

URGENT ACTION

FREE ARBITRARILY DETAINED OPPOSITION MEMBERS

On 16 June, police arrested and arbitrarily detained 79 Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) members, including interim party leader Jameson Timba. The group had gathered at Jameson Timba's house to commemorate the International Day of the African Child. On 17 June, police charged the detainees with "gathering with intent to promote public violence and disorderly conduct." One person was given bail and 2 minors released, while 76 activists remain in remand as they await court proceedings. The Zimbabwean authorities must immediately and unconditionally release all 76 CCC members and drop all the politically motivated charges against them.

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

Honourable Ziyambi Ziyambi

Minister of Justice. Legal and Parliamentary Affairs

Mgandane Dlodlo Building (New Gvt Complex)

Cnr Samora Machel Avenue & Simon Vengesai

Harare, Zimbabwe

Emails: pr@justice.gov.zw; justice@justice.gov.zw

Dear Honourable Ziyambi Ziyambi,

*On 16 June, police arrested and arbitrarily detained **79 Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) members**, including interim party leader **Jameson Timba**, who had gathered at Jameson Timba's house to commemorate the International Day of the African Child. The arrest and arbitrary detention of the CCC members while exercising their rights to freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly is deeply concerning.*

During their arrest, the police used baton sticks and fired teargas at the group, resulting in injuries; including an extensive injury to one member which required surgery. 79 members were originally arrested and remanded, but two minors have since been released and one person granted bail. On 17 June, the 79 members who remain detained were charged with "gathering with intent to promote public violence and disorderly conduct" and held for over 48 hours in custody before appearing before a court on 18 June, in violation of the country's Criminal Procedure and Evidence act which states that "any person who is arrested or detained must be brought before a court as soon as possible and in any event not later than forty-eight hours after the arrest took place or the detention began.". On 27 June, the group were denied bail on the grounds that they will "commit similar offences if released". On 17 July, the 76 members' bail application was dismissed by the High Court.

I have noted a worrying trend of suppression of civic space and intimidation and harassment of activists and opposition politicians ahead of the 44th Ordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, due to take place on 17 August. Your government has warned against "criminal and opportunistic elements within the opposition, certain politicians, and some civil society organizations" and threatened to use law enforcement to crackdown on human rights.

In light of the above, I call on you to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of the 76 Citizens Coalition for Change members (including Jameson Timba) and drop all charges against them as they are detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. I further urge you and the authorities to uphold and ensure respect for the human rights of everyone in the country including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly as enshrined in Zimbabwe's Constitution and the country's international human rights obligations including under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Several people who attended the CCC member's court hearings were beaten by police and three were arrested for calling for the release of the group. The three were subsequently released on \$100 USD bail each.

People face growing restrictions to the exercise of their human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association ahead of the Southern African Development Community's Heads of State and Government Summit in Harare scheduled to take place on 17 August.

On 27 June, President Mnangagwa, while addressing the ZANU PF central committee, warned against 'rogue elements in the form of opposition political parties bent on peddling falsehoods and instigating acts of civil disorder, especially before, during and after regional and world state events' and said, 'such acts would be dealt with decisively'. On 28 June, the information, publicity and broadcasting minister issued a statement warning against "criminal and opportunistic elements within the opposition, certain politicians, and some civil society organizations" and that law enforcement will apprehend those who 'undermine the justice delivery through causing chaos and mayhem'.

On 29 June, the members of the National Democratic Working group were arrested at a private residence in Kuwadzana, Harare for holding an 'unsanctioned' meeting. The group was having regarding the monthly monetary contribution to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged families. On 3 July, police arrested another six people with the Community Voices Zimbabwe media organization in the town of Gokwe, in Zimbabwe's midlands.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 September 2024

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Jameson Timba (he/him) & Citizens Coalition for Change members
(Male and Female/they)