

Zimbabwean journalist charged for smuggling journalists

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Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) is closely watching the trial of Zimbabwean freelance journalist Jeffrey Moyo, who was in court his week to face charges of smuggling two *New York Times* journalists into the country last year.

Moyo is said to have given these two journalists bogus credentials, a charge that even the government has previously admitted is on 'shaky ground.'

"Moyo's detention highlights the ongoing harassment of journalists in Zimbabwe. It appears that prosecutors are using Moyo as an example to intimidate the press. We are very concerned," said CFE executive director Anton Harber.

Moyo, together with Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) official Thabang Manhika, were arrested on 26 May last year. Manhika was accused of processing fake accreditations for the two *New York Times* reporters, Christina Goldbaum and João Silva.

The two trials were separated this week. Moyo is represented by human rights lawyers Douglas Coltart and Beatrice Mtetwa.

In a telephonic interview, Mtetwa said that the whole of last week they were in Bulawayo for Moyo's trial, but the state was still awaiting two witnesses. He is due to return to court on 14 February and is currently on bail.

Mtetwa said the state does not have a solid case, nor do they have enough evidence against Moyo.

The prosecutors have provided no evidence so far to back their contention that the accreditation documents were fake, Mtetwa said. Moreover, the lawyer

said, Moyo has provided the police with receipts that show he obtained the documents legally and that Moyo believed he had been “dealing with a bona fide ZMC official who is authorized to accredit journalists”.

Threats against Zimbabwean journalists have increased in recent years. Last week it was reported by Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) that freelance journalist Mary Mundeya was arrested on January 22 while covering a demonstration by teachers in Harare. She was detained at Harare Central Police Station for about two hours before being released without charges.

Dr Tabani Moyo, Regional Secretariat Director for MISA Zimbabwe, called on the Zimbabwe police to desist from unjustifiably interfering with the work of media practitioners.

“Journalists should be allowed to undertake their professional duties without fear,” he said.

CFE calls on the government of Zimbabwe to respect the constitutional rights of journalists.

We call on the regional body, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to exert pressure on Zimbabwe to allow journalists to do their work without any fear of intimidation and persecution.

Zimbabwe was ranked at 130 out of 180 countries on Reporters without Borders’ Media Freedom Index in 2021, down from 126 in 2020.

*The Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting and expanding the right to free expression for ALL, and enabling EVERYONE to exercise this right to the full, whether it by speaking out, by protesting, by revealing information, by blowing the whistle on wrong-doing, by arguing, debating, writing, painting, composing or just by shouting out an opinion.

More information is available at: <https://freeexpression.org.za/>

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