

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 290/08, (AFR 46/029/2008, 22 October 2008) Torture and other ill-treatment/ prisoners of conscience

ZIMBABWE

**Jenni Williams (f)
Magodonga Mahlangu (f)**

On 5 November 2008, the High Court of Zimbabwe granted Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) leaders Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu bail following their arrest on 16 October. They were released the following morning on 6 November.

Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu were arbitrarily arrested after participating in a peaceful protest outside Mhlahlandlela Government Complex in Bulawayo, in which they demanded immediate access to food aid in Zimbabwe. Police used excessive force to break up the peaceful protest by about 200 WOZA activists. Magodonga Mahlangu was beaten by police during her arrest.

Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu were unlawfully detained at Bulawayo Central police station overnight before being moved to be remanded in prison on 17 October. The Magistrate Court in Bulawayo remanded the two women in custody until 21 October, when their bail hearing took place without them being present. The state alleged that there was no transport to take them to the bail hearing. The court reserved judgement on the bail application until 24 October. However, on 24 October the magistrate allegedly postponed the judgement until 27 October because she was attending a workshop. Their bail applications were denied on 27 October. They then lodged appeals with the high court and were granted bail on 5 November, 21 nights after their arrest.

They have been charged under Section 37 1(a) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act – ‘disturbing the peace, security or order of the public’.

No further action is required. Many thanks to all those who took action.