

20 June 2025



STATEMENT: CFE Condemns Intimidation of Zimbabwean Journalist Matthew Takaona

The Campaign for Free Expression (CFE) strongly condemns the recent arrest and harassment of journalist and publisher Matthew Takaona by Zimbabwe’s Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO).

What happened?

On Tuesday June 3, Takaona and a group of parents were lawfully cutting grass outside Mushayavanhu Primary School using simple tools—sickles and slashers—as part of a community initiative to improve road visibility and enhance child safety. Instead of a police intervention, a CIO-led team of five agents detained him, citing no formal charges.

Due process denied

Takaona was held for approximately five hours before being released later that evening, as authorities couldn’t substantiate any legal grounds to press charges. This bypass of legal protocol, whereby intelligence officers detain journalists instead of proper law enforcement, is deeply concerning.

Pattern of targeting

In November 2024, Takaona fled Zimbabwe after uncovering electoral irregularities in Mozambique, where Zimbabwean citizens allegedly cast ballots across the border. This arrest appears to fit a broader pattern of suppressing critical voices and intimidating journalists.

Community action criminalised

The grass-cutting was a community-led safety project, yet CIOs intervened, framing normal civic action as political defiance. Observers noted villagers “happily armed with sickles and slashers” to keep their roads safe, yet they were met with force.

CIO overreach

By arresting a journalist, bypassing police, and detaining him without due process, CIO agents breached both legal norms and professional boundaries. These actions suggest a troubling trend of using intelligence services to intimidate independent media.

For media inquiries or support contact:

info@freeexpression.org.za

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