

Réseau de
Développement et de
Communication des
Femmes Africaines

African Women's
Development
and Communication
Network



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For Immediate Release

Media Release

Armed Police disperse FEMNET staff and activists from Zimbabwe High Commission in Nairobi

Officials from the Zimbabwe High Commission this morning barred African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) from delivering a letter of solidarity with the women of Zimbabwe.

While at the Zimbabwe High Commission, an official came to the gate to meet the FEMNET staff and activists from Men for Gender Equality Now (MEGEN) and assured them he was going to make arrangements for the letter to be officially delivered to authorities inside the offices. However, after waiting for over 1 hour, 2 plain clothed police officers came to inform the group that Zimbabwe High Commission had called them, informing them that there was a huge demonstration outside the offices.

The two plain clothed police officers admitted that they were alarmed by the High Commission official, who called them saying that the demonstration was not as big as the Embassy had put it to them.

However, before the plain officers finished questioning FEMNET Executive Director, Norah Matovu-Winyi, armed uniformed policemen arrived at the scene and ordered the FEMNET staff and the activists to disperse in 2 minutes.

FEMNET is disappointed that even after giving a three weeks notice to the police about the protest, the official permit to conduct the peaceful protest march to the Zimbabwe High Commission was still not granted. Police instead claimed that they had lost a copy of the application letter. Police demanded a photocopy of the application letter bearing their stamp. The copy was availed to them in good time, but still the permit was not granted.

FEMNET strongly condemns the acts by police to curtail the solidarity action with the Zimbabwe women.

FEMNET also condemns in the strongest terms the Zimbabwe High Commission Officials for misinforming the police about the magnitude of the peaceful protest.

We also condemn the Zimbabwe High Commission for not opening the gate to enable FEMNET deliver the open letter addressed to Mr. Mugabe.

FEMNET believes that the action to protest was justified in upholding the UN Declaration on Human Rights. According to Article 1 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”.

FEMNET will continue to condemn the suffering of women and children in Zimbabwe who have been victimized for no apparent reason or cause.

The current problems in Zimbabwe are aggravating violence against women especially sexual exploitation.

We appeal to President Robert Mugabe to honour and listen to the demands of people in Zimbabwe. FEMNET sees the on-going peace talks as our hope for Zimbabwe to get back on track.

We therefore appeal to MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai and Mr. Robert Mugabe to expedite the process of power sharing in Zimbabwe.

Norah Matovu-Winyi
Executive Director

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