

URGENT ACTION

RELEASE ARBITRARILY DETAINED JOURNALIST

On 24 February, journalist Blessed Mhlanga was arrested and charged with 'transmitting data messages that incite violence or damage to property'. Prior to his arrest, he had interviewed a war veteran and senior member of the ruling Zanu-PF party, who criticized President Mnangagwa. The authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Blessed Mhlanga as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights. Authorities must drop all the charges against him. Blessed Mhlanga's detention is arbitrary and in contravention of Zimbabwe's constitutional and international obligations to respect and uphold the right of everyone to freedom of expression and press freedom.

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

Honourable Ziyambi Ziyambi

*Minister of Justice. Legal and Parliamentary Affairs
Mgandane Dlodlo Building (New Gvt Complex)
Cnr Samora Machel Avenue & Simon Vengesai
Harare, Zimbabwe
Emails: pr@justice.gov.zw; justice@justice.gov.zw
X: @MoJLPA*

Dear Honourable Ziyambi Ziyambi,

*I am writing to express grave concern about the arbitrary detention of journalist **Blessed Mhlanga**.*

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 and charged him with 'transmitting data messages that incite violence or damage to property.' On 25 February, he was denied bail by the Harare Magistrate court. His appeal was also rejected by the High court. His trial is due to begin on 4 April 2025.

Blessed Mhlanga's arbitrary detention appears to be linked to an interview he conducted with war veteran and 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 allegations of corruption and the deteriorating economic conditions in the country.

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.

Blessed Mhlanga's arrest and continued detention violates his rights to liberty, freedom of expression and media freedom.

I therefore call on you and other authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Blessed Mhlanga, as he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights, and drop all the charges against him. I further urge you and other authorities to uphold and ensure respect for the human rights of everyone in the country including the right to freedom of expression and media freedom as enshrined in Zimbabwe's Constitution and the country's international human rights treaties such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to which Zimbabwe is a state party.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 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)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

His Excellency Colonel Christian Katsande
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary
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Monday-Friday 09.00-13.00 & 14.00–17.00
Salutation: Your Excellency