

PUBLIC

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21 March 2003

UA 81/03 Arrest and detention without charge/abduction/ "disappearance"/ fear for safety

**ZIMBABWE** Giles Mutsekewa (m), Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) member of  
parliament  
for Mutare North  
Austin Mupandawana (m), MDC member of parliament for Kadoma Central  
Up to 500 others

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Up to 500 people including officials and members of parliament of the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), have been arrested without charge by police in Zimbabwe. An unknown number of people have reportedly been abducted by supporters of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), and state security personnel. There have also been reports that a number of MDC activists have "disappeared".

The incidents took place before and during a peaceful "stay-away" coordinated by the MDC in protest of state repression and human rights violations in the country, on 18 and 19 March. Giles Mutsekewa, MDC member of parliament for Mutare North in Harare and Austin Mupandawana, MDC member of parliament for Kadoma Central in Kadoma were among some 60 MDC activists and around 70 others arrested in and around the capital Harare on 19 March, as the police went around arresting people in their homes and in the streets. Giles Mutsekewa is reportedly being held at Harare Central Police Station while Austin Mupandawana is being held at Kadoma Police station. Police have reportedly denied Austin Mupandawana access to his family. Hundreds of others arrested throughout the country on 19 March remain in detention.

Also on 19 March, the army is believed to have been deployed in the town of Masvingo and various suburbs of Harare, where they reportedly targeted and assaulted a number of people perceived to be MDC supporters. On 20 March, the army again attacked scores of MDC activists in the suburbs of Harare. Sixty people were also arrested in the Eastern Highlands of Chimanimani province on that day.

According to reports, four MDC activists were abducted by ZANU-PF supporters and state agents in the town of Bindura on 18 March. Their whereabouts remain unknown and it is feared that they may have "disappeared". Four other MDC activists were also allegedly abducted in the town of Mabvuku. Other MDC activists are reported to be missing and their whereabouts remain unknown.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Politically motivated violence has intensified in the run up to parliamentary by-elections scheduled for 29 and 30 March in Kuwadzana and Highfield, two suburbs outside the capital Harare. MDC supporters and officials together with human rights activists and members of Zimbabwe civil society have been subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention without charge and torture by government authorities and militia.

Reports indicate that the "stay-away" was observed by the vast majority of people in the country. In the two main cities of Harare and Bulawayo, many workers stayed at home and most business remained closed. On 20 March, the day after the "stay-away", the MDC gave the government a deadline of 31 March to meet certain demands or face "an escalation of protests". It is feared that human rights violations may increase as this deadline approaches.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- expressing serious concern over the escalating levels of human rights violations in the country, and the involvement of government authorities and militia, in these human rights violations;
- expressing concern for the safety of up to 500 people, including members of parliament Giles Mutsekewa and Austin Mupandawana, who have been arrested without charge by the authorities;
- calling on the authorities to either charge Giles Mutsekewa, Austin Mupandawana and others who remain in custody, with a recognizably criminal offence, on the basis of solid evidence, or release them immediately;
- expressing concern at reports that an unknown number of people have reportedly been abducted by supporters of the ZANU-PF party and state security personnel;
- calling for the whereabouts of those reportedly abducted to be verified and for the authorities to do their utmost to secure their immediate release;
- calling for an immediate investigation into the reported abductions, for the results to be made public, and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Home Affairs  
The Honourable Khembo Mohadi  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor Mukwati Building  
Private Bag 7703  
Causeway  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

**Fax: + 263 4 726 716 (please keep trying)**

**Telegram: Minister of Home Affairs, Harare, Zimbabwe**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Police Commissioner  
Mr. Augustine Chihuri  
Police Headquarters  
P.O Box 8807  
Causeway  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

**Fax: + 263 4 726 084/ 235 212/ 728 768 (please keep trying)**

**Telegram: Augustine Chihuri, Police Headquarters, Harare, Zimbabwe**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Commissioner**

**COPIES 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 2 May 2003.