

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 46/05/99  
25 January 1999

Further information on EXTRA 07/99 (AFR 46/03/99, 22 January 1999) - Fear of torture/prisoner of conscience

ZIMBABWE Clive Wilson, newspaper managing director, aged 62  
Mark Chavunduka, journalist  
Ray Choto, journalist

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Clive Wilson, managing director of *The Standard* newspaper, was discharged from police detention at midday on Monday 25 January 1999. The Attorney General Patrick Chinamasa said that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute him under the Law and Order Maintenance Act for publishing or causing to be published information 'creating alarm and despondency'.

Wilson's lawyer indicated that police were not dropping the investigation against his client and would continue to seek sufficient evidence to arrest him once more. Wilson, who spent three nights in detention, did not appear to have been ill-treated while held in civilian police custody.

Ray Choto and Mark Chavunduka remain at liberty, though they have kept their whereabouts hidden to avoid any further arbitrary detention by police.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 12 January *Standard* editor Mark Chavunduka was illegally arrested by Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) military police, in connection with a story printed in *The Standard* on 10 January 1999 that alleged a plot within the ZNA to overthrow the government of Robert Mugabe had been foiled, and that 23 soldiers and officers had been arrested. He was detained incommunicado for six days at Cranborne military barracks in Harare, in defiance of a 14 January High Court judgment ordering Minister of Defence Moven Mahachi and Major Mhonda of the ZNA to release him.

Ray Choto turned himself over to the civilian police on 19 January, after they had sought to arrest him in connection with the story. Amnesty International considered the two men prisoners of conscience.

Both men were taken to Harare police headquarters on 19 January to give statements to civilian police. They were then handed over to military police and tortured for approximately 24 hours at a torture centre outside the capital, Harare. The torture included beatings with fists, wooden planks and rubber batons, the use of electric shocks to the body and genitals, and having their heads wrapped in plastic bags and then being submerged in water tanks. The torturers threatened to kill the men and their families.

Mark Chavunduka and Roy Choto were later released on bail on 21 January.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- noting that on 25 January 1999 Clive Wilson was released without charge from police custody;
- seeking assurances that Clive Wilson, Mark Chavunduka, and Ray Choto will not be subjected to arbitrary arrest or threat of arrest solely on account of their legitimate activities as independent journalists;

- urging that an immediate, independent inquiry be launched into the unlawful detention and torture of Mark Chavunduka and Ray Choto, and into the allegations that their captors threatened to kill the men and had threatened their families, and that any officials found to have condoned or taken part in such torture be held accountable for their actions.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Robert Mugabe  
Office of the President  
Private Bag 7700  
Causeway  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

**Faxes: + 263 4 728 799 or 728799**

**Salutation: Dear President**

Minister of Defence Moven Mahachi  
Ministry of Defence  
PO Box 7713  
Causeway  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

**Faxes: + 263 4 731 313**

**+ 263 4 796 762**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Minister of Home Affairs Dumiso Dabengwa  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Private Bag 505D  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

**Faxes: + 263 470 3641, 792 774**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

The Standard/The Independent  
PO Box 661730  
Kapje, Harare, Zimbabwe

Zimrights  
PO Box 3951,  
Harare, Zimbabwe

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 8 March 1999.