

16 October 2019

## Malawi: Attempted killing of human rights defender Timothy Mtambo

On 10 October 2019, an attempt was made on the life of human rights defender **Timothy Mtambo**. Following several months of attacks and threats made against him and those close to him, several gunshots were fired by unknown assailants at the human rights defender as he was driving home from his place of work.

[Timothy Mtambo](#) is the chairperson of the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC), a Malawi organisation that works to defend human rights. He is also the executive director of the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) as well as the vice chairperson of Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network. He organises large peaceful demonstrations advocating for the preservation of civil and political rights in Malawi. He has recently led civil society organisations' and citizens' protests calling for the resignation of Malawi Electoral Commission Chairperson Jane Ansah over the alleged mismanagement of national elections held on 21 May 2019.

Timothy Mtambo has faced several targeted threats in recent months. On 15 August 2019, the human rights defender's house and car were subject to a petrol bomb attack. A number of weeks previously, his office was targeted in a similar attack. On 25 September 2019, a prominent councilor for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party named Jomo Osman released an online video in which he vowed to kill Timothy Mtambo if he did not cease organising protests.

Since May, tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets across Malawi to demonstrate against the management of the May elections, which the government have sought to stop through court injunctions and intimidation. Human rights defenders and individuals associated with HRDC in particular have been targeted. On 1 August 2019, Timothy Mtambo's uncle was killed after he was hit by a police vehicle. Human rights defender and HRDC coordinator, **Moir Walita Mkandawire** had to be taken to hospital for injuries sustained to his eye after he was beaten while a peaceful protest was violently dispersed by police.

At around 22:00 on 10 October 2019, Timothy Mtambo was shot at numerous times as he made his way home from work. A group of unidentified individuals fired six bullets at his car as it approached them near the Mtandire bridge in Lilongwe; three to the rear, two to the driver's side door and one to the front tire. The human rights defender escaped uninjured after the attackers quickly fled the scene.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the increased targeting of human rights defenders in Malawi. Front Line Defenders believes that the attempted murder of Timothy Mtambo was solely motivated by his peaceful work in defence of civil and political rights in Malawi.

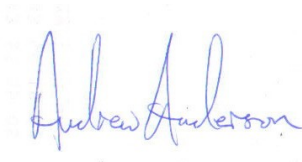
**Front Line Defenders urges the Malawi authorities to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attempted killing of Timothy Mtambo, and the threats and attacks received by those close to him, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Timothy Mtambo as well as of the members of his family and organisation;
3. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declarations stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defenders;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Malawi are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 5: *“For the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels: (a) To meet or assemble peacefully”; (b) To form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups;*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director