

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS RELEASED ON BAIL

Three Zimbabwean human rights defenders, who were detained on 5 November and illegally transferred between Harare and Bulawayo on 7 November, were finally charged and released on bail on the afternoon of 8 November.

Fidelis Mudimu, Zachariah Godi and Tafadzwa Geza are senior staff members of the Counselling Services Unit (CSU), an organisation providing medical and psychological assistance to the victims of organised violence and torture.

On the afternoon of 8 November, a Bulawayo magistrate ordered the release of the three CSU employees after they were finally charged with “causing malicious damage to property, in contravention of Section 140 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act.”

Each man was granted \$100 bail with conditions that their passports should be surrendered to the Clerk at Harare Magistrate’s Court, and that they should report to once a week to Harare Central Police station. They have been ordered to appear before a Bulawayo court again on 6 December. Lawyers representing the three human rights defenders have registered complaints against the inhuman and degrading treatment that their clients were subjected to during their 72 hours in detention.

Amnesty International believes the charges to be trumped up and indicative of continued abuse of the law by Zimbabwean police to frustrate and persecute human rights defenders going about their legitimate work.

Fidelis Mudimu, Zachariah Godi and Tafadzwa Geza had been arrested on 5 November during a raid by police on the CSU clinic in Harare. After initially arriving at the organisation without a search warrant and demanding entry, officers produced a warrant to search the building for “offensive and subversive material”. Police entered the building to conduct the search during which they seized a computer, documents and confidential medical records. The three men were arrested and transported to Harare Central Police station. On Wednesday 7 November, the three men were illegally transferred by police more than 400km from Harare to Bulawayo in an open pick up truck without protection from the sun, despite temperatures exceeding 30°C. In total, they were held in custody for over 72 hours without being brought before a Magistrate and being charged. It is illegal to detain someone without charge for over 48 hours in Zimbabwe.

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

This is the first update of UA 301/12. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR46/012/2012/en>

Name: Fidelis Mudimu, Zachariah Godi and Tafadzwa Geza

Gender: All male

Further information on UA: 301/12 Index: AFR 46/013/2012 Issue Date: 12 November 2012

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