

Zimbabwe

Case Summary: Journalists

The Government of Zimbabwe is using provisions of national legislation to silence dissent, perpetrate human rights violations and place the basic rights of Zimbabweans under siege. Provisions of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Act are examples of legislation which contravenes international human rights standards, in particular the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly. The Government of Zimbabwe has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), both of which protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

AIPPA, enacted in March 2002 has been used to specifically target the independent media. It:

- Restricts access to information held by public bodies;
- Establishes a government controlled Media and Information Commission which regulates the independent media;
- Requires the accreditation of journalists and media houses;
- Criminalizes defamation.

In its report, *Zimbabwe: Rights under Siege* released in May 2003, Amnesty International documents how the Zimbabwean authorities are using restrictive legislation such as AIPPA to repress internationally-recognized rights and freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression.

Despite claims by the government that Zimbabwe's independent media is thriving and that the right to freedom of expression is guaranteed, legislation such as AIPPA continues to be used to curtail freedom of expression and to arrest independent media workers. In recent months a number of journalists have been harassed and arrested and the country's only independent daily newspaper the *Daily News* has been shut down.

ACT NOW!

- 1. Write to President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa calling on him to publicly condemn the Government of Zimbabwe's repression of human rights and urging the Zimbabwe authorities to cease attacks on the independent media!**

- 2. Write to the Government of Zimbabwe calling on them to:**
 - Immediately repeal or amend legislation which violates the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, as guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international human rights to which Zimbabwe is party;
 - Bring national legislation in line with international human rights treaties to which Zimbabwe is state party;
 - Immediately cease all intimidation, arbitrary arrests, beatings and torture of independent media workers and other human rights activists;
 - End the political misuse of the police and ensure that police officers abide by the highest standards of professionalism and respect for human rights.

Addresses:

His Excellency, President Thabo Mbeki, Office of the President, Private Bag X1000, Pretoria, 0001. Fax: +21 12 323 8246, email: president@op.gov.za, Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Home Affairs, The Honourable Kembo Mohadi, Ministry of Home Affairs, 11th Floor Mukawati building, Private Bag 7703, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe. Fax: +263 4 726 716, salutation: Dear Minister