

# URGENT ACTION

## JOURNALIST THREATENED AND HARASSED

Journalist Gregory Gondwe has gone into hiding following his investigative report on the Malawi Defence Force's dealings with a businessman who is under investigation for corruption. Following the publication of his report on 29 January, Gregory Gondwe was alerted by "top government officials" that the Malawi Defence Force intended to arrest him for "endangering state security and detain him incommunicado unless he revealed his sources for the report. The Malawi authorities must guarantee and ensure the safety and security of Gregory Gondwe and other journalists in the country and respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone including the right to freedom of expression and press freedom.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**President Lazarus Chakwera**  
Office of the President and Cabinet,  
Capital Hill Circle,  
Private Bag 301,  
Capital City, Lilongwe 3, Malawi  
Email: [parliament@parliament.gov.mw](mailto:parliament@parliament.gov.mw)

Dear His Excellency,

I am writing to you to express my concern about the safety and security of journalist **Gregory Gondwe** following the publication of his report in January 2024, detailing the Malawi Defence Force (MDF) and their alleged dealings with a businessman who is under investigation for corruption. The report details allegations of multi-million-dollar payments to the companies owned by the businessman for the procurement of military equipment. This report contradicts the announcement by government to cancel all contracts with companies associated with the businessman.

On 31 January, Gregory Gondwe was informed by "top ranking officials" that the MDF intended to arrest him for "endangering state security" and detain him incommunicado unless he revealed his sources for the report. I am deeply concerned that as a result, Gregory Gondwe has now gone into hiding, in fear of his life, safety and security, simply for doing his job as a journalist. I am aware that this is not the first time Gregory Gondwe has been targeted in connection with his work as a journalist. In April 2022, he was detained by the police and questioned, with the police again demanding that he reveal his sources.

Malawi has international human rights obligations to uphold human rights and press freedom and to create an enabling environment for free and independent journalism including by respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling the rights to freedom of opinion and expression as guaranteed under article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to which Malawi is a state party.

**In light of the above, I urge you to:**

- **Ensure a prompt, thorough, independent, impartial, transparent and effective investigation into the reports of threats against Gregory Gondwe, and to bring those suspected to be responsible to justice in fair trials.**
- **Publicly condemn the harassment, intimidation, threats, and attacks against Gregory Gondwe and other journalists.**
- **Take effective measures to ensure that all journalists in the country can safely carry out their work without any fear of retaliation.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 29 January 2024, the investigative report by Gregory Gondwe was published in the [Platform for Investigative Journalism](#) documenting alleged payments to businesses own by an individual who is under investigation for corruption; contrary to the government's commitment to cancel all contracts with companies linked to the named individual.

Malawi has a history of curtailing the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The right to freedom of expression has increasingly been threatened since 2022 with a rise in cases of unlawful surveillance by police, including interception of people's private conversations which resulted in arbitrary arrests, prosecutions and convictions. On 1 May 2022, Chidawawa Mainje was arrested and charged with cyber harassment under section 86 of the Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act of 2016 in connection with the accusation that he had insulted President Chakwera in a WhatsApp conversation.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 10 April 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Gregory Gondwe (he, him, his)