

# URGENT ACTION

**ACTIVIST HELD IMMEDIATELY AFTER RETURNING HOME**  
**Fumba Chama, affectionately known as Pilato, was arrested on 16 May on arrival at Kenneth Kaunda Airport in Lusaka. He had been forced to flee the country on 5 January after receiving threats on his life from members of the ruling Party, Patriotic Front.**

**Fumba Chama**, affectionately known as **Pilato**, was arrested on 16 May at approximately 3:45pm on arrival at Kenneth Kaunda International Airport. Pilato, who fled to South Africa for fear of his safety, had decided to return to Zambia to attend trial. Pilato, an activist and musician, was arrested after going through immigration by three plain clothed policemen. He has not been formally charged.

Pilato was forced to flee because he released a song in December 2017 entitled Koswe Mumpoto (rat in the pot), which members of the ruling party, the Patriotic Front (PF), considered insulting to President Lungu and his ministers. On 11 December 2017, members of the ruling party ordered radio and TV stations to stop playing Pilato's song and instructed Pilato to stop singing the song. The police also prohibited his live shows. Pilato started receiving death threats from PF supporters on his mobile phone in the form of anonymous calls, whatsapp voice notes and videos. He was forced to flee Lusaka fearing for his life.

In 2017, Pilato was arrested and jointly charged with five other activists for protesting over corruption in the procurement of 42 fire trucks at an exorbitant cost of 42 million US dollars. The six activists were charged with 'disobedience to lawful orders' contrary to section 127 of the Penal Code which attracts a penalty of imprisonment of up to two years. The six were released on bail pending a trial which began in January 2018 after Pilato had already fled the country. After his failure to appear in court, the magistrate issued a bench warrant of arrest for Pilato. The state prosecutor mentioned that they would be engaging Interpol to bring Pilato back into the country to attend the trial. Pilato returned to Zambia to attend the trial. Amnesty International believes Pilato is a prisoner of conscience, detained for peacefully exercising his right to the freedom of expression.

## 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Calling on the Zambian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Pilato and guarantee his safety, personal security and wellbeing ensure that he is protected from abuse by ruling party members;
- Urging them to drop all charges against Pilato and five other activists and ensure that human rights activists are not unlawfully detained, arrested or threatened in the legitimate exercises of their work;
- Urging them to end misuse of the criminal justice system to persecute human rights activists and Perceived opponents of the ruling party Patriotic Front.

**Contact these two officials by 27 June, 2018:**

Director of Public Prosecutions  
 Ms. F.L Shawa-Siyunyi S.C  
 Ministry of Justice  
 Plot BLX 29B  
 Independence Avenue  
 Lusaka, Zambia  
 Email: [ca@npa.gov.zm](mailto:ca@npa.gov.zm)  
**Salutation: Dear DPP**

Ambassador Dr. Ngosa Simbyakula,  
Embassy of the Republic of Zambia  
 2200 R Street NW, Washington DC  
 20008  
 Phone: (202) 265-0757  
 Fax: (202) 332-0826  
 Contact Form: [goo.gl/p4Qush](http://goo.gl/p4Qush)  
**Salutation: Dear Ambassador**

## 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 94.18*

Here's why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVIST HELD IMMEDIATELY AFTER RETURNING HOME

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pilato is a Zambian musician, activist and political commentator whose music is full of political satire in a country where freedom of expression is severely restricted. This has led to his arrest several times.

The environment in Zambia is increasingly hostile to anyone perceived to be an opponent of the State. Intimidation and harassment of activists who are seen as non-conforming or even having different views from those of government is widespread. The Zambian government has not held members of the ruling party to account for intimidating and harassing human rights defenders and other members of the public. Prominent government officials have in some cases attended trials of activists or people arrested for insulting the president. Their presence has served to intimidate magistrates who are inclined to rule in favour of the ruling party.

On 15 December 2017, Pilato left Lusaka fearing for his life and was offered shelter in a village after PF (the ruling party) supporters sent him a recorded video message threatening his life. On 31 December 2017, he attempted to flee to neighbouring Zimbabwe but was denied exit by authorities from Zambia. He successfully left Zambia for South Africa, through Livingstone International Airport on 5 January.

Pilato has been arrested before on charges of defamation of the President President Lungu after he released the song, Alungu Anabwela in 2015, which was interpreted to be targeting the president. Currently he is charged jointly with Mika Mwambazi (f) Sean Tembo (m), Lewis Mwape (m), Laura Miti (f) and Bonwell Mwewa (m) for disobeying lawful orders, following a protest held outside parliament over corruption in the procurement of fire tender trucks.

Name: Fumba Chama, also known as Pilato  
Gender m/f: Male

UA: 94/18 Index: AFR 63/8403/2018 Issue Date: 16 May 2018