



Zimbabwe: Arbitrary detention of Hopewell Chin'ono (alias Daddy Hope)

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

New information

ZWE 002 / 0720 / OBS 084.4

Arbitrary detention /

Judicial harassment

Zimbabwe

January 15, 2021

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a partnership of FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), has received new information and requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Zimbabwe**.

New information:

The Observatory has been informed about the arbitrary detention of **Hopewell Chin'ono** (alias Daddy Hope), a freelance investigative journalist and filmmaker, who is very active in defending democracy, exposing State corruption and demanding transparency and accountability in the administration of public funds. Mr. Chin'ono exposed alleged corruption in the procurement of COVID-19 medical supplies[1].

On January 8, 2021, Hopewell Chin'ono was arrested at his home in Harare by police officers from the Law and Order Section, who took him to the Harare Central police station without any warrant. Mr. Chin'ono was then charged with "publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to the State", as defined in section 31(a) of the Zimbabwe's Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Chapter 9:23, for a tweet he wrote about the death of a child who had allegedly been beaten by the police, while

enforcing new lockdown measures[2]. If convicted, Mr. Chin'ono could face up to 20 years in prison. At the time of publication of this urgent appeal, Hopewell Chin'ono remains detained at Harare remand prison.

On January 14, 2021, Mr. Chin'ono was denied bail by a magistrate court in Harare on the ground that the "State fears that he will commit other offences". His lawyers will appeal this decision and his next hearing is scheduled for February 18, 2021.

The Observatory recalls that Hopewell Chin'ono was released on bail on September 2, 2020 after spending 44 days in pre-trial detention for "incitement to commit public violence". The Observatory further recalls that M. Chin'ono was re-arrested on November 3, 2020 for allegedly breaking bail conditions in relation with two tweets he published on October 2020. Hopewell Chin'ono was granted bail and was released from Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison on November 20, 2020, on condition that he would not use his Twitter account to write messages obstructing the course of justice.

The Observatory condemns the new arbitrary detention of Hopewell Chin'ono which is part of the ongoing judicial harassment against him since his first arrest on July 20, 2020 and seems once again to be only aimed at punishing him for his legitimate human rights activities. The Observatory calls upon the authorities of Zimbabwe to immediately and unconditionally release him and to put an end to any kind of harassment, including at the judicial level, against him as well as all human rights defenders in the country.

The Observatory expresses its concern over the use the authorities could give to the new lockdown restrictive measures in Zimbabwe as a means to intensify the harassment of human rights defenders in the country and calls upon the authorities to ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout Zimbabwe in accordance with international human rights instruments.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Zimbabwe asking them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical integrity and psychological well-being of Hopewell Chin'ono, as well as all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe;

ii. Immediately and unconditionally release Hopewell Chin'ono as his detention is arbitrary and only aimed at sanctioning his legitimate human rights activities;

iii. Put an end to all acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Hopewell Chin'ono, as well as all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe, and ensure that they are able to carry out their activities without hindrance.

Addresses:

- Mr. Emmerson Mnangagwa, President of Zimbabwe; Twitter: @edmnangagwa
- Mr. Kazembe Kazembe, Minister of Home Affairs; Email: thesecretary@moha.gov.zw,
- Mr. Sibusiso Moyo, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Email: mfa@zimfa.gov.zw
- Mr. Ziyambi Ziyambi, Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs; Email: justice@justice.gov.zw
- Ambassador Mr. Taonga Mushayavanhu, Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe to the United Nations in Geneva; Email: mission.zimbabwe@ties.itu.int
- Embassy of Zimbabwe in Brussels; Email: zimbrussels@skynet.be

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

Paris-Geneva, January 15, 2021

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The

objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of ProtectDefenders.eu, the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

- E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org
- Tel FIDH: +33 1 43 55 25 18
- Tel OMCT: +41 22 809 49 39

[1] The journalist was detained after reporting allegations involving US\$60 million worth of contracts awarded to companies at inflated prices for COVID-19 supplies, including Personal Protective Equipment, by the Ministry of Health.

[2] On January 2, 2021, the government of Zimbabwe announced a new 30-days lockdown beginning on January 5, 2021.