

Human Rights Watch Mourns Loss of Dewa Mavhinga

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Dewa Mavhinga © 2021 Human Rights Watch

(Johannesburg) – Human Rights Watch is heartbroken to report the sudden death of [Dewa Mavhinga](#), Southern Africa director at Human Rights Watch and beloved colleague to many activists across the human rights movement. Mavhinga was known not just for his passion, commitment, and leadership on human rights but above all for his great heart, his kindness, and solidarity with others.

“Dewa was a deeply empathetic and highly effective human rights activist whose work made many people’s lives better, whether it was pushing the Zimbabwe government to respect the right to protest in the face of economic hardship or ensuring that victims of human rights abuses across Southern Africa have access to justice,” said [Kenneth Roth](#), executive director of Human Rights Watch.

Mavhinga, who joined Human Rights Watch as senior Zimbabwe researcher in 2012, spent years documenting human rights violations in his native country during the turbulent and violent final years of the Robert Mugabe government. He had also been an extraordinary support to human rights defenders in Zimbabwe, where civil society is often under relentless attack.

As Southern Africa director Mavhinga oversaw and supported a broad range of work in the region aimed at ensuring human rights for all including exposing and ending political repression, forced evictions of Indigenous people, violence and discrimination against women, LGBT people, and foreigners, and demanding access to clean water and fair distribution of vaccines and Covid-19 relief packages.

A sophisticated thinker and persuasive speaker, Mavhinga was an excellent advocate and much sought-after by the media. He gave thousands of interviews, yet he never sought the limelight, mentoring and helping other colleagues and activists to deliver compelling messages. He was, one colleague wrote, “the best of what we strive to be.”

News of his death spread across Twitter, prompting tributes from activists and admirers. Among those Mavhinga had supported was the Zimbabwean journalist Hopewell Chin'ono, who tweeted that Mavhinga "was a great advocate for human rights in Zimbabwe and beyond. A gentle giant who was always there for anyone who was facing political persecution."

Human Rights Watch sends our deepest condolences to Dewa Mavhinga's wife, Fiona, their four children, and his extended family and many friends. In the coming days we will share details of how people can pay tribute to Mavhinga.

"We have lost a true gem, a treasure of a person and colleague. We're devastated by Dewa's passing," said [Mausi Segun](#), Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/04/human-rights-watch-mourns-loss-dewa-mavhinga>