

19 September 2019

### **Zimbabwe: Abduction of human rights defender Peter Magombeyi**

On 14 September 2019 around 10 pm, Peter Magombeyi was abducted from his home in Budiro suburb in the south-western area of Harare by three unknown men. The human rights defender's lawyer filed a habeas corpus application at court on 15 September 2019 and argued it before a High Court judge in Harare. Peter Magombeyi remains missing.

Peter Magombeyi is a doctor and the Acting President of The Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association (ZHDA), an organisation defending labour rights and advocating access to healthcare for all, as well as the improvement of health facilities. The union negotiates conditions of service for government hospital doctors and patients. The association also represents hundreds of newly qualified doctors who are doing their residencies.

On the evening of 14 September, Peter Magombeyi sent a message alerting colleagues that three men were forcibly taking him away from his home in Budiro in Harare. The authorities have been informed of the abduction of Peter Magombeyi but no further information has been received on his whereabouts. On 16 September 2019, his lawyer argued a habeas corpus petition before the High Court in Harare. The judge ruled that whoever is holding Peter Magombeyi is compelled to bring him to the court. On the same day, doctors from public and private hospitals decided to stop working until Peter Magombeyi is safely returned. They organised a peaceful march to the President's office, before being stopped by a line of riot police.

Before his abduction, Peter Magombeyi reported to his lawyers a variety of threats that he had received on his cell phone from unknown persons, which he believed to be related to his union work. He had been leading the advocacy for the improvement of working conditions in public hospitals. Doctors working in public hospitals are currently earning less than EUR 40 a month and are demanding a review of their salaries and allowances.

The abduction of Peter Magombeyi is part of an emerging pattern of abductions, enforced disappearances and torture of human rights defenders in Zimbabwe. On 18 January 2019, [Obert Masaraure](#), Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ)'s national president, was abducted and tortured before being handed over to the police at Harare Central Police Station.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the abduction of Peter Magombeyi as it believes that it is solely motivated by his legitimate activities in defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders condemns the ongoing human rights violations and recognises them as part of an effort to silence dissent, specifically targeted against human rights defenders fighting for labour rights in Zimbabwe.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Zimbabwe to:**

1. Immediately take measures to guarantee the safety and security of Peter Magombeyi and ensure his immediate release from his captors;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction of Peter Magombeyi, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.

3. 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 from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 11: *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to the lawful exercise of his or her occupation or profession (...),”* and to Article 12 (2): *“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threat, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson  
Executive Director