

**ZIMBABWE: Freelance journalist and internet writer Frank Chikowore charged but remains detained - fears of ill treatment; another freelancer charged and then released**

**BACKGROUND: Frank Chikowore** (28), freelance journalist for publications including the private weekly *The Standard*, who also runs a popular blog covering the 2008 elections, has been detained since April 15, 2008. That day, Chikowore reportedly went to cover a strike called by the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to demand release of the March 29 election results. He and 15 others, said to be MDC supporters, were arrested. Chikowore was brought home by the police who searched his home without a warrant and confiscated his equipment before taking him to an unknown location. Although the police initially denied detaining Chikowore, he was later discovered at Harare Central Police Station. On April 17, Chikowore's lawyer filed an urgent High Court application to have the journalist taken to hospital due to abdominal and chest pains, but he has yet to receive the required treatment.

On April 21, Chikowore was charged with "public violence" in relation to the burning of a bus on the morning of April 15. Under Zimbabwean law, individuals should be charged within 48 hours of their arrest. Other accusations including reporting without accreditation (dropped when it was discovered that he is accredited by both the Media and Information Commission and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission), arson and attempted murder. On April 22, Chikowore was remanded in custody, reportedly until May 5.

**Stanley Karombo**, freelance journalist for Spanish news agency EFE among others, was detained on April 18 and held incommunicado for three days. According to the Zimbabwean Union of Journalists (ZUJ), the police repeatedly denied any knowledge of Karombo and his whereabouts; however, he was subsequently found at Harare Central police station. Karombo was released on April 21; it is not known whether or not he had been charged.

Meanwhile, three foreign print journalists were subjected to week-long detentions and trials this month before returning home. *New York Times* correspondent **Barry Berak** and contributor to the *Daily Telegraph* **Stephan Bevan** were detained for five days, accused of covering the elections without accreditation. On April 16 they were acquitted of all charges on lack of evidence and returned to South Africa, where they are based. The same day **Jonathan Clayton**, correspondent for *The Times* (UK) was sentenced to a 20 billion Zimbabwean dollar fine (approx. 150 euros) or six months in prison for allegedly telling immigration officials he was a tourist rather than a journalist. Clayton reportedly appeared in court wearing leg irons after having been detained for a week. He was subsequently deported to South Africa.

April has seen a number of other attacks against broadcast journalists and other media workers as part of a post-election crackdown. According to an Amnesty International report (April 18), at least one person has died and more than 240 people have been injured as a result of state-sponsored violence following the elections.

For a full list of Honorary Members, click on the following link:  
<http://www.pencanada.ca/prison/HonoraryMembers.php>.

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President  
His Excellency President Robert G Mugabe  
Office of the President  
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Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe

Fax: +263 4 734 644

Your Excellency:

As a member of PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the worldwide writers' organization, International PEN, I join my colleagues in deep concern over the wave of attacks on journalists in Zimbabwe since the elections.

In particular, I am protesting the continuing detention of freelance journalist and internet writer **Frank Chikowore**, charged with 'public violence' on April 21, 2008, almost a week after his arrest. He has reportedly been denied medical treatment while in detention.

Writers around the world also remain seriously concerned about a number of other attacks against print journalists in Zimbabwe in the wake of the contested March 2008 elections: freelancer **Stanley Karombo** was detained incommunicado for three days before being released on April 21. Three foreign correspondents have also been detained and put on trial this month.

The Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of International PEN fears that these journalists are being targeted for their reporting on the recent elections, in violation of their right to freedom of expression. I join the WiPC in calling on the authorities to substantiate the charges against Chikowore, and to allow him access to medical and legal assistance and bail provision, or alternatively to release him immediately and unconditionally.

Sincerely,  
[your name and address here]

Please send a copy of your letter to:

Commissioner-General of Police  
Augustine Chihuri  
Zimbabwe Republic Police  
Police Headquarters, PO Box 8807, Causeway  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
Fax: +263 4 253 212  
Salutation: Dear Commissioner-General

Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression in Africa  
Commissioner Faith Pansy Tlakula  
African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights  
48 Kairaba Avenue, P. O. Box 673  
Banjul, Gambia  
Fax: +220 439076  
Email: [achpr@achpr.org](mailto:achpr@achpr.org)

Please send a copy of your letter to the following Canadian officials:

Ms Roxanne Dubé, Ambassador  
Embassy of Canada to Zimbabwe  
Email: [hrare@international.gc.ca](mailto:hrare@international.gc.ca)  
Fax: 011 2634 707 568

Jeff Senior  
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