



18 August, 2015

His Excellency President Robert Gabriel Mugabe
President of the Republic of Zimbabwe
Office of the President
Munhumutapa Building
Samora Machel Avenue
Harare
Zimbabwe

RE: Investigate and resolve the circumstances around the enforced disappearance of Itai Dzamara

Your Excellency,

We are writing to request that your government establishes a Commission of Inquiry into the abduction and likely enforced disappearance of Itai Dzamara and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials. The pro-democracy activist has not been accounted for since his abduction on 9 March 2015.

Itai Dzamara, 36 years old, was abducted by unidentified men on the morning of 9 March 2015 while at a barber shop in Harare's Glen View suburb. Witnesses say that the men accused Itai of stealing cattle, after which they handcuffed him, and forced him into a white truck, which had concealed number plates, before driving off.

On 13 March 2015, the High Court of Zimbabwe ordered the Minister of Home Affairs, the State Security Minister, the Commissioner-General of Police and the Director General of the Central Intelligence Organization to investigate the report of Itai's abduction and to report progress of their searches each fortnight to the Registrar of the High Court by 1600 hrs on Friday until his whereabouts are determined.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are concerned at the paucity of detail contained in the reports sent so far by the police to the Registrar of the High Court. Inadequate and perfunctory reports provide no substantive details of steps taken by the police except to confirm that investigations into Dzamara's "disappearance" are underway.

Following his abduction, Itai Dzamara's family made a report to the Glen Norah Police Station. Since then no meaningful investigation has taken place, as evidenced by the absence of any comprehensive reports submitted by the authorities to the courts. Reports by the state-controlled Herald newspaper on police reports to the High Court point at lack of urgency by state security agents.

Itai Dzamara had previously been targeted by state security agents, beaten, abducted and unlawfully detained. While on 9 March 2015 the abductors did not identify themselves as state security agents and did not wear uniforms, other activists have been previously abducted in similar manner by unknown perpetrators who later turned up to be state security agents.

The circumstances of Itai's abduction and the history of similar abductions in Zimbabwe suggest that he may have been a victim of an enforced disappearance. As you and your government is aware, enforced disappearance constitutes a grave crime under international law and is a continuing offence.

We are concerned that Itai's abduction adds to the number of other unresolved "disappearances" in Zimbabwe. In some incidences victims of apparent abductions were later found in state custody, despite earlier denials by the authorities.

We urge your government to live up to its constitutional and international law obligations. In particular, we urge your high office to intervene and set up an independent judge led Commission of Inquiry into the abduction of Itai Dzamara with powers to subpoena witnesses. The findings of the Commission of Inquiry must be made public and those implicated brought to justice in fair trials.

We urge Zimbabwe to accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the recognition of the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of victims or other states party.

Your Excellency, we sincerely hope that you will take all steps necessary to establish the fate and whereabouts of Itai Dzamara.

Yours sincerely,



Salil Shetty
Secretary General
Amnesty International



Kenneth Roth
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch