

Zimbabwe activist pastor acquitted of subversion



A beaming Pastor Evan Mwarire in the High Court in Harare, Zimbabwe, today, where he was acquitted on charges of subversion and inciting violence. (PHOTO: Facebook).

Zimbabwean social media activist pastor Evan Mwarire was acquitted in the High Court in Harare today on charges that he tried to subvert the government of former president Robert Mugabe and incited public violence during anti-government protests last year.

He subsequently made an appeal to new president Emmerson Mnangagwa – via a Facebook video broadcast – “to consider amnesty for all political prisoners who are held in prison who are still facing charges for having tried to exercise their constitutional right [to protest against the government]”.

High Court Priscilla Chigumba threw out the charges against the pastor, saying he had called for peaceful protests over the economic crisis – not the “violent removal of government”,

AFP reports.

Mwarire rose to prominence through his youtube video #ThisFlag campaign in which he voiced grievances about corruption and injustice, while appearing with a Zimbabwean flag draped around his shoulders. In July he led a strike that paralysed much of the nation. He was repeatedly hounded by the security forces, and briefly went into exile before returning to Zimbabwe.

In a Facebook video after today's acquittal, he thanked people for their prayers and support. While elated at the discharge, he said "we should never have been arrested in the first place".

"No citizens of this country should ever be afraid to stand up and express themselves," he said.

He said he hoped and prayed that under the new dispensation nobody in Zimbabwe would be intimidated and oppressed for speaking out in the interest of building a better nation.

He urged President Mnangagwa to be different from his predecessor and to handle the citizens he was called to serve with the consideration they deserved.

"As long as you respect the constitution of this nation, and as long as you love Zimbabwe the way we love Zimbabwe, we will support your effort. But we also want you to know that the moment we begin to sense that you are against the citizens of this nation then we will stand up as our constitution allows us to do and we will demand that our nation be run the way it is supposed to be run," Mwarire said.