



# INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

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## PRESS RELEASE-COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE

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### **Zimbabwe: ICJ expresses concern about the arrest and charge of persons connected with the Voice of the People Radio**

The day before six trustees of the Voice of the People Radio (VOP) in Zimbabwe are to appear in court on charges of possessing broadcasting equipment without a license, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) expressed concern about the charges and said it would send a trial observer should the matter go to a full trial.

The six VOP trustees, David Masunda, Isabella Matambanadzo, Millicent Phiri, Lawrence Chibwe, Nhlahla and Arnold Tsunga, were arrested on 25 January 2006 and are free on bail. Tomorrow, 10 February, a magistrate will consider whether there is sufficient evidence to send the case to trial.

"These charges come in the context of a pattern of attempts by the Government of Zimbabwe to silence the independent media and only days before Military Intelligence reportedly threatened the life of one of the accused, Arnold Tsunga, Executive Director of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights", said Federico Andreu Guzman, Deputy Secretary-General of the ICJ."

There have also been disturbing reports that the police have arbitrarily detained people associated with VOP to find Arnold Tsunga and that they seriously beat and injured a driver working for Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights.

The Broadcasting Services Act, under which the six have been charged, imposes restrictions on the right to freedom of the media that violate international human rights law.

"The ICJ will monitor these proceedings closely and should the accused stand trial, we will send an observer to monitor whether it complies scrupulously with international fair trial standards", said Federico Andreu Guzman.

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The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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