

# Zimbabwean faces trial for Facebook protest posts

A Zimbabwean will go on trial next month over a Facebook post that pro-democracy protests in Egypt had sent shockwaves to the world's dictators and were worth imitating, a report said Tuesday (24 May 2011).



The privately-owned *NewsDay* said a magistrate in Bulawayo had set a June 10 trial date for Vikas Mavhudzi who faces a charge of posting offensive messages on Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's Facebook wall.

Prosecutors said Mavhudzi sent a message on February 13 exhorting Zimbabweans - whose President Robert Mugabe has been in power for 31 years - to take a cue from the protests which forced out long-time ruler Hosni Mubarak.

"I'm overwhelmed, don't know what to say Mr PM," Mavhudzi is alleged to have written.

"What happened in Egypt is sending shockwaves to all dictators around the world. No weapon but unity of purpose. Worth emulating hey." Tsvangirai joined Mugabe in a fragile power-sharing government in 2009 after disputed polls escalated into a political and economic crisis.

Mavhudzi, who became the first person to be arrested in the country for posting comments on Facebook is currently out of police custody on US\$200 (€142) bail.

In February, 46 Zimbabweans were charged with treason for discussing the mass protests in Egypt.

The courts later freed 38 activists for lack of evidence, while the remaining six including Munyaradzi Gwisai, a former lawmaker from Tsvangirai's party were arrested released on \$2,000 bail.

*Source: Sapa-AFP*