

3 July 2017

Zimbabwe: Conviction of human rights defender Patson Dzamara

On 29 June 2017, human rights defender **Patson Dzamara** was convicted and sentenced by a court in Harare following allegations brought against him in connection with a peaceful protest he helped to organise.

[Patson Dzamara](#) is the Co-ordinator of **Occupy Africa Unity Square**, a project launched in 2014 that demands accountability and transparency from the Zimbabwean government. He has consistently spoken out against corruption and impunity within government ranks. Patson Dzamara's brother, [Itai Dzamara](#), is also a human rights defender, journalist, and organiser of the Occupy Africa Unity Square. Itai Dzamara was abducted and disappeared on 9 March 2015. To date, his whereabouts remain unknown. Patson Dzamara explains that his brother's disappearance motivated him to "*...take a bold stand against human rights violations and leadership failure in Zimbabwe*".

On 29 June 2017, Patson Dzamara was convicted of obstructing the course of justice. In June 2016, following a protest, Patson Dzamara was charged on two counts; robbery and obstructing the course of justice, for allegedly stealing a baton and a hat from a police officer during a protest by Occupy Africa Unity Square. The first charge of robbery was dropped by the Magistrate, however Dzamara received a twelve-month custodial sentence for obstruction of justice, suspended on condition that he complete 315 hours of community service.

Front Line Defenders has previously [reported](#) on the harassment that Patson Dzamara has faced, including his abduction and torture on 18 November 2016.

Front Line Defenders is concerned by the sentencing of human rights defender Patson Dzamara as it believes this amounts to judicial harassment and is directly linked to his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights in Zimbabwe.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Zimbabwe to:

1. Quash the sentence against Patson Dzamara and cease all further judicial harassment against him as it is believed that it is solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Investigate and bring to justice those responsible for the disappearance of Itai Dzamara with the aim of facilitating his return to his family and colleagues;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.