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ESCALATING THREATS AGAINST INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST EXPOSE DETERIORATION OF PRESS FREEDOM IN MALAWI

The Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (Southern Defenders) and Amnesty International are concerned about the continued harassment, intimidation and threats against Gregory Gondwe following the publication of his article titled "[Chakwera Still in Bed with Zuneth Sattar: Treasury Pays \\$4.98 Million for Armoured Carriers Amidst Corruption Allegations](#)," documenting the Malawi Defence Force's (MDF) alleged dealing with a businessman who is facing allegations of corruption.

Malawian authorities must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone in the country including the rights to freedom of expression, opinion, association and assembly, and press freedom. The Constitution of Malawi provides that "the press shall have the right to report and publish freely." However, 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 article. Gregory Gondwe had to go into hiding in fear for his life, safety and security, simply for doing his job as a journalist.

Gregory Gondwe has been targeted before in connection with his work. In April 2022, he was detained by the police and questioned, with the police again demanding that he reveal his sources. Malawian authorities must allow human rights defenders (HRDs), including journalists reporting on allegations of corruption and human rights violations to freely carry out their duties without any fear of reprisals. Gondwe who is associated with the Platform for Investigative Journalism (PIJ) in Malawi, focuses on promoting transparency, accountability and the rule of law through investigative journalism.

In 2022, President Chakwera [committed](#) to "upholding the Constitution, which protects freedom of the press by defending and guarding the rights that provide a safe working environment for journalists". The President made the commitment during a breakfast with journalists at Kamuzu Palace, Lilongwe in celebration of World Press Freedom Day. This was a positive step, but it seems to have quickly been short lived with the continuing harassment, intimidation and attacks on journalists. The targeting of journalists is deeply concerning and demonstrates an escalating repression and decline in the protection and promotion of human rights and press freedom in Malawi ahead of the upcoming elections next year.

We condemn these attacks by the MDF, and urge the authorities to end the harassment, intimidation threats against Gregory Gondwe and allow him to freely carry out his journalistic work. The attacks against him not only hamper journalist from doing their work but also raise concerns about the state of a free and independent media in Malawi.

In light of the above, we call on the authorities in Malawi 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 and allow them to freely carry out their work and guarantee their safety and security;

- Reaffirm the commitment to press freedom as enshrined in the Constitution and human rights treaties to which Malawi is a state party and create an environment where journalists can carry out their work without any fear or reprisals;
- Respect, protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone in the country including the rights to freedom of expression, association and press freedom.

#TogetherWeDefend

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