

PUBLIC

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UA 333/08 Enforced disappearance/Fear for Safety

ZIMBABWE Jestina Mukoko (f) director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)

Human rights activist Jestina Mukoko was forcibly taken from her home by a group of at least 12 armed plain-clothes men who identified themselves as policemen on 3 December. More than 48 hours after her abduction her whereabouts remain unknown. Lawyers have checked with police stations in the capital Harare and the town of Norton, but have failed to locate her.

Jestina Mukoko is the director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), a local human rights organisation that is involved in monitoring and documenting human rights violations in Zimbabwe. According to an eyewitness more than a dozen men, believed to be state security agents, stormed her home in Norton and took her by force while still barefoot and dressed in her pyjamas. The men then drove off in two cars, one of which did not have registration plates.

Amnesty International has been told that on 29 November another group of about six men, believed to be part of the same group, tried to enter her house during her absence after claiming to be workmates.

Jestina Mukoko's abduction is consistent with an established pattern of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders by the Zimbabwean authorities in an attempt to discourage them from documenting and publicising the human rights violations that are taking place.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Zimbabwe operate in a very restrictive environment. They face repeated arrests, torture and ill-treatment, intimidation and harassment by state security forces and other non-state actors aligned to President Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front.

Amnesty International has documented several cases of enforced disappearances similar to that of Jestina Mukoko this year alone. Some of the victim's bodies were later found dumped. The Zimbabwean authorities have been unwilling to investigate these cases of enforced disappearances, including politically motivated killings of human rights defenders and political activists.

In the run up to the 27 June presidential election run-off, scores of supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) were abducted and killed. Thousands were tortured at camps that were set up with the acquiescence of the security forces. Nearly 200 people died as a result of state-sponsored violence during that time.

Between 27 October and 1 November 15 people, most of them MDC activists from Mashonaland West province, including a baby, were abducted from their homes and have not been seen since. Zimbabwean authorities are still to comply with an order that was issued by the High Court on 11 November compelling them to bring the victims before the courts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing grave concern over the abduction or arrest of Jestina Mukoko, the director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, who was forcibly taken from her home by people believed to be state security agents on 3 December 2008;

- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Jestina Mukoko and not to ill treat her.
- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to allow Jestina Mukoko access to her lawyer, family as well as food, water, warm clothes and medication;
- stating that Amnesty International considers that Jestina Mukoko is solely detained for expressing her views, without advocating violence, and considers her a prisoner of conscience. Amnesty International therefore calls for her immediate and unconditional release;
- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to immediately end its practice of enforced disappearances and follow international standards on arrest and detention for persons under criminal investigation;
- expressing concern about continued harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and political activists by the Zimbabwean security forces;
- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to immediately investigate all those responsible for the enforced disappearances, including those who sanctioned it and bring them to account.

APPEALS TO: (It may be difficult to get through to Zimbabwe by fax so please keep trying, alternatively send letters)

President Robert G. Mugabe
 Office of the President
 Munhumutapa Building
 Samora Machel Avenue
 Box 7700 Causeway
 Harare, Zimbabwe

Fax: + 263 4 734644
Salutation: Dear President

Commissioner General of Police Augustine Chihuri
 Zimbabwe Republic Police General Head Quarters
 PO Box 8807
 Causeway
 Harare
 Zimbabwe

Fax: + 263 4 253 212
Salutation: Dear Commissioner

Commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces
 General Constantine Chiwenga
 Ministry of Defence
 H/Q Defence House cnr Kwame Nkhuruma
 3rd Street
 Private Bag 7713
 Causeway, Harare
 Zimbabwe

Fax: + 263 4 796762
Salutation: Dear General

Attorney General
 Justice Bharat Patel
 Office of the Attorney General
 Private Bag 7714
 Causeway
 Harare
 Zimbabwe

Fax: + 263 4 777 049
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Zimbabwe Peace Project
PO Box BE 427
Belvedere
Harare
Zimbabwe

Fax: +263 4 778311

and to diplomatic representatives of Zimbabwe accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 January 2009.