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### Zimbabwe: Judicial Harassment of human rights defender Robson Chere

On 5 July 2022, human rights defender and Secretary General of the **Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ)**, **Robson Chere**, was arrested at the Harare Central Police Station. The human rights defender has been arbitrarily charged with the murder of Roy Issa, a youth activist and member of ARTUZ who died in an accident in 2016.

[Robson Chere](#) is the Secretary General of the [Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe \(ARTUZ\)](#), which works to defend the labour rights of teachers and to protect schools, students and teachers from political interference and manipulation. The human rights defender is one of the directors of the organization and leads networking and communication on behalf of the Union. ARTUZ is also the winner of the 2022 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk for Africa.

Between 19 June 2022 and 24 June 2022, Robson Chere travelled to the U.S.A. to represent ARTUZ as part of a tour for the 2022 Front Line Defenders Award. He held a series of meetings with U.S. officials and international human rights organizations and spoke about the working conditions of rural teachers in Zimbabwe. On 15 June 2022, his colleague, human rights defender and president of ARTUZ, [Obert Masaraure](#), was [also arrested and charged with the same crime](#).

In June 2016, Robson Chere was participating in a workshop organized by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Organization (FES) and hosted at the Jameson Hotel in Zimbabwe. During this workshop, a youth activist and associate member of ARTUZ, Roy Issa, fell from the 7th floor of the hotel, resulting in his death. The case was heard by the Court of Inquest in 2016 at Harare Magistrates' Court and the court ruled out any form of foul play.

On 27 April 2022, Robson Chere, [was arbitrarily detained by members of the Central Intelligence Organisation](#). The human rights defender was conducting a planning workshop at Guruve Growth Point when the officers interrupted the meeting and arrested the human rights defender without a warrant. He was released later the same day after he was dropped off at the Guruve Police Station.

Front Line Defenders believes that the recent incidents involving Robson Chere and Obert Masaraure are part of a pattern of violations against ARTUZ and its members. These incidents come in a context of harassment and detentions against human rights defenders in Zimbabwe.

Front Line Defenders has seen a global pattern of misuse of the judicial system to silence human rights defenders and the organizations they work for, through imprisonment and destruction of their reputation, as a means of interrupting their work, thus simultaneously silencing the victims of human rights violations they support.

Front Line Defenders reiterates its deep concern regarding the accusations brought against Robson Chere and believes that these measures are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful activities in defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders condemns the ongoing human rights violations by security agents and recognises them as part of an effort to clamp down on freedoms, specifically against human rights defenders fighting for the right to education in rural areas, labour and other civil rights in Zimbabwe.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Zimbabwe to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against Robson Chere and Obert Masaraure, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Robson Chere;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe, and 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 of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.