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INITIATIVE FOR STRATEGIC
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Release Malawian Human Rights Defender Mr. Gift Trapence from Detention Now

We are human rights and health organizations gravely concerned by the arrest on July 8 of Mr. Gift Trapence, the Vice-Chairperson of the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) and the Executive Director of the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), a Malawian civil society organization.

We are calling for the immediate release of Mr. Trapence from detention.

There is no basis on which to detain Mr. Trapence. He is being charged with operating an unregistered NGO without the permission of the NGO Board, a low-level charge subject only to a fine.

We are concerned that the charge of unlawful operation of an NGO as well as the claims circulating in the media of alleged fraudulent activities are being used as a deliberate attempt to discredit Mr. Trapence and other human rights defenders, to squash ongoing protests of the presidential elections, and to justify efforts by the Malawian authorities to constrain civil society and their ability to operate and advocate for human rights.

Mr. Trapence is a respected human rights defender working in Malawi, regionally and globally to advance access to HIV treatment, prevention and care for key populations. As a leader of the HRDC he has joined thousands of Malawians challenging recent reports of electoral fraud.

We join others in Malawi and around the world who are monitoring this case closely.

We call on the entire United Nations family of organizations and governments to act swiftly and publicly in support of Mr. Trapence and civil society in Malawi.