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Zimbabwe: Arbitrary detention of human rights defender Robson Chere

On 27 April 2022, human rights defender and member of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), **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. Robson Chere was released later the same day after he was dropped off at the Guruve Police Station.

[Robson Chere](#) is a human rights defender and the secretary general of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ). [ARTUZ](#) is a Trade Union working for the improvement of the working conditions of rural teachers as well as the right to education in rural areas of Zimbabwe. Founded in 2009 in response to extremely poor wages and working conditions of rural teachers, the union now has about 35,000 members and operates in 10 provinces, widening its reach to include non rural teachers.

On 27 April 2022, human rights defender Robson Chere was conducting a planning workshop for ARTUZ's Save Our Education campaign when two plain clothes individuals, later identified as members of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), interrupted the meeting. The human rights defender was briefly arbitrarily detained for about an hour on the roadside by the two men. After his arbitrary detention was made public online, with ARTUZ reporting the make and the number plate of the vehicle in which Robson Chere was taken, the human rights defender was dropped off at the Guruve Police Station. Robson Chere was then handed over to the CID Law and Order Department and detained for an additional 3 hours without charges. During his detention, the human rights defender was interrogated about the workshop meeting. The officers demanded to know "who is funding [the ARTUZ campaign]" and "what the big goal" is. The police released him without charges after the interrogation.

This is not the first time that ARTUZ and its members have been targeted. On 27 April 2019, Robson Chere and fellow ARTUZ members Jess Drury, Precious Ndlovu and Munyaradzi Ndawana were [arbitrarily detained](#) by the CIO section of Harare Central Police Station. The four defenders were released later the same day, but continued to face judicial harassment into 2020. On 12 January 2021, [sixteen human rights defenders](#) and members of ARTUZ were arrested during a peaceful protest. The human rights defenders in this case were charged with participating in a gathering with the intention to promote public violence, bigotry and breaches of peace, as defined in Section 37(1)(a) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. They are still experiencing continued judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the arbitrary detention and interrogation of human rights defender, Robson Chere, and the continued targeting of ARTUZ and its members, as it believes this to be due to their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights.

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Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Zimbabwe to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the arbitrary detention Robson Chere, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Stop the continued targeting of ARTUZ for carrying out their legitimate work to defend the rights of others.
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.