



HRDs Alert

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ZIM MAN SET FREE OVER ANTI-MNANGAGWA SLUR

A ZIMBABWEAN man is now a free man after authorities opted to withdraw criminal charges against him, which had emanated from allegations that he had criticised President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** for boasting that Zimbabwe had the strongest currency in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

The 44 year-old **Robert Zakeyo** of Rushinga in Mashonaland Central province, had been scheduled to stand trial at Bindura Magistrates Court on 31 January 2023 on charges of contravening section 33 (2)(b) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act.

Zakeyo, who was represented by **Gift Mtisi** of **Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights**, was to stand trial after the National Prosecuting Authority Acting Prosecutor-General **Nelson Mutsonziwa**, in November 2022, issued a Certificate of Authority to Prosecute.

Zakeyo, who is an entrepreneur at Rushinga Business Centre and who had been out of prison custody on bail, was arrested on 3 May 2020 after he was accused of posting a video on 1 May 2020 on a WhatsApp group called Rushinga Residents of President Mnangagwa issuing a press statement in relation to the strength of the local bond notes currency.

Prosecutors claimed that in the same video clip, there also appeared a lady who was dressed in opposition MDC Alliance party regalia uttering the word “musatanyoko” in vernacular purporting as if the lady was rubbishing President Mnangagwa’s sentiments on the competitiveness of Zimbabwe’s currency.

This reportedly incensed **Author Chinyoka**, the Acting Coordinator for the ruling ZANU PF party in Rushinga, who was the complainant in the matter, after he came across the messages while browsing through Rushinga Residents WhatsApp Group.

But Zakeyo is now a free man after prosecutors on Tuesday 31 January 2023 withdrew charges against him before plea.

Zakeyo is among dozens of people, who have been arrested since 2017, when President Mnangagwa seized power from the late Robert Mugabe, and charged with insulting or undermining the authority of the President.

In most cases, human rights defenders and ordinary citizens are targeted for expressing themselves on matters to do with or connected with the President.

ENDS

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