

URGENT ACTION

LEADERS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP AT RISK

Two leaders of the social justice movement Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, are being sought by police. They are at risk of arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment.

On 12 February, WOZA staged its ninth annual Valentine's Day peaceful protest in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. Since then police officers have paid regular visits to the homes of WOZA leaders **Jenni Williams** and **Magodonga Mahlangu**, attempting to find them. Officers have also contacted a human rights lawyer, demanding he bring the two WOZA leaders to Bulawayo Central Police station. The officer reportedly stated that the two 'must prepare themselves for a long detention'. However, police have given no indication of the reasons why they are searching for the two WOZA leaders, causing fears that the two could be arbitrarily arrested and detained. Both have been arbitrarily arrested on numerous occasions in the past following peaceful protests and have been detained for periods of up to 37 days.

Since February police appear to have launched a crackdown in which human rights activists across the country including WOZA members have been systematically targeted. In one incident, on 28 February, seven members of WOZA and Men of Zimbabwe Arise (MOZA) were arrested in Bulawayo and detained for two days. They were allegedly tortured using a method known as falanga, in which victims are beaten on the soles of their feet, while in the custody of the Law and Order section at Bulawayo Central police station. While in custody the detainees were also repeatedly asked for details of the whereabouts of Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu.

On 26 November 2010, the Justice of Appeal at the Supreme Court ruled that Williams and Mahlangu had been wrongfully arrested and detained following a peaceful protest in 2008, and as a result had had their rights and fundamental freedoms violated; and that the state had failed to protect the activists from this abuse.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Expressing concern about the systematic harassment by officers under their command of WOZA members including Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, and urging them to end these practices by the Law and Order Section of the Zimbabwe Republic Police;
- Urge them to ensure that in their conduct, officers are mindful of and respect the ruling by the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe on 26 November 2010, that in violation of their rights and fundamental freedoms, Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu were wrongfully arrested and detained over a peaceful demonstration in 2008.
- Urge them to ensure officers under their command respect and protect all human rights in line with Article 1 of the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operating Organisation Code of Conduct for Police Officials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 MAY 2011 TO:

Deputy Commissioner-General (Crime)

Innocent Matibiri
Zimbabwe Republic Police
P. O. Box 8807, Causeway
Harare, Zimbabwe
Fax: +263 4 253 212

**Salutation: Dear Deputy
Commissioner-General**

Officer in Charge,

Bulawayo Central Police Station
Zimbabwe Republic Police
PO Box 2329
Fife Street/ L Takawira Avenue
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Fax: +263 9 65763

Salutation: Dear Officer in Charge

And copies to:

Mrs Cheda
Chief Law Officer
Office of the Attorney General
Tredgold Building
Box 531
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Fax: + 263 9 66824

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since February 2003, members of the Zimbabwean social justice movement WOZA (Women of Zimbabwe Arise) have been repeatedly arrested while taking part in peaceful demonstrations against the worsening social, economic, and human rights situation in the country. While in detention, the women have been held in poor and overcrowded conditions, usually for periods ranging from a few hours to several days. WOZA activists have been threatened and assaulted by police officers, who have also obstructed their access to lawyers.

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