



CFE Statement on Zimbabwean Journalist Blessed Mhlanga's continued detention

16 April 2025

Monday marked Zimbabwean journalist Blessed Mhlanga's 50th day behind bars. His unlawful arrest and detention is but one of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's many attempts to silence the press and criminalize speech under unconstitutional laws.

Mhlanga, a senior journalist at Heart and Soul TV, has been charged with inciting violence and unrest after interviews with liberation veteran and former ZANU-PF politician Blessed Geza. Geza accused Mnangagwa of corruption and called for his immediate resignation in the November 2024 and January 2025 interviews Mhlanga conducted with Geza.

Since his arrest on 24 February 2025 for having purportedly violated a section of the criminal law which prohibits transmission of data, Mhlanga has been denied bail an extraordinary three times on the flimsiest of pretexts – including that he might interfere with state witnesses whose identities are not known to him

Mhlanga also suffered arrest in 2022, again seemingly for simply doing his job -- covering the attempted arrest of an opposition politician. His arrest and continued detention at present represents the furtherance of a campaign both Mnangagwa and his predecessor, Robert Mugabe, have long waged: ruthlessly targeting independent media and suppressing critical voices.

Nicole Fritz, executive director of the Campaign for Free Expression (CFE), said: "It is high-time that Blessed Mhlanga have his freedom restored, be returned to his family and be able to conduct his profession unhindered. It is long overtime that the Mnangagwa government cease its relentless suppression of freedom of expression and allow Zimbabweans both to call and organise for better government. We call on the diplomatic community, and on South Africa in particular, to make Blessed Mhlanga's continued incarceration a matter for general engagement on Zimbabwe-related issues."

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