

URGENT ACTION

CRITICAL LAWYER GRANTED BAIL THEN REARRESTED

Former Malawian Attorney General, Ralph Kasambara, a lawyer and prominent critic of the government, was arrested on 13 February at his office in Blantyre. He was charged with assault and released on bail on 15 February. Hours later he was rearrested at his home by armed police. Since 2011 many real or perceived government critics have had their homes or offices raided by men who have threatened or assaulted them.

On 13 February a group of men of five men carrying a jerry can of petrol arrived at Ralph Kasambara's office, asking where he was. Two of them ran away when Ralph Kasambara's security team arrived. The other three apparently admitted, after his security team used force, that they had been sent by government officials to attack him. The police then arrived and arrested Ralph Kasambara, his security team and the three remaining men. On arrival at Blantyre Police Station Ralph Kasambara and his security team were detained and charged with assault before being transferred to Chichiri Prison in Blantyre. The three men who were also arrested at his office are apparently no longer in custody, having been driven away from the police station in an unmarked car.

Bail was granted by a Blantyre Magistrate on 14 February and Ralph Kasambara was returned to prison for one night. His release on 15 February was delayed when police arrived at the Chichiri prison in the morning with a search warrant and requested he accompany them to his office and home. He refused and the search went ahead. He was released in the afternoon and returned to his home before being rearrested by armed police and returned to Chichiri prison.

Ralph Kasambara is one of a number of people in Malawi, including human rights defenders, journalists and civil society activists, who have been targeted since the beginning of 2011 for criticising the government on issues including human rights, governance and the economy. On 12 February two national newspapers quoted Ralph Kasambara criticising Malawi's President Bingu wa Mutharika.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Expressing concern about the re-arrest of Ralph Kasambara
- Calling on the authorities to immediately comply with the court order for his release on bail
- Urging the authorities to end the systematic harassment and intimidation of perceived critics of the government and to respect the right of all Malawians to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 MARCH 2012 TO:

Inspector General of Police

Peter Mukhito
Malawi Police Services Headquarters
Lilongwe
Malawi
Fax: + 265 1 797 979 /+265 1 796 835

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

President Bingu wa Mutharika

Office of the President
Capital Hill Circle
Private Bag 301, Lilongwe 3
Malawi
Fax: +265 1 788 456

Email: opc@malawi.gov.mw

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Home Affairs and Public Security

Aaron Sangala
Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Security
Private Bag 331, Lilongwe 3
Malawi
Fax: +265 1 789 509

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Human rights defenders and other critics of the government have been harassed and intimidated since the beginning of 2011. This has included death threats, forced entry to homes and offices, petrol bombings and other attacks. There have been several suspicious break-ins at NGO offices. Threats and attacks have been made either by people who say they are aligned with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) or by men believed to be state security agents. Human rights defenders speaking at international forums and those involved in organizing anti-government demonstrations have been publicly criticized and threatened with violence and arrest by government officials, including President Mutharika

Name: Ralph Kasambara

Gender m/f: m

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