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Zimbabwe

Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians under Rule 12(4) of its Rules and Practices (Geneva, 29 May 2020)



Joana Mamombe © Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE)

ZWE-45 – Joana Mamombe

Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Abduction
- ✓ Torture, ill-treatment and other acts of violence
- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detention
- ✓ Violation of freedom of opinion and expression
- ✓ Violation of freedom of assembly and association

A. Summary of the case

Ms. Joana Mamombe is a member of the Parliament of Zimbabwe and belongs to the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC Alliance).

According to the complainant, at around 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 May 2020, Ms. Mamombe and two other young women leaders, namely Ms. Cecilia Chimbiri and Ms. Netsai Marova, were abducted, tortured and sexually abused by suspected state security agents.

The complainant states that the three were intercepted at a police roadblock manned by members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Zimbabwe National Army in Harare. They were reportedly informed that they had been arrested for taking part in a peaceful flash demonstration in Warren Park in Harare on 13 May 2020 while the country was in lockdown due to COVID-19. On that day, Ms. Mamombe led a flash protest with other young leaders over a lack of social safety nets for the poor in Zimbabwe in light of the pandemic.

Case ZWE-45

Zimbabwe: Parliament affiliated to the IPU

Victim: female, opposition member of the Parliament of Zimbabwe

Qualified complainant: Section I.1.(d) of the [Committee Procedure](#) (Annex I)

Submission of complaint: May 2020

Recent IPU decision(s): - - -

Recent IPU Mission(s): - - -

Recent Committee hearing(s): - - -

Recent follow-up:

- Communication from the authorities: - - -
- Communication from the complainant: May 2020
- Communication addressed to the authorities: - - -
- Communication addressed to the complainant: May 2020

According to the complainant, after being intercepted, Ms. Mamombe and the two other young women leaders were taken to Harare Central Police Station. Before they could be formally charged, they were taken to an undisclosed destination, where they were subjected to intense torture and degrading treatment. According to the complainant, the three suffered serious sexual abuse, which included their breasts being sucked and guns inserted into their anal passages. They were also made to sing, march and dance non-stop for more than 24 hours. The complainant also affirms that they were assaulted all over their bodies with iron rods. The three women were forced to drink each other's urine and to eat human excreta. The perpetrators allegedly also cut them on their backs using razor blades as part of the torture. According to the complainant, the three women were later dumped near Bindura around 9 p.m. on Thursday, 14 May 2020. They were finally rescued at around 2 a.m. on Friday, 15 May 2020, by a team of family members and lawyers.

According to the complainant, petitions regarding these abuses have been submitted to Zimbabwe's Gender Commission, Human Rights Commission and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission. The complainant affirms that these petitions have been copied to the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

The complainant states that Ms. Mamombe is one of the leading and vibrant young women leaders in Zimbabwe and the youngest in parliament. Over the past two years she has been very vocal and outspoken over deteriorating economic conditions in Zimbabwe and their effect on women and girls.

According to the complainant, Ms. Mamombe has been arrested five times in the past two years alone in connection with the exercise of her fundamental rights and parliamentary mandate. According to the complainant, her situation has also to be seen in the context of the rising number of cases of human rights abuses against human rights defenders and activists in recent years in Zimbabwe.

B. Decision

Pursuant to Rule 12(4) of its Rules and Practices, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Notes* that the communication was submitted in due form by a qualified complainant under Sections I.1.(d) of the Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints (Annex I of the Rules and Practices of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians);
2. *Notes* that the communication, inasmuch as it refers to Ms. Mamombe, concerns a member of parliament at the time of the alleged facts;
3. *Notes* that the communication concerns allegations of abduction, torture, ill-treatment and other acts of violence, including sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, and violations of freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of assembly and association;
4. *Considers*, therefore, that the communication is admissible under its Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints; and *declares itself* competent to examine the case.