

# URGENT ACTION



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5 December 2008

UA 333/08

Enforced disappearance/Fear for Safety

ZIMBABWE

Jestina Mukoko (f) director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)

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Human rights activist Jestina Mukoko was forcibly taken from her home by a group of at least 12 armed plain-clothes men who identified themselves as policemen on 3 December. More than 48 hours after her abduction her whereabouts remain unknown. Lawyers have checked with police stations in the capital Harare and the town of Norton, but have failed to locate her.

Jestina Mukoko is the director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), a local human rights organization that is involved in monitoring and documenting human rights violations in Zimbabwe. According to an eyewitness more than a dozen men, believed to be state security agents, stormed her home in Norton and took her by force while still barefoot and dressed in her pajamas. The men then drove off in two cars, one of which did not have registration plates.

Amnesty International has been told that on 29 November another group of about six men, believed to be part of the same group, tried to enter her house during her absence after claiming to be workmates.

Jestina Mukoko's abduction is consistent with an established pattern of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders by the Zimbabwean authorities in an attempt to discourage them from documenting and publicizing the human rights violations that are taking place.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Human rights defenders in Zimbabwe operate in a very restrictive environment. They face repeated arrests, torture and ill-treatment, intimidation and harassment by state security forces and other non-state actors aligned to President Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front.

Amnesty International has documented several cases of enforced disappearances similar to that of Jestina Mukoko this year alone. Some of the victim's bodies were later found dumped. The Zimbabwean authorities have been unwilling to investigate these cases of enforced disappearances, including politically motivated killings of human rights defenders and political activists.

In the run up to the 27 June presidential election run-off, scores of supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) were abducted and killed. Thousands were tortured at camps that were set up with the acquiescence of the security forces. Nearly 200 people died as a result of state-sponsored violence during that time.

Between 27 October and 1 November 15 people, most of them MDC activists from Mashonaland West province, including a baby, were abducted from their homes and have not been seen since. Zimbabwean authorities are still to comply with an order that was issued by the High Court on 11 November compelling them to bring the victims before the courts.

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***Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.***

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:**

- expressing grave concern over the abduction or arrest of Jestina Mukoko, the director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, who was forcibly taken from her home by people believed to be state security agents on 3 December 2008;
- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Jestina Mukoko and not to ill treat her.
- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to allow Jestina Mukoko access to her lawyer, family as well as food, water, warm clothes and medication;
- stating that Amnesty International considers that Jestina Mukoko is solely detained for expressing her views, without advocating violence, and considers her a prisoner of conscience. Amnesty International therefore calls for her immediate and unconditional release;
- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to immediately end its practice of enforced disappearances and follow international standards on arrest and detention for persons under criminal investigation;
- expressing concern about continued harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and political activists by the Zimbabwean security forces;
- calling on the Zimbabwean authorities to immediately investigate all those responsible for the enforced disappearances, including those who sanctioned it and bring them to account.

**APPEALS TO:**

*Please note: It may be difficult to get through to Zimbabwe by fax so please keep trying, alternatively send letters.*

President Robert G. Mugabe  
Office of the President  
Munhumutapa Building  
Samora Machel Avenue  
Box 7700 Causeway  
Harare, ZIMBABWE

**Fax:** 011 263 4 734644  
**Salutation:** Dear President

Commissioner General of Police Augustine Chihuri  
Zimbabwe Republic Police General Head Quarters  
PO Box 8807  
Causeway  
Harare  
ZIMBABWE

**Fax:** 011 263 4 253 212  
**Salutation:** Dear Commissioner

Commander of the Zimbabwe Defense Forces  
General Constantine Chiwenga  
Ministry of Defence  
H/Q Defence House cnr Kwame Nkhuruma  
3rd Street  
Private Bag 7713  
Causeway, Harare  
ZIMBABWE

**Fax:** 011 263 4 796762  
**Salutation:** Dear General

Attorney General  
Justice Bharat Patel  
Office of the Attorney General  
Private Bag 7714  
Causeway  
Harare  
ZIMBABWE

**Fax:** 011 263 4 777 049  
**Salutation:** Dear Attorney General

**COPIES TO:**

Zimbabwe Peace Project  
PO Box BE 427  
Belvedere  
Harare  
ZIMBABWE

**Fax:** 011 263 4 778311

Ambassador Dr. Machivenyika T. Mapuranga  
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe  
1608 New Hampshire Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20009

**Fax:** 1 202 483 9326

**Email:** [info@zimbabwe-embassy.us](mailto:info@zimbabwe-embassy.us)

**Via website:**

<http://www.zimbabwe-embassy.us/contact.html>

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

**Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 16 January 2009.**