

Zimbabwe: Women's right activists arrested

Monday 1 January 2007, by [SMITH Kerry](#) (Date first published: 6 December 2006).

Sixty-three Women Of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) members were arrested on November 29 during a peaceful launch of its People's Charter. They were taken to Bulawayo Central Police Station. WOZA leaders Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu were among those arrested.

A WOZA media release stated: "Hundreds of WOZA and MOZA [Men of Zimbabwe Arise] members marched peacefully through central Bulawayo today to the government offices at Mhlanhlandlela. There was an almost carnival atmosphere to the procession with the singing marchers handing out leaflets and copies of the People's Charter, which were eagerly accepted by passersby."

The protest was conducted in defiance of the repressive Public Order Security Act, but in accordance with constitutional freedoms of assembly and expression, the WOZA statement noted.

As members of WOZA began to "to read out the People's Charter before approximately 30 riot police arrived and began to arrest them. In typical WOZA fashion, members sat down peacefully and waited to be arrested."

The police however "began to viciously assault the peaceful group members with baton sticks, forcefully dispersing most of the group of over 200 that were waiting to be arrested. There are fears that police might also have arrested a lot of other passers-by as the police were seen pulling a man from his car and arresting him."

According to the statement, police took six protesters to Mpilo Hospital for medical attention.

Since February 2003, WOZA members have repeatedly been arrested by the police while taking part in peaceful demonstrations to protest at the worsening social, economic and human rights situation in the country. They have been subjected to intimidation, harassment, and ill-treatment by police officers.

P.S.

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