

Blantyre, Malawi, July 11 (Infosplusgabon) - Amnesty International has slammed the Malawi authorities for the arbitrary arrest on allegations of fraud of two of the key figures involved in organising post-election demonstrations in Southern African country.

Muleya Mwananyanda, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Southern Africa, said in a statement that the charges are "a ploy" to harass and intimidate the two activists and force them to end the ongoing post-election demonstrations.

Police arrested Gift Trapence, Vice Chairman of the Human Rights Defenders Coalition, and McDonald Sembereka, a coalition member, on 9 July following days of demonstrations after the disputed election which were held on 21 May.

“Malawian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release them and stop clamping down on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association,” Mwananyanda said.

“Organising and participating in peaceful protests is not a crime. Authorities must stop targeting dissenting voices and using politically motivated charges to suppress differing views.”

Mwananyanda said the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association must be fully respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled in Malawi.

The demonstrators are calling for the resignation of the Chairperson of the Malawi Electoral Commission, Jane Ansah, accusing her of mishandling the election in which President Peter

Mutharika won a second term.

Major cities such as Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Rumphi have been the scenes of post-election protests since the disputed election results in May.

President Peter Mutharika has dismissed the protesters as nothing but people hellbent on making Malawi a “lawless state”.

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