

Statement by SA Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa on the ``country arrest" of publisher Trevor Ncube

The South African Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa condemns the confiscation of the passport of Zimbabwean citizen and newspaper publisher Trevor Ncube by President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. According to media reports Ncube's passport was taken from him at Bulawayo airport on instructions from the presidency while he was on a visit to that country. The passport, according to the reports, was seized under a recently promulgated law empowering the government to confiscate the passports of citizens deemed to be ``undermining national interests" abroad. MISA-SA regards the law as a crude instrument to prevent citizens from criticising Mugabe's government. Such government conduct contravenes all democratic concepts of human rights and freedom of expression and movement as laid down by the United Nations and the African Union. Misa-SA requests the Zimbabwean authorities to return Ncube's passport and restore his rights to move freely and criticise the government.

Misa-SA also calls on South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki to intervene by making a personal request to Mugabe to restore Ncube's rights. Misa-SA points out that the Mugabe government action against Ncube contravenes the rights enshrined in the SA Constitution. Also, Ncube who publishes the Mail and Guardian in Johannesburg and the independent publications, the Standard and Zimbabwe Independent in Harare, is an exponent of SA's black economic empowerment policies. His ``country arrest" in Zimbabwe will seriously impair his ability to continue to run his SA publishing business.

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