

# URGENT ACTION

## SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISTS NO LONGER AT RISK

**Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) leaders are no longer in hiding after a police search for them appears to have been called off. Ten members of WOZA, who were arrested in three separate incidents between 28 February and 7 March, had all charges against them withdrawn by a magistrates court in Bulawayo, on 10 May.**

Following WOZA's annual Valentines Day protest in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, on 12 February when hundreds of WOZA members peacefully marched through Bulawayo, distributing roses and cards, police had been searching for WOZA leaders **Jenni Williams** and **Magodonga Mahlangu**. As well as paying visits to their homes, officers reportedly told a human rights lawyer that the WOZA leaders should 'prepare themselves for a long detention'. As the police gave no reason for their search, the two feared they were at risk of arbitrary arrest and detention.

Following an Urgent Action issued on 25 March, police have not only halted the search but are reported to have refused to admit that it had even taken place when they were questioned by an official from the Attorney General's office who had received copies of the Urgent Action.

Since the Valentines Day march, police had also been systematically targeting WOZA members with arrest and detention. 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. They were charged with C/S 37 (1) (a) (i) of the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act Chapter 9:23: "Acting together with one or more other persons with him/her in any place realizing that there is a real risk or possibility of disturbing peace, security or order of the public".

The decision of the magistrate to withdraw all of the charges against the ten WOZA activists who were arrested between 28 February and 7 March suggests that the state was acting with respect for a Supreme Court ruling in November 2010. This stated that Jenni Williams and Magodonga 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

**Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is required on this case.**

This is the first update of UA 86/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR46/007/2011/en>

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISTS NO LONGER AT RISK

### 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.

Further information on UA: 86/11 Index: AFR 46/010/2011 Issue Date: 10 May 2011

**AMNESTY**  
**INTERNATIONAL**

