

22 June 2021

Zimbabwe: Detention of woman human rights defender Alice Kuvheya

On 14 June 2021, woman human rights defender **Alice Kuvheya** was arrested at St Mary's Police Station in Chitungwiza upon presenting herself at the police station in the presence of a lawyer. She was charged with inciting criminal activity and gathering with intent to incite public violence. The woman human rights defender was released on 17 June 2021, but is scheduled to appear in Chitungwiza Magistrates Court 23 June 2021.

[Alice Kuvheya](#) is a woman human rights defender and director of Chitungwiza Residents Trust (CHITREST). CHITREST is a community and membership based residents association based in Chitungwiza. CHITREST was founded in 2013 and is legally registered as a Trust. The community trust works to provide civic education and human rights advocacy at a community level, but also carries out advocacy on health and environmental issues. Alice Kuvheya has been advocating for the protection of informal trade structures and homes in Chitungwiza and Harare.

On 14 June 2021, woman human rights defender Alice Kuvheya was arrested at St Mary's Police Station in Chitungwiza upon presenting herself in the presence of a lawyer. The police had been looking for her at her home for a week and the woman human rights defender had gone into hiding to allow the situation to de-escalate. The arrest comes only four days after Alice Kuvheya, on behalf of CHITREST, had obtained a court order stopping the local and central governments from demolishing informal trade structures and homes in Chitungwiza and Harare. The charges against the human rights defender are inciting criminal activity, and gathering with intent to incite public violence. Alice Kuvheya has had access to her family and her lawyer. The woman human rights defender appeared in court on 16 June at the Chitungwiza Magistrates Court and was remanded out of custody. She was scheduled to appear in court again on 17 June 2021 and was remanded out of custody until 23 June 2021 when she is scheduled to appear in court again.

On 11 June 2021 the Provincial Development Coordinator, the senior government official in Harare Province, made a [public statement](#) threatening to get CHITREST leaders arrested and the organisation de-registered. He has reiterated this in press statements on radio, television and in newspapers and described the CHITREST court action as an act of mischief which must be punished. In response to these threats, Alice Kuvheya made a statement in a video released online calling on authorities to follow the law when evicting residents or informal traders from their workshops. In the video, the woman human rights defender takes a stand against the illegal demolition of vending stalls and called on the residents and informal traders to peacefully resist illegal evictions and demolitions by the government. The Provincial Development Coordinator responded on [Twitter](#) further antagonizing the human rights defender by implying that she and members of CHITREST are politicians and former councillors.

Front Line Defenders condemns the detention of human rights defender Alice Kuvheya and believes that she is being targeted solely because of her peaceful and legitimate human rights work in Zimbabwe. Furthermore it expresses its concern regarding the targeting of members of CHITREST for their work in peacefully resisting illegal evictions and demolitions by the government.

Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities of Zimbabwe to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally drop the charges against Alice Kuvheya, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Immediately cease all further harassment of Alice Kuvheya and CHITREST, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate work in resisting illegal evictions and demolitions by the government;
3. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declarations stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defenders;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including harassment, namely the members of CHITREST.
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