

# URGENT ACTION

## NGO BAN PUTS LIVES UNDER THREAT IN ZIMBABWE

**The work of 29 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is at risk of being halted in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, after an announcement by the local governor ordering the suspension of their operations. Many of these organizations work with people living with HIV/AIDS or provide relief to residents affected by the frequent droughts in the province.**

On 14 February the Governor of Masvingo Province, Titus Maluleke, called a press conference in which he announced that a group of 29 domestic and international NGOs had missed the deadline to register with the governor's office and as a consequence were to have their activities suspended. Some of the 29 NGOs were first told to register their activities with the Provincial Governor in October 2011, and, after negotiations, were given a deadline of 31 December 2011 to complete this registration. However, several others were only informed of this demand for registration on 14 February. Given that Masvingo is an arid province prone to droughts, and that many communities there depend on food, water, medication and other forms of support provided by humanitarian organizations, such a move could put the lives of many of its residents at risk.

Zimbabwean law designates the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare as the body responsible for registering and monitoring NGOs, rather than local governors. In addition, the suspension contravenes Section 21 and 22 of the Zimbabwe Constitution which guarantee the rights to freedom of assembly, association and freedom of movement. Amnesty International believes that this action by Governor Maluleke may be an attempt to implement a resolution by President Mugabe's ZANU-PF party to constrain the activities of certain NGOs who they accuse of pursuing an agenda of 'regime change'. Amnesty International fears that this kind of suspension could spread to other provinces if it is not challenged in Masvingo.

Some NGOs operating in Masvingo have stated that they would carry on with their operations despite the ban and may organize activities in the province in the next few days or weeks. Such actions could put activists and NGO workers at risk of arrest by the police or attacks by ZANU-PF supporters including war veterans.

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language:**

- Calling on Governor Maluleke to publicly withdraw the purported suspension of NGO operations.
- Stating that the Governor's action is in violation of Zimbabwe's Constitution which guarantees the rights to freedom of assembly and associations and freedom of movement.
- Urging the Provincial Commanding Officer to guarantee the safety of all NGO workers in Masvingo Province, and to ensure that police officers under his command are not used by the governor to pursue a partisan agenda which interferes with the legitimate work of NGOs.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 APRIL 2012 TO:**

#### Provincial Governor of Masvingo

Titus Maluleke

Provincial Governor, Masvingo

Benjamin Burombo House

R Mugabe Street/S Mazorondza Avenue

PO Box 595 Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Fax: + 263 39 265968

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

#### Provincial Commanding Officer

Masvingo Provincial Police Headquarters

PO Box 125

Masvingo

Zimbabwe

Fax: +263 39 264026 (if someone answers, please ask for the fax)

**Salutation: Dear Commanding Officer**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Government authorities in Zimbabwe have given similar orders in the past to halt the activities of NGOs. In June 2008, the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Nicholas Goche, wrote to all private voluntary organizations and NGOs on, instructing them to stop their operations.

Since 2000, millions of people in Zimbabwe have had great difficulty in gaining access to adequate food. One of the major causes of the food crisis in Zimbabwe has been the drop in domestic food production. While climatic factors, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and economic problems have all played a role in declining agricultural productivity, government policies and practices have exacerbated Zimbabwe's food security problems.

Zimbabwean media sources have reported the following 29 NGOs as having been suspended in Masvingo Province by this latest order: Strengthen Seed and Output Markets Project, Soap, Choose Life, Community Based Aids Programme, Zimbabwe Community Development Programme (ZCDP), GYPCE, Centre for HIV and Aids Care and Agriculture, Ambassadors, Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), Mucheke Community Conflict Centre, Free the Child Trust, Precare, Liestomy Colostomy Zimbabwe Trust (ILO ZimTrust), Masvingo Plan of Hope, Rujeko Conflict Management Association, Youth and Environment Action Support Network, Care and Support Trust, Friends of the Blind, Advocacy and Literacy Trust, ROHR Zimbabwe, Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation, Care International-Bikita, Fact Mutare, Mvuramanzi Trust, Safire, Khula Sizwe Trust, Heifer Project, Pump Aid and Zvishavane Water Project

Name: 29 non-governmental organizations in Zimbabwe  
Gender m/f: both

UA: 57/12 Index: AFR 46/003/2012 Issue Date: 22 February 2012