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Zimbabwe: Amnesty International welcomes acquittal of Morgan Tsvangirai

Amnesty International today welcomes the acquittal of Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, on charges of treason.

Amnesty International believes that the trial of Mr. Tsvangirai was a politically-motivated prosecution in keeping with a wider pattern of arrest and trial on spurious charges as a form of harassment of the political opposition in Zimbabwe.

"The Government of Zimbabwe should end the use of politically-motivated arrest and trial as a form of harassment," Amnesty International said.

Background

Morgan Tsvangirai, both in his capacity as Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions in the 1990s, and in his capacity as leader of the MDC since 2002 has been repeatedly arrested and assaulted. Amnesty International has reported on the harassment of Morgan Tsvangirai on a number of occasions.

His trial on charges of treason started on 3 February 2003 and ended on 24 February 2004. The judgment was reserved and then scheduled to be handed down on 29 July 2004, but was further postponed indefinitely. The acquittal was delivered by the High Court on 15 October 2004.

Morgan Tsvangirai faced two charges of treason. The first charge related to an alleged plot to assassinate President Mugabe ahead of the presidential elections in March 2002. The second charge of treason was based on an alleged incitement to engage in a march to unseat the government in the so-called "final push" in June 2003.

Public Document

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