

Zim: IFJ condemns arrest of ZUJ president

HARARE: The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has condemned the arrest and detention by police in Zimbabwe of Dumisani Sibanda, the president of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), calling for his immediate release.



IFJ referred to the arrest as the latest in a series of hostile incidents that are putting the country's journalists increasingly at risk. Sibanda, Bulawayo bureau chief of *The Standard* newspaper, is being questioned over a story involving the police force.

Harassment of journalists

The action follows condemnation two weeks ago by the IFJ of the arrests and harassment of Nkosana Dlamini and Anderson Manyere, both freelance journalists, and the beating up of another freelance journalist, Sydney Saize, in Mutare. Also on Sunday in Mbare, a suburb of the capital Harare, two journalists were reportedly attacked.

"The atmosphere for press freedom and independent journalism in Zimbabwe is rapidly becoming toxic," said Aidan White, IFJ general secretary. "The president of the union must be released without delay and the authorities must act to protect journalists from violence and intimidation."

Weak response from authorities

But the IFJ says the response of the authorities to the growing concern of journalists is weak and lacks credibility.

"When the information minister Webster Shamu, who is supposed to protect media appears reluctant to condemn the threats journalists face, we have every reason to be worried," said White.

The IFJ is supporting its affiliate the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists in its efforts to ensure the rapid release of Dumisani Sibanda and a commitment from the government to pursue those guilty of intimidating journalists.

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