

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER DENIED BAIL

Prominent Zimbabwean human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa was arrested in Harare on Sunday 17 March when she went to help a client whose home was being searched by police. She was denied bail on Wednesday 20 March and remains in custody, despite the High Court issuing an order for her immediate release on Monday 18 March.

On the morning of Sunday 17 March, **Beatrice Mtetwa** responded to the call of a client, Thabani Mpfu, who is a staff member in Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's office. When she arrived at his home, police were conducting a search. She asked to be shown the search warrant and told police that what they were doing was "unlawful, unconstitutional, illegal and undemocratic". Police did not show her the search warrant, and instead arrested her for "obstructing the course of justice". Beatrice Mtetwa was handcuffed and detained in a police vehicle. She was taken to Harare Central police station and later transferred to Rhodesville Police station in Harare.

Following her arrest, Beatrice Mtetwa's lawyers obtained a High Court order for her immediate release on the grounds that the arrest was unlawful. Police did not comply with the order and she remained in police custody. On Tuesday 19 March Beatrice Mtetwa was brought to the Magistrate's Court in Harare and applied for bail. At the hearing, her lawyers reported that she was ill-treated while in custody. She was denied access to her family, denied a bath while in police custody and on Monday 18 March, during the night, two male police officers entered her cell and attempted to remove her blankets. Neither Beatrice Mtetwa nor her lawyers have seen the search warrant that she demanded prior to her arrest.

On 19 March after the first day of her bail hearing Beatrice Mtetwa was taken to a remand prison for the night. On 20 March, the bail hearing concluded with the denial of bail. She has been remanded in custody until 3 April.

Amnesty International considers Beatrice Mtetwa's arrest and detention to be an attack on the legal profession in Zimbabwe and in particular human rights lawyers. Zimbabwean human rights lawyers have fearlessly defended targeted HRDs and political activists in the context of systematic violations of the rights of freedom of expression, association and assembly which have intensified in the run up to Zimbabwe's 2013 presidential elections.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Call for the immediate and unconditional release of Beatrice Mtetwa;
- Express concern that Beatrice Mtetwa was arbitrarily arrested and continues to be arbitrarily detained despite a High Court order calling for her immediate release;
- Urge the Zimbabwean authorities to ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, obstruction, harassment or unlawful interference; and that they do not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other penalties for any action they take in accordance with their recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 MAY 2013 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 77 29 99 / +263 4 25 21 55
Salutation: Dear Minister

The Attorney General

Johannes Tomana
Government of Zimbabwe
P. Bag 7714, Causeway
Harare, Zimbabwe
Fax: +263 4 77 32 47
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

H.E. R.G. Mugabe
Munhumutapa Building
Samora Machel Avenue
Causeway
Harare, Zimbabwe
Fax: +263 4 73 46 44
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, elections could be held in July 2013. The lead-up to elections over the last decade has seen an increase in human rights violations, in particular severe restriction of rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and freedom of expression through state-sponsored violence and arbitrary arrests. In recent months a crackdown on HRDs has been manifested in police searches at offices and arbitrary arrests of HRDs. At least seven organisations had their offices searched since August 2012, with two searches taking place in mid-February.

Name: Beatrice Mtetwa

Gender m/f: F

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