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## **Zimbabwe: Human rights defender Hopewell Chin'ono detained and charged**

On 20 July 2020, human rights defender and journalist **Hopewell Chin'ono** was arbitrarily arrested at his home in Harare and charged with 'incitement to commit public violence'. He remains in detention at Harare Central police station.

[Hopewell Chin'ono](#) is an investigative journalist and human rights defender. His work primarily focuses on investigating and exposing corruption and the mismanagement of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. In June 2020, the defender exposed an alleged case of corruption involving the former Ministry of Health for awarding contracts to pharmaceutical companies selling COVID-19 medical supplies at inflated prices.

On 20 July 2020, police officers forcibly entered the defender's home and arrested him, despite not possessing an arrest warrant against him. Hopewell Chin'ono was detained in Harare Central police station and charged with 'incitement to commit public violence', and his request for provisional release was denied on 24 July 2020. His hearing at the High Court of Harare was first scheduled for 7 August, however it has since been postponed to 12 August.

The charges against Hopewell Chin'ono are in relation to posts he made on social media, calling on citizens to participate in the anti-corruption demonstrations that took place on 31 July around the country. Authorities and the investigating officer on the case claimed that the posts incited people to participate in gatherings that would promote a breach of the peace, and that the aim of these demonstrations was to overthrow the Government of Zimbabwe. The aim of the protests however, was to denounce corruption, mismanagement of the economic crisis and the lack of reforms by the government.

The defender believes he has been targeted in reprisal for his investigation and reporting on the alleged case of government corruption involving COVID-19 medical supplies in June 2020. The Minister was dismissed from his role and arrested as a result of the scandal.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the arbitrary detention of Hopewell Chin'ono and the charges brought against him, as it believes he has been targeted solely for his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

Front Line Defenders also expresses concern regarding the crackdown on peaceful demonstrations against corruption and the repression of human rights defenders in Zimbabwe, through arbitrary arrests and detentions, fabricated charges and alleged abductions. Front Line Defenders condemns the ongoing human rights violations, and recognises them as part of an effort to suppress dissenting voices, specifically human rights defenders critical of the government, prevalent corruption, the economic crisis and the lack of reforms in Zimbabwe.

## **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Zimbabwe to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Hopewell Chin'ono, and cease all further harassment towards him, as Front Line Defenders believes that he was arbitrarily arrested and is currently detained as a result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Hopewell Chin'ono while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders arrested in relation with their human rights work, including those investigating and exposing corruption, and cease all further harassment towards them, as Front Line Defenders believes that they were arbitrarily arrested and are currently detained as a result of their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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