Honourable Loyce Matanda-Moyo
Prosecutor General
National Prosecuting Authority of Zimbabwe
101 Kwame Nkrumah Ave
Harare

Zimbabwe

Dear Honourable Loyce Matanda-Moyo,

I welcome the news that journalist Blessed Mhlanga was provisionally released from detention on 7 May. However, I am writing to express grave concern about the unjust prosecution he has been subjected to.

On 21 February, the Zimbabwe Republic Police called for information on the whereabouts of Blessed Mhlanga for allegedly contravening Section 164 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. On 24 February, Blessed Mhlanga presented himself to the police who arrested Blessed Mhlanga and charged him with 'transmitting data messages that incite violence or damage to property’ under the Cyber and Data Protection Act. His bail application was denied multiple times, and his first appeal was also rejected by the High court. He was only released on bail following a successful second appeal. His trial was due to start on 14 May and was postposed to 17 June. If convicted Blessed Mhlanga could be fined or face up to 10 years imprisonment.

Blessed Mhlanga’s arbitrary arrest and prosecution appears to be linked to an interview he conducted with war veteran and a former member of Zanu-PF central committee, Blessed Geza, on 27 January and 11 February respectively, who criticized President Mnangagwa and demanded his resignation for failing to address corruption and the deteriorating economic conditions in the country.

Blessed Mhlanga’s unjust prosecution violates his right to freedom of expression.

I therefore call on you to act immediately and drop all charges against Blessed Mhlanga. I further urge you and the authorities to uphold and ensure respect for the human rights of everyone in the country including the rights to freedom of expression and media, as enshrined in Zimbabwe’s Constitution and the country’s international human rights treaties that Zimbabwe is signatory to.

Yours sincerely,

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