



global witness

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Global Witness welcomes bail for Zimbabwe diamond activist, but calls for charges to be dropped

Campaign group Global Witness today welcomed the decision by the Harare High Court to grant bail to Zimbabwean activist Farai Maguwu, who has been in custody since 3 June, on charges of 'communicating falsehoods' about human rights abuses in the diamond mining sector.

Global Witness's Elly Harrowell said: "We are pleased and relieved to hear that Farai has been granted bail, but we are extremely dismayed that the spurious charges against him are yet to be dropped. The systematic intimidation and harassment of civil society activists in Zimbabwe, exemplified by Farai's arrest, must end."

Mr Maguwu is the Director of the Zimbabwean non-governmental organisation, the Centre for Research and Development, which has been instrumental in campaigning against state-sponsored violence in the Marange diamond fields of eastern Zimbabwe. His arrest followed a meeting with the official monitor from the Kimberley Process diamond certification scheme.

The Kimberley Process (KP) was set up in 2003 to eradicate the trade in conflict diamonds. It brings together industry, civil society and governments, and sets certain criteria for diamonds to be certified as 'conflict free'. The KP monitor had been appointed to assess the situation in Zimbabwe's diamond fields after reports of human rights abuses and non-compliance with the scheme's minimum standards led to a suspension of diamond exports from Marange.

"Farai's bail must not distract from the horrific abuses, smuggling and militarised mining that are taking place in eastern Zimbabwe, nor from the fact that the country is still in clear breach of the minimum standards of the Kimberley Process. The trumped up charges against Farai are a crude attempt by the Zimbabwean authorities to silence independent reporting on abuses in Marange," said Harrowell.

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Contact: Amy Barry on +44 207 4925858 or Elly Harrowell on +44 7703 108401