

Statement of Solidarity with Dr Sishuwa Sishuwa against unfounded charges of sedition

29 April 2021

We, the undersigned, as prominent academics across Zambia, Africa and the wider world, are deeply alarmed at credible reports that the University of Zambia (UNZA) historian, Dr Sishuwa Sishuwa, is to be charged with sedition, as the result of an opinion piece he published in the *Mail and Guardian* (South Africa), on 22 March 2021.

As historians and social scientists who have studied and published in and about Zambia for many decades, we are extremely concerned that the threat of sedition charges is being used to silence the legitimate expression of belief by one of the country's most prominent early-career scholars. Dr Sishuwa, who has published outstanding and prize-winning research articles in the world's most prominent African studies journals, is drawing on his research expertise to bring to public attention his concerns about the current direction of Zambian political life. Far from inciting popular rebellion (as the term 'sedition' implies), he seeks to address the underlying causes of societal tension as a way to reduce it. We believe it is both his right and his patriotic duty to bring such concerns into the public eye. Article 20 of the Constitution of Zambia guarantees Dr Sishuwa and all other Zambians freedom of expression, that is to say freedom to hold opinions, receive ideas and impart or communicate ideas and information without interference.

As citizens and longstanding friends of Zambia, who have documented the country's prominent historical role in the political liberation of southern Africa, and its pioneering role in constitutional democratisation, we are worried about the proposed use of an authoritarian tool such as the charge of sedition, and call for any consideration of such charges to be immediately and permanently dropped.

We are further alarmed at the issuance by the University of Zambia of a statement dated 27 April 2021, disassociating the university from its employee Dr Sishuwa. This misleading statement suggests Dr Sishuwa is not currently employed by the university, when in fact he is, as is normal for academic researchers, simply on temporary research leave from it. Indeed, as recently as December last year, UNZA publicly celebrated the achievements of Dr Sishuwa.

All of us have worked at or with colleagues from UNZA, long a prominent university that has, since independence, been a centre of intellectual freedom, often in difficult circumstances. We wholly reject the allegation that Dr Sishuwa is pursuing a 'personal agenda' and call on the university to guarantee Dr Sishuwa's continued employment and his right to academic freedom.

Signatories:

Professor David M. Anderson, Professor of African History, University of Warwick

Professor Kate Baldwin, Associate Professor of Political Science, Yale University

Dr Nicole Beardsworth, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Pretoria

Professor Michael Bratton, Emeritus Professor of Government, Michigan State University

Professor Nic Cheeseman, Professor of Democracy, University of Birmingham

Dr Grieve Chelwa, Postdoctoral Fellow, The New School

Dr Boniface Dulani, Senior Lecturer in Political Science, University of Malawi

Professor Samuel Hickey, Professor of Politics and Development, University of Manchester

Professor Alan Hirsch, Emeritus Professor of Public Governance, University of Cape Town

Professor Faizel Ismail, Professor of Public Governance, University of Cape Town

Dr Walima Kalusa, Senior Lecturer in African History, University of eSwatini, and former Head of the Department of History, University of Zambia

Professor Chammah J. Kaunda, Assistant Professor of World Christianity and Mission Studies, Yonsei University

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Professor Jeremy Seekings, Professor of Political Studies and Sociology, University of Cape Town

Dr Neo Simutanyi, retired Senior Lecturer in Political Science, University of Zambia and Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue

Dr Morris Szeftel, Senior Lecturer Emeritus, Political & International Studies, University of Leeds

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