

To: Health professional members
From: Medical team / Africa program
Date: 6 June 2003

MEDICAL ACTION

Police target patients in clinic following national protests Zimbabwe

Key words security in hospital / ill-treatment /

On 29 May 2003, the Zimbabwean opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) called on Zimbabweans to participate in nationwide peaceful protest marches from 2-6 June to protest against the country's deteriorating economic, political and human rights situation.

On Monday, 2 June, the police and army responded with mass arbitrary arrests and attacks on opposition supporters. Thus far, two people have reportedly died from the attacks and over 400 people have been arrested across the country, at least five of which are MDC Members of Parliament. In the Harare suburb of Highfield, protestors were intercepted by the police and army, who fired live ammunition into a crowd. One person was shot in the leg while many others were injured. At the University of Zimbabwe, riot police, army officers and "war veterans" cordoned off a march, firing tear gas and using water cannons on student protestors. At least 49 students were taken to Parirenyatwa hospital for treatment.

On Tuesday, 3 June, MDC member Tichaona Kaguru and MDC Councillor for Mbare, Sydney Mazaranhanga, were brutally beaten by police and army officers who used whips, rubber batons and sticks. As a result of his injuries, Tichaona Kaguru died the same day.

Since 3 June, more than 150 people injured in the state-sponsored attacks have been taken to the privately-run Avenues Clinic (<http://www.avclin.co.zw/>) in Harare for treatment. As the injured awaited treatment on Wednesday, 4 June, approximately 10 police officers reportedly entered the clinic and asked people to lie down. They then proceeded to search the hospital, harassing and threatening the injured. They left after reportedly abducting seven opposition supporters.

The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) – an NGO established earlier in 2003 -- expressed concern for the invasion of the clinic and expressed fears that "intimidating behaviour of the uniformed forces in hospital premises will prevent patients from accessing treatment."

ZADHR condemned "the use of violence against the public with the purposeful intention of inflicting injuries and disability on any individuals", and called on all parties "to cease violence forthwith".

Background

The opposition MDC called in March for a series of “stay away” protests in which people would not go to work. There was a one day protest in March, one in April and then a week-long strike called to commence on 2 June. All these peaceful protests have provoked violent acts by Zimbabwe police.

Relevant document and web-action

- Public report: *Zimbabwe: Rights under siege* (AI Index: AFR 46/012/2003, May 2003)
- Rights under siege in Zimbabwe - take action now!
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/zwe-020503-action-eng>

Recommended actions

Please write letters in English or your own language to the addresses below:

- Stating that you are a health professional concerned with human rights
- Expressing alarm at the manner in which police officers entered the Avenues Clinic on Wednesday 4 June 2003 and intimidated patients and staff
- Stating that legitimate policing goals were not served by such aggressive methods
- Asking for details of the situation of those taken away by police and seeking guarantees that they will be protected from ill-treatment
- Asking for assurances that police will be instructed that the rights of patients to seek medical care will be respected
- Also urging that hospitals and clinics will not be subject to violent incursions by police seeking wounded and non-violent patients

Addresses

President Robert G. Mugabe
Office of the President
Private Bag 7700
Causeway
Harare
Zimbabwe
Fax: + 263 4 708 820 / 708 211
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Home Affairs
The Honourable Khembo Mohadi
11th Floor Mukwati Building
Private Bag 7703
Causeway
Harare
Zimbabwe
Fax: + 263 4 726 716
Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Health and Child Welfare
Dr D. P. Parirenyatwa
Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
4th Floor Kaguvi Building
Box 8204
Causeway
Harare
Zimbabwe
Fax. + 263 4 729154, 793634
Salutation: Dear Minister

Copies

Please send copies of your letters with an appropriate cover letter to your nearest diplomatic representative of Zimbabwe, to your own Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to your professional body.

Monitoring of action

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter writing actions. If you write one, two or more letters please send us an e-mail and let us know. Please write in the subject line of your e-mail the index number of the action and the number of letters your write e.g. AFR 46/014/2003 -- 3.

Please send your message to medical@amnesty.org

Thank you