 hours without access to their lawyer. The leader of Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), Robson Chere, was severely tortured during the detention. The group have been denied bail including Robson Chere whose extensive injuries puts him at risk of kidney failure or even death.

On August 1, Kariba Member of Parliament, John Houghton, and 13 other individuals were arrested in Kariba town for staging a peaceful demonstration against the continued incarceration of opposition party leader, Jameson Timba, and 74 party activists. Bruce Moyo, the councilor representing Ward 22 Nkulumane, Bulawayo and Bulawayo Senator Hon. Gideon Shoko were arrested on the same day.

On August 2, several arrests took place including Bishop Kevin Nyamakanga who was arrested at his home in Harare for "plotting to incite public violence during the SADC summit"; Jacob Ngarivhume, the opposition Transform Zimbabwe political party leader, was arrested in Mutare and later transferred to Harare where he was charged alongside Kelvin Gonde for participating in an 'unlawful gathering and disorderly conduct'; 11 residents were also arrested in Mutare for allegedly gathering at a house and accused of "plotting to carry out acts of public violence meant to disturb the successful hosting of the SADC summit".

On August 3, Brian Nyoni and Tineyi Munetsi were arrested for separate incidents. Brian was released after 2 hours without charges after the police denied having him in custody. Tineyi Munetsi was arrested and accused of having participated in the January 2019 anti-government protests.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: December 10, 2024

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr46/8338/2024/en/>