

Zimbabwe to put New York Times freelance journalist on trial

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Jeffrey Moyo spent three weeks in jail last year accused of obtaining fake accreditation documents.



Freelance journalist for the New York Times, Jeffrey Moyo, centre, leaves the Bulawayo prison in Bulawayo [File: Zinyange Auntony/AFP]

A freelance journalist working for the New York Times will appear in Zimbabwe court on Wednesday, his lawyer and the newspaper said, in a case critics say illustrates the authoritarian nature of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government.

Thirty-seven-year-old Jeffrey Moyo [spent three weeks in jail](#) last year accused of obtaining fake accreditation documents for two of the US newspaper's journalists on a visit.

The New York Times said the charges were baseless and that a Zimbabwe Media Commission official had issued him papers for Christina Goldbaum and Joao Silva. They were expelled.

"We are deeply troubled by the prosecution of Jeffrey Moyo, which appears designed to chill press freedom in Zimbabwe. Jeffrey is a widely respected journalist with many years of reporting experience in Zimbabwe," Dean Baquet, the executive editor of The New York Times, [said in a statement](#), reported by the Times.

Moyo told the Reuters news agency that "it was a nasty experience, sleeping on the concrete floor and having no contact with my family."

"It was terrible, but I'm optimistic that things will go well."

Officials were not immediately available to comment on the trial due to take place at a court in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-biggest city. But last year, a spokesperson accused Moyo of paying a bribe to break immigration laws.

The government of Mnangagwa, who replaced long-serving leader Robert Mugabe in a 2017 coup, has testy relations with non-state media. Another prominent reporter, [Hopewell Chin'ono](#), who is critical of the government, has been arrested three times.

Moyo's lawyer Doug Coltart told Reuters that the state had a "very weak case" against his client.

"Jeffrey believed he was dealing with a bona fide official of the Zimbabwe Media Commission," Coltart said.

Moyo had also worked for the Thomson Reuters Foundation charity.

Reporters Without Borders ranked Zimbabwe 130th out of 180 countries in its World Press Freedom Index in 2021.

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