



THE SADC Lawyers' Association

SADC Lawyers Association Condemns the Harassment of Civil Society Representatives by Zimbabwean State Security Agents at the SADC Extraordinary Summit In Windhoek.

The SADC Lawyers Association is appalled by the harassment of civil society organizations' representatives at the SADC Extraordinary Summit in Windhoek on 20 May 2011 by Zimbabwean state security agents accompanied by Namibian police officers. Various members of civil society organizations from Zimbabwe and the region were at the Summit to highlight their concerns on issues that were on the summit agenda, including the crisis in Zimbabwe and the future of the SADC Tribunal.

The Civil Society Organizations held meetings and press conferences in various venues in Windhoek to highlight their concerns. At the venue of the Summit, Safari Court Hotel, some Zimbabwean state security agents who refused to identify themselves targeted Zimbabwe National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO) chairperson Dadirai Chikwengo, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition officials MacDonald Lewanika, Pedzisayi Ruhanya and Dewa Mavhinga and other representatives of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network who were distributing statements with civil society demands to the summit. They were taken away from the hotel by the Namibian police under the watchful eye of the Zimbabwean state security agents. This was despite the fact that ZANU PF youths, led by one Nguni were allowed to freely distribute glossy booklets titled "Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) and the Culture of Violence" without any interference from either the Namibian Police or the Zimbabwe state security agents.

The SADC Lawyers' Association Executive Secretary Makanatsa Makonese, Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights Irene Petras, Lloyd Kuvheya of the Southern Africa Litigation Centre and Joy Mabhenge of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in Zimbabwe were also targeted whilst holding a meeting at the Safari Court Hotel. They were taken from the hotel into the parking area by armed police officers and interrogated by aggressive Zimbabwe state security agents for more than an hour. The security agents asked personal questions about the CSO representatives' addresses in Zimbabwe, villages of origin, who had paid for their tickets to Namibia and where they were staying in Namibia. They also demanded the four's passports to record their national identity numbers and other identity information.

Another civil society representative Jealousy Mawarire was briefly detained for taking pictures whilst a car that was being used by Dewa Mavhinga was confiscated. Both Mawarire and the car were only released after the intervention of Namibian human rights lawyer Norman Tjombe.

The SADC Lawyers Association is dismayed that the Zimbabwe state security agents continue to behave as a law unto themselves, even on foreign land. To this end the Association supports the call made by the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights on 20 May 2011 for the reform of the Zimbabwean security sector as enunciated in the Zimbabwe Global Political Agreement. It is sad that the Namibian police officials allowed themselves to be used by these agents to harass harmless and peaceful civil society organization representatives who had not committed any offence. The Government of Zimbabwe, state security agents in that country and SADC Governments are reminded that civil society organizations and individual citizens have a right to be heard and to participate in issues that affect how they are governed.

Issued for and on behalf of the SADC Lawyers Association

By Thoba Poyo-Dlwati

President

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