



Zimbabwe

15 March 2011

Acts of harassment and intimidation against Mr. Chikomo, Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum - ZWE 001 / 0311 / OBS 035

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Zimbabwe.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the continuing acts of harassment and intimidation faced by Mr. **Abel Chikomo**, Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum in Zimbabwe (the Forum).

According to the information received, on March 14, 2011, Mr. Abel Chikomo was summoned by the Law and Order Section of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) at the Harare Central Police station. Mr. Abel Chikomo, accompanied by his lawyer, Mr. Harrison Nkomo, was interrogated by a police officer on the work carried out by the Forum and its legal status. He was then informed that the investigating officer in charge was away and had not left the file or any instructions. Mr. Abel Chikomo was then allowed to leave the Police station and informed that he will be summoned to appear on a later date. Mr. Abel Chikomo had to report on March 15, 2011 in the afternoon and was told that he would be summoned again at a later stage.

Over the last months, Mr. Abel Chikomo has been interrogated and asked to report to the police on several occasions. According to the information received, these summons were related to activities carried out by the Forum, in particular the Campaign against Torture, the Transitional Justice National Survey and several press statements issued in 2011 on the resurgence of politically motivated violence.

The Observatory is concerned that these acts form part of an ongoing trend of harassment by the Zimbabwe Republic Police against the Forum and more generally against human rights defenders in the country, in the run-up to the referendum on the Constitution likely to take place in September 2011 and the parliamentary elections due in November 2011.

The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about this summons and fears for Mr. Abel Chikomo's physical and psychological integrity. The Observatory calls upon the Zimbabwe authorities to immediately and unconditionally put an end to acts of intimidation and harassment against Mr. Chikomo which merely seem to aim at sanctioning his human rights activities.

Background information

On November 11, 2010, Mr. Abel Chikomo was summoned by Bulawayo Law and Order police regarding the Forum's public campaign against torture. Bulawayo Law and Order police alleged that billboards put up by the Forum and calling on the Government of Zimbabwe to ratify the Convention against Torture and to outlaw torture were offensive.

On February 9, 2011, two days after the inception by the Forum of a Transitional Justice National Survey, the Machipisa police in Harare detained two researchers from the Forum and questioned them about this survey. They released them only after receiving the assurance that Mr. Chikomo will report the next morning to the Machipisa Police station.

The next day, on February 10, 2011, Mr. Chikomo was interrogated at the Machipisa Police Station about the work of the Forum. The police also insisted on the fact that the Forum required police clearance to carry out a survey and an authorisation from the Government of Zimbabwe. After approximately two hours of questioning, the Machipisa police said it was a very serious matter that required the intervention of the Harare Central Law and Order Section. As a consequence, Mr. Chikomo was transferred to the latter and questioned for more than six hours. Detectives from the Harare Central Law and Order Section also visited the Forum offices in the city of Harare on the same day accompanied by Mr. Chikomo. After the visit, he was released without charges but the police insisted they will call him later.

On March 10, 2011, two officers from the Harare Law and Order Section visited the Forum offices and requested to meet Mr. Chikomo who was at the time out of the office. They then asked for the organisation's registration certificate and number under the Private Voluntary Organisations Act. The two officers instructed that the Executive Director should report in person without fail on March 14, as he has "questions to answer" and needs to provide the certificate of registration.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Zimbabwe asking them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Abel Chikomo as well as all members of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and all human rights defenders in the country;
- ii. Put an end to any kinds of harassment against members of the Forum as well as against all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe;
- iii. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998 and notably :
 - its Article 1, which states that "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels";
 - Article 5 (b), which states that "For the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels [...] to form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups";

- its Article 6 (b) and (c), which states that "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others [...] as provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms and [...] to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters";
 - and its Article 12.2, which provides that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration".
- iv. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Zimbabwe.

Addresses:

- President of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, Office of the President, Private Bag 7700, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe, Fax : +263 4 708 211 / + 263.4.70.38.58;
- Mr. Khembo Mohadi, co-Minister of Home Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, 11th Floor Mukwati Building, Private Bag 7703, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe, Fax : +263 4 726 716;
- Mrs Terese Makone, co-Minister of Home Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, 11th Floor Mukwati Building, Private Bag 7703, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe, Fax : +263 4 726 716;
- Mr. Patrick Chinamasa, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Fax: + 263 4 77 29 99 / +263 4 252 155;
- Mr. Augustine Chihuri, Commissioner General, Police Headquarters, P.O. Box 8807, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe, Fax : +263 4 253 212 / 728 768 / 726 084;
- Mr. Justice Johannes Tomana, Attorney-General, Office of the Attorney, PO Box 7714, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe, Fax: + 263 4 77 32 47;
- Mrs. Chanetsa, Office of the Public Protector Fax: + 263 4 70 41 19;
- Ambassador Mr. Chitsaka Chipaziwa, Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe to the United Nations in Geneva, Chemin William Barbey 27, 1292 Chambésy, Switzerland, Fax: + 41 22 758 30 44, Email: mission.zimbabwe@ties.itu.int;
- Embassy of Zimbabwe in Brussels, 11 SQ Josephine Charlotte, 1200 Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Belgium, Fax: + 32 2 762 96 05 / + 32 2 775 65 10, Email: zimbrussels@skynet.be.

Please also write to the embassies of Zimbabwe in your respective country.

<http://www.fidh.org/Acts-of-harrassment-and-intimidation-against-Mr>