

Mr. Tomaz Salamao
Executive Secretary
Southern African Development Community
Gaborone, Botswana

Paris, 9 January 2009

Dear Mr. Salamao,

Reporters Without Borders, an organisation that defends press freedom worldwide, would like to share with you its deep concern about the repeated postponements of the trial of journalist and human rights activist Jestina Mukoko in Zimbabwe. We condemn the behaviour of the courts, which are doing everything possible to prolong her detention although her state of health is reported to be very worrying.

Magistrate Olivia Mariga postponed Mukoko's trial again on 6 January, meaning that she will have to remain in pre-trial custody until 14 January at least, despite the fact that a high court judge ordered her transfer to hospital on 24 December.

A former programme presenter for the *Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation* and then the privately-owned *Voice of The People*, Mukoko now heads the Zimbabwe Peace Project. She and eight fellow defendants are being detained in Chikurubi high security prison. Held in solitary confinement and denied her medicine, she says has been mistreated and tortured since her arrest.

The conditions in which Ms. Mukoko is being held are intolerable, the judicial proceedings being brought against her are a sham, her rights have been flouted and her health is in danger.

In the light of these circumstances, we urge you to put pressure on President Robert Mugabe's government to release Ms. Mukoko as soon as possible.

We hope you will give this matter your careful consideration.

Sincerely,



Jean-François Julliard
Secretary-General