

CENTRE ON
HOUSING RIGHTS
AND EVICTIONS



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Ms. Hina Jilani
The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
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Honourable Ms. Jilani,

You are no doubt following events related to the crackdown on the Zimbabwean opposition. In the context of the current emergency, we would call your attention to threats to a number of housing rights activists in Zimbabwe, persons about whom we believe your office should make all possible efforts to see protected from harm as a result of their work as human rights defenders.

According to reports reaching COHRE from partner organizations, Zimbabwean police detained over 30 persons at a prayer meeting on 11 March at the Zimbabwe Grounds in Highfield. Reports also indicate that police used torture on the majority of detainees. The detainees included Mike Davies, Chairperson of the Combined Harare Residents Association; Madock Chivasa, Spokesperson for the National Constitutional Assembly; and Gladys Hlatwayo, Information Officer for the Crisis Coalition, each of whom are civic leaders that have been active in advocating to halt and attain remedies for the rights violations perpetrated by the Government of Zimbabwe.

Police also detained political leaders, Arthur Mutambara, Job Sikhala, Morgan Changamire, Frank Chamunorwa, Linos Mushonga, Godfrey Gumbo, and Clever Kafero of the Mutambara-led Movement for Democratic Change, as well as Morgan Tsvangirai, Tendai Biti, Nelson Chamisa, Sekai Holland, and Grace Kwinjeh of the Tsvangirai-led Movement for Democratic Change.

We urge you to undertake any and all measures available to your office to ensure any detrimental treatment to which these persons are subjected as a result of their status as human rights defenders – in particular their arbitrary detention by police -- is discontinued forthwith, that they receive urgent medical care upon their release from custody, and that, without delay, they are provided with due judicial remedy for the harms to which they have been subjected.

Thank you in advance for all efforts in this regard.

Sincerely,

Jean du Plessis
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