

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ACQUITTED OF ALL CHARGES

Pastor Evan Mawarire, a human rights defender in Zimbabwe, was acquitted of the charge of ‘subversion of constitutional elected government’ on 29 November.

Evan Mawarire, a pastor, human rights defender and leader of the #ThisFlag movement, was acquitted of the ‘subversion of constitutional elected government’ charge by the High Court on 29 November. If he had been found guilty he risked a 20 year prison term.

Evan Mawarire had been arrested on 1 February upon arrival at Harare International Airport. He and his family had fled the country fearing for their safety. He was charged with ‘subversion of constitutional elected government’ and “insulting the national flag of Zimbabwe”. The latter charge was dropped. These charges were in relation to #ThisFlag’s role in calling for a national shutdown down in Zimbabwe in July 2016 in protest against corruption and the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the country. He was later released on USD 300 bail.

Earlier in the year on 26 June, Evan Mawarire was arrested for holding prayers with University of Zimbabwe medical students who were protesting against fee increases. He was charged with ‘inciting public violence’ and ‘disorderly conduct’ at the University of Zimbabwe and released on bail. He went on trial and on 29 September, the Magistrates’ Court acquitted him of the charges. He was also arrested on 24 September for posting videos on social media, criticizing the deteriorating economic situation in the country. He was released after the state failed to bring him to court before the 48 hour period prescribed in law.

“The work you (Amnesty International) do for people like me, all the international campaigning... you may not see it on the ground, but it keeps people like me safe. Thank you.” Pastor Evan Mawarire.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the fifth update of UA 169/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr46/7099/2017/en/>

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