

IRCT demands end to illegal detention of member centre staff in Zimbabwe

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The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) today called for an immediate end to the arbitrary detention of three staff members following their arrest at Counselling Services Unit (CSU) in Zimbabwe. Among the staff members are newly elected IRCT Council member Fidelis Mudimu along with colleagues Zachariah Godi and Tafadzwa Geza.

CSU, a member of the IRCT's global network of rehabilitation centres, is a lawfully registered medical clinic based in Harare that provides non-partisan counselling and referral to all victims of trauma.

On Monday 5th November, twelve police officers stormed the centre, aided by riot police who threatened to fire tear gas into the building. Patients awaiting services were left unattended for four hours while the police demanded and forcibly accessed confidential medical records. The police came with a search warrant limited to "material likely to deface any house, building, wall, fence, lamp post, gate or elevator without the consent of the owner or occupier thereof." However they arrived with an IT expert and left with a computer, which they had no warrant to take and which holds confidential patient data.

Five staff were held at first, but two have since been released. The remaining three staff have since been transferred from the capital to Bulawayo. The removal of the three staff to another location and the further detention order with no defined charges or substantive evidence of illegal activities constitutes serious and illegal harassment.

The IRCT is deeply concerned for its illegally detained council member and his colleagues, as well as other staff at the centre and the survivors of trauma who have seen their treatment severely disrupted by these actions.

The IRCT therefore requests that civil society and the wider international community join in its calls for an immediate release of those detained and an end to the harassment of its member centre.

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About the Counselling Services Unit

The Counselling Services Unit (CSU) provides medical and rehabilitation services to survivors of organised violence and torture in Zimbabwe.

The CSU also works to increase awareness of chronic mental disabilities, carries out forensic documentation of medical and psychological injuries, and carries out research, prevention, training and advocacy activities.

About The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims

The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims is an independent non-profit global organisation with a membership of 144 rehabilitation centres, including Counselling Services Unit in Zimbabwe.

The work of the IRCT is threefold:

- Rehabilitation of torture victims and their families
- Ensuring victims' access to justice
- Eradication of torture