

Media group members arrested

By [Alex Bell](#)

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Three members of the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) have been arrested by police in Gwanda and charged in connection with a civic education meeting held there last month.

MMPZ advocacy officers, Fadzai December and Molly Chimhanda and the Gwanda chairperson of MMPZ's Public Information Rights Forum Committee, Gilbert Mabusa, are all being charged under POSA [Public Order and Security Act] for failing to give notice of the meeting.

The group said in a statement that this is "despite the fact that the meeting was convened by the membership of MMPZ's Public Information Rights Forum Committee for Gwanda and was therefore not a public meeting as contemplated under POSA."

The three are also being charged under the terms of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for "participating in a gathering with intent to promote public violence, breaches of the peace or bigotry."

According to the MMPZ, the Gwanda police authorities allege that the advocacy officers distributed "illegal material" in the form of a DVD, which calls for the media to contribute to peaceful elections through fair, accurate and balanced coverage.

"While MMPZ respects the necessity of the due process of the law, it is MMPZ's view that this case does not warrant the pre-trial detention of its advocacy officers and Mr Mabusa. They are not remotely a flight risk as MMPZ's officers have fully cooperated with the police," the organisation said in a statement.

The group added, "Depriving an individual of their personal liberty should be an action of last resort. It should not be employed as a first option, especially in cases whose circumstances do not warrant pre-trial detention.

MMPZ therefore calls upon the police to release Gilbert, Fadzai and Molly from custody forthwith as their attendance at court can be secured by way of summons."

Source: allAfrica.com