

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS IN MALAWI DETAINED AFTER PROTEST

Five activists in Malawi were arrested and detained by police on Friday 14 October for engaging in a peaceful protest outside parliament in Lilongwe. They are being detained at three police stations in the Malawian capital city. One of the detainees, Brian Nyasulu, is diabetic has been denied medical attention.

Five activists, **Billy Mayaya, Habiba Osman, Brian Nyasulu, Ben Chiza Mkandawire and Comfort Chitseko**, were arrested on 14 October for being part of a small demonstration. The demonstrators called for President Bingu wa Mutharika to call a referendum for an early election, demanded the resignation of Police Inspector General Peter Mukhita and an investigation into his alleged involvement in the death of student activist Robert Chasowa.

Police charged the activists with holding an illegal demonstration under the Police Act alleging that they did not get permission from the police. Billy Mayaya, Habiba Osman and Comfort Chitseko are being detained at Lumbadzi police station in Lilongwe, while Ben Chiza Mkandawire is detained at Kanengo police station and Brian Nyasulu is at Area 18 police station, both also in Lilongwe. Amnesty International is concerned that police have denied Brian Nyasulu, who is diabetic, access to medical treatment.

Amnesty International considers all the detained activists to be prisoners of conscience, arrested solely for exercising their right to peaceful protest, and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Urging the President of Malawi and the Inspector General of Police to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of the five activists.
- Urging the Inspector General of Police to allow Brian Nyasulu access to medical care.
- Expressing concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in Malawi and calling on the police to respect the right of all Malawians to freedom of expression, association and assembly.
- Urging the President and Police to end systematic harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders by government officials and members of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 NOVEMBER 2011 TO:

President and Chief of the Police Service

Bingu wa Mutharika
Office of the President
Capital Hill Circle
Private Bag 301, Lilongwe 3
Malawi
Fax: +265 1 788 456 /+256 1 773 728
Email: opc@malawi.gov.mw

Salutation: Your Excellency

Inspector General of Police

Peter Mukhito
Malawi Police Services Headquarters
Lilongwe
Malawi
Fax: + 265 1 797 979 /+265 1 796 835

Salutation: Dear Inspector General

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Billy Mayaya is the programme manager of the Church and Society programme of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod. Habiba Osman is a lawyer with Norwegian Church Aid; Comfort Chitseko is the 22 year-old brother of Habiba Osman

Robert Chasowa was a student and chair of the student activist group Youth for Democracy. His death in September was ruled a suicide by police, who claimed that he jumped from a building. Robert Chasowa's family and fellow activists contested this version of events, pointing to injuries detailed in a post-mortem by an independent pathologist that are inconsistent with a fall from a high building.

Since the 20 July protests Amnesty International has noted an increase in cases of threats against human rights defenders, including death threats, by members of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party. Many human rights defenders have been forced into hiding. In September an office and a house, belonging to prominent activists Rafiq Hajat and Rev Macdonald Sembereka respectively, were petrol bombed. Another house belonging to opposition politician Salim Bagus was also petrol bombed.

Name: Billy Mayaya (m), Habiba Osman (f), Brian Nyasulu (m), Ben Chiza Mkandawire (m) and Comfort Chitseko (m)

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