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### **Zimbabwe: Human rights defender and lawyer Obey Shava attacked**

On 5 July 2023, four unidentified men violently attacked Zimbabwean human rights defender and lawyer **Obey Shava**. The human rights lawyer was lured to the Belvedere neighbourhood in Harare, by an unknown man allegedly seeking legal services.

[Obey Shava](#) is a human rights lawyer, co-founder of Shava Law Chambers (Rights and Business Centre) and a member of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR). The human rights lawyer advocates for justice and equality and has defended opposition political party activists.

On 5 July 2023, Obey Shava received calls from people pretending to be potential clients requesting legal assistance and asking to urgently meet him in person. The human rights defender was lured to Belvedere, Harare, to meet this potential client, but he was met by four unidentified men in two vehicles. Obey Shava was violently attacked and beaten by these men, sustaining serious injuries which led to him being hospitalised.

The upcoming elections in August 2023 in Zimbabwe have contributed to a further closing of civic space in Zimbabwe, with some human rights defenders and political opposition members currently in detention. The situation in the country is tense and is making the work of human rights defenders more difficult and unsafe. The human rights defender Obey Shava was representing Zimbabwe's opposition party, Citizens' Coalition for Change, who are facing charges of crimes against the state. On 4 July 2023, two of the activists represented by Obey Shava were acquitted.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the violent attack against the human rights defender and lawyer Obey Shava as it believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights. It is also concerned about the further closing of civic space in Zimbabwe which is further limiting the ability human rights defenders to carry out their work. Front Line Defenders would like to remind the authorities of Zimbabwe that they are signatories of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Zimbabwe to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the violent attack against Obey Shava with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice and publishing the results;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Obey Shava;
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.