

# URGENT ACTION

## DETAINED ACTIVISTS RELEASED ON BAIL

**Three Zimbabwean activists from the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) who were arrested in December 2011 have been released on bail. Two charges against them have now been dismissed by a Magistrate. They continue to face a third charge of “undermining the authority of or insulting President Robert Mugabe”. Amnesty International believes that the activists were arrested solely as a result of their legitimate work advocating for media reforms and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe.**

The three activists are **Fadzai December** and **Molly Chimhanda**, both advocacy officers for MMPZ, and **Gilbert Mabusa**, the MMPZ’s Public Information Rights Forum committee chairman for Gwanda, Matabeleland South Province. They were summoned to Gwanda police station on 5 December 2011 for questioning regarding a civic education workshop that they had delivered on public information rights in Gwanda on 24 November. On arrival at the police station they were charged with “participating in a gathering without seeking authority from the regulating authority” and “distributing material that is likely to provoke a breach of peace”. Despite being granted bail of \$50 with no reporting conditions when they appeared in court on Friday 9 December, the three spent one more week in detention after a state prosecutor invoked Section 121 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act to suspend the bail order for a further seven days whilst filing an appeal with the High Court against bail. Furthermore the State added an alternative charge of “undermining authority of or insulting President Robert Mugabe” in contravention of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. However the State did not give further details of the nature of the alleged offence. The appeal by the state against bail was dismissed by the High Court on 16 December.

All three activists appeared before Gwanda Magistrates Court on 24 January, facing charges of “knowingly failing to give notice of a gathering”, “participating in a gathering with intent to promote public violence, breaches of the peace, or bigotry” and “undermining the authority of or insulting the President”. The court dismissed the first two charges, but upheld the alternative charge of “undermining the authority of or insulting the President”. They will appear at Gwanda Magistrates Court on 7 February.

**Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is required. Amnesty International will continue to monitor further developments in this case.**

This is the first update of UA 353/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR46/027/2011/en>

Name: Fadzai December, Molly Chimhanda; Gilbert Mabusa

Gender m/f: Fadzai December (F); Molly Chimhanda (F); Gilbert Mabusa (M);

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