

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS FACE TWENTY YEARS IN JAIL FOR LECTURE

Six Zimbabwean activists, arrested in February this year in relation to a lecture about revolt in North Africa, will be tried on 18 July for attempting to subvert a constitutionally elected government. If convicted, they could be sentenced to twenty years in prison.

Eddson Chakuma, Antonater Choto, Hopewell Gumbo, Munyaradzi Gwisai, Tatenda Mombeyarara and Welcome Zimuto were among a group of 45 social justice, trade union and human rights activists who were arrested and charged with treason on 19 February after attending and organising a lecture entitled 'Revolt in Egypt and Tunisia: What lessons can be learnt by Zimbabwe and Africa'. On 7 March, 39 of the activists were released after a Magistrates court dismissed the treason charges against them. The remaining six, who either spoke at the lecture or work with the Zimbabwean chapter of the International Socialist Organisation, which organised the lecture, were held in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day until they were released on bail on 16 March. Several of the activists, including Munyaradzi Gwisai, were reportedly beaten by security agents while in prison.

Although the state dropped the charges of treason, which can carry the death penalty under Zimbabwe's penal code, the six activists are now due to stand trial on 18 July for the lesser charge of attempting to subvert a constitutionally elected government. These charges violate the activists' freedom of expression. If convicted the charge, which Amnesty International considers to be politically motivated, carries a maximum prison sentence of twenty years.

Many thanks to all those who have sent appeals on their behalf.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Calling for the charges against Eddson Chakuma, Antonater Choto, Hopewell Gumbo, Munyaradzi Gwisai, Tatenda Mombeyarara and Welcome Zimuto to be dropped immediately.
- Expressing concern that the six are facing trial solely as a result of peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 JULY 2011 TO:

Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs

Hon Patrick Chinamasa
Government of Zimbabwe
New Government Complex
P. Bag 7751, Causeway
Harare, Zimbabwe
Fax: +263 4 790901
Salutation: Dear Minister

The Attorney General

Johannes Tomana
Government of Zimbabwe
P. Bag 7714, Causeway
Harare, Zimbabwe
Fax: +263 4 777049
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 55/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR46/004/2011/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR46/005/2011/en>

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