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PRESS STATEMENT

Cyber Clampdown: State Attack on Magamba Network

On Tuesday 14th November, as tanks moved into Harare and military intervention in the state began, CID police from the Law & Order Section raided the Magamba Network offices at Moto Republik. Police were armed with a vague search warrant which allowed for confiscation of devices allegedly connected to the offence of 'subverting a constitutional government'. The officers confiscated computers and laptops of Magamba staff.

This attack on Magamba follows on from the arrest and detention of our Magamba TV Project officer Martha O'Donovan one and a half weeks ago, on similar charges. These charges are not only malicious and baseless but an infringement on Magamba Network and its staff's freedom. Our crime is apparently using social media and comedy as a way to engage young people and to speak truth to power. This is not just an attack on Magamba for our work in social media, citizen journalism and political satire, it is an attack on all young people in Zimbabwe who use the internet as a space for free expression.

We are committed to fighting these baseless allegations in the courts. Martha O'Donovan's remand hearing has been postponed to the 24th of November 2017. If the state is not ready to furnish the court with the trial date by then, and to produce evidence of their accusations, the defence team shall be making an application for refusal of further remand and dismissal of the case. In terms of the confiscation of the Magamba computers, we are challenging this in the High Court, having filed papers on the 15th November.

It is our hope that the state will see that even as they are accusing Magamba of using social media to overthrow the government, a real threat to democracy is posed by the current standoff with the military. Tweets are not a threat to the government but an expression of the freedoms we hold dear as Zimbabweans.



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Thank you all for standing with us to #FreeMartha and fight against this #CyberClampdown.
Together we can create an internet and a country where expression is free.