

From:

Date:

Innocent Matibiri
Deputy Commissioner-General (Crime)
Zimbabwe Republic Police
P.O. Box 8807, Causeway
Harare, ZIMBABWE

Dear Deputy Commissioner General,

you may know that the movement „Women of Zimbabwe Arise“ (WOZA) which was formed in 2003 is aiming at providing a united voice and lobbying to speak out on issues affecting their day-to-day lives to women from all walks of life. They endeavour to empower female leadership and encourage women to stand up for their rights and freedoms. The fact that WOZA is supported by Amnesty International certifies their peacefulness. In 2009, prominent WOZA member Magodonga Mahlangu and founder Jenni Williams received the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award.

From their beginnings until this day, WOZA members have repeatedly been arrested while taking part in peaceful demonstrations to ask for social, economic and human rights improvements. For these peaceful activities, many have been arrested and detained in appalling conditions. As a form of punishment, some of those held in police custody have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and denied access to medical care, food and lawyers.

The treatment of WOZA illustrates an increasing intolerance of peaceful demonstrations. It also highlights the malicious use of the law, particularly the combination of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Miscellaneous Offences Act (MOA), to allow arbitrary arrests and detentions and to facilitate a range of other human rights violations by the police.

Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu were detained for 13 days between 21 September 2011 and 4 October 2011 after participating in a peaceful march. They have been charged with "kidnapping and theft".

Dear Deputy Commissioner General, I kindly ask you to ensure that the ongoing arbitrary arrest, intimidation, harassment and ill-treatment of WOZA activists is stopped and to ensure their right to exercise their constitutionally and internationally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Trusting in your understanding and positive action, I remain

Yours faithfully