



## Zimbabwe - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 10 November 2016

### Information on Evan Mawarire

A report issued in July 2016 by *IRIN News* notes that:

“The focus of Zimbabwe's growing civil disobedience campaign shifted to a court building in Harare on Wednesday, where pastor Evans Mawarire, a leader of the protest movement, was appearing on the charge of subversion. Mawarire, who heads the reformist #ThisFlag campaign, was arrested on Tuesday ahead of "stay at home" protests planned for today and Thursday” (*IRIN News* (13 July 2016) *Zimbabwe's season of discontent*).

*Reporters Without Borders* in August 2016 notes:

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the harassment of journalists in recent weeks by President Robert Mugabe's government and the ruling ZANU-PF party. Journalists have been the targets of intimidation attempts, physical attacks and arrests without justification. The harassment is related to a wave of anti-government protests that began several months ago and were sparked by revelations about the vast sum (more than 700,000 euros) that the state lavished on Mugabe's 92nd birthday celebrations despite a deep economic crisis. Pastor Evan Mawarire is the figurehead of this new wave of opposition. After criticizing the regime's flaws in a series of Internet posts, Mawarire was arrested on 12 July on a charge of trying to overthrow the government and was held for 48 hours until a Harare court dismissed the case” (*Reporters Without Borders* (1 August 2016) *RSF decries Zimbabwean government's harassment of journalists*).

In September 2016 *Amnesty International* states:

““Evan Mawarire has left Zimbabwe fearing for his life as police continue to look for him even after all charges against him in relation to calling for a national stay-away were dismissed and he was freed. He risks arrest if he returns to Zimbabwe. Evan Mawarire, a pastor and leader of the #ThisFlag a non-aligned social media movement in Zimbabwe, has had to leave his country of residence for fear of his safety. The police have been after him despite a Magistrates' Court dropping the charge against him and his release. Evan Mawarire had been charged after #ThisFlag staged a national stay-away in Zimbabwe on 6 July in protest of the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe” (*Amnesty International* (9 September 2016) *Zimbabwe: Further Information: Human rights defender forced to leave country: Evan Mawarire*).

*Human Rights Watch* in September 2016 points out that:

“In the face of coordinated harassment that included arrest on false charges of treason and public violence, Mawarire fled to the United States via South Africa together with his family...Mawarire's fears are well-founded. Despite constitutional guarantees of free expression and association and Zimbabwe's international human rights obligations to protect these rights, authorities have been unwilling to tolerate

any dissent or criticism” (Human Rights Watch (12 September 2016) *Zimbabwe Returns to Its Ugly Past*).

A document issued in October 2016 by the *New York Times* notes that:

“The crackdown on Mr. Mawarire and social media has had a chilling effect, activists said. Ordinary Zimbabweans, who participated in the protest on July 6, have stopped joining protests since then, lessening the pressure on the government. Recent protests have been led by a few hundred activists and opposition party supporters” (New York Times (3 October 2016) *Robert Mugabe Seizes on the Latest Political Threat to His Zimbabwe: WhatsApp*).

In October 2016 *New Zimbabwe* states:

“THE pastor who is leading protests against President Robert Mugabe and his regime has been refused entry to the UK...Mawarire been instrumental in the 'This Flag' campaign - an uprising against the leadership of Mugabe. He was held in prison for several days after convincing his fellow countrymen and women to take part in a general strike but was released after protests. He was then forced to flee Zimbabwe...Mawarire is currently in the United States but was due to give a speech in London on Tuesday night” (New Zimbabwe (24 October 2016) *Pastor leading fight against Mugabe refused entry to the UK*).

## References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

### **Sources Consulted**

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