



Zimbabwe detains reporter on criminal defamation charges

New York, November, 18, 2010--Reporter Nqobani Ndlovu remained in police custody today despite expectations that he would appear in court on criminal defamation charges, local journalists told CPJ. Police in Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo, arrested Ndlovu, a reporter for the private weekly *Standard*, on Wednesday and charged him with criminal defamation in relation to an article concerning the cancellation of police promotion examinations, according to local journalists.

In the November 14 article, the 26-year-old reporter alleged that exams were being [scrapped](#) to allow war veterans and retired officers to return to the police force. Ndlovu wrote that the war veterans and retired officers, all loyal to the former ruling party ZANU-PF, would direct police operations ahead of next year's presidential and parliamentary elections. Police charged Ndlovu under Section 96 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for defaming Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri and the entire police force, Ndlovu's defense lawyer, Josphat Tshuma, said.

Ndlovu presented himself at the Bulawayo Central Police Station accompanied by his lawyer this morning, [NewsDay](#) Bulawayo Bureau Chief Dumisani Sibanda told CPJ. Tshuma said Ndlovu was asked to reveal his sources but he refused, [Agence France-Presse reported](#). (*NewsDay* is published and produced in the same office as *The Standard* and *The Independent* under the Alpha Media Holdings Company.) Police detained Sibanda on Tuesday for two hours of questioning.

"It is absurd in a democracy to use antiquated criminal defamation laws to prevent reporting on a public body such as the police," said CPJ Deputy Director Robert Mahoney. "We call on the authorities to release Nqobani Ndlovu immediately and drop all charges against him."

Police spokesman Oliver Mandipaka denied the allegations published in the *Standard* and accused the reporter of "criminal and irresponsible journalism of the highest order," in a public opinion piece published by the government daily [The Herald](#). Ndlovu had used information from sources within the police department, Sibanda said. "This is the main concern of the authorities," he told CPJ, "they are worried about disgruntled police officers leaking information to the media."

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