

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST RELEASED BUT CHARGES STILL PENDING

On 7 May, journalist Blessed Mhlanga was granted provisional release from prison. He had been detained for 72 days after being arrested and charged with 'transmitting data messages that incite violence or damage to property' on 24 February. Prior to his arrest, he had interviewed a war veteran and former senior member of the ruling Zanu-PF party, who criticized President Mnangagwa. The Zimbabwean authorities must drop all charges against Blessed Mhlanga as his prosecution is unjust and in contravention of Zimbabwe's constitutional and international obligations to respect and uphold the rights to freedom of expression and press freedoms.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Honourable Loyce Matanda-Moyo

Prosecutor General

National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe

101 Kwame Nkrumah Ave

Harare

Zimbabwe

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Dear Honourable Loyce Matanda-Moyo,

I welcome the news that journalist **Blessed Mhlanga** was provisionally released from detention on 7 May. However, I am writing to express grave concern about the unjust prosecution he has been subjected to.

On 21 February, the Zimbabwe Republic Police called for information on the whereabouts of Blessed Mhlanga for allegedly contravening Section 164 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. On 24 February, Blessed Mhlanga presented himself to the police who arrested Blessed Mhlanga and charged him with 'transmitting data messages that incite violence or damage to property' under the Cyber and Data Protection Act. His bail application was denied multiple times, and his first appeal was also rejected by the High court. He was only released on bail following a successful second appeal. His trial was due to start on 14 May and was postponed to 17 June. If convicted Blessed Mhlanga could be fined or face up to 10 years imprisonment.

Blessed Mhlanga's arbitrary arrest and prosecution appears to be linked to an interview he conducted with war veteran and a former member of Zanu-PF central committee, Blessed Geza, on 27 January and 11 February respectively, who criticized President Mnangagwa and demanded his resignation for failing to address corruption and the deteriorating economic conditions in the country.

Blessed Mhlanga's unjust prosecution violates his right to freedom of expression.

I therefore call on you to act immediately and drop all charges against Blessed Mhlanga. I further urge you and the authorities to uphold and ensure respect for the human rights of everyone in the country including the rights to freedom of expression and media, as enshrined in Zimbabwe's Constitution and the country's international human rights treaties that Zimbabwe is signatory to.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Journalists in Zimbabwe have continued to face intimidation, harassment and arbitrary arrests for doing their work. On 18 March, investigative journalist Watson Munyaka was killed after reportedly being thrown out of a moving car in Marondera, Mashonaland East. Watson Munyaka, who was a researcher and journalist at *Dug Up*, a publication known for its political reporting on corruption, was allegedly abducted, driven to Marondera where his body was found with all his belongings.

Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression and media freedom. Zimbabwe also has international human rights obligations to uphold human rights and press freedom and to create an enabling environment for free and independent journalism including by respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling the rights to freedom of opinion and expression as guaranteed under article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to which Zimbabwe is a state party.

This is not the first time that Blessed Mhlanga has been targeted by the authorities in connection to his journalist work. In May 2022, he was arrested and charged with 'disorderly conduct' after he recorded the arrest of former opposition MP, Job Sikhala. The police allegedly punched him, smashed his phone and arrested him despite him notifying them that he is a journalist. He was later acquitted.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 18 September 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Blessed Mhlanga (He, Him, His)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr46/9185/2025/en/>