

## **End the persecution of civil society and education campaigners in Malawi.**

Several Civil Society members in Malawi and members of the education coalition CSCQBE are now facing prolonged and unprecedented discrimination and persecution. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), together with the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA) are calling for an immediate end to this discrimination and give messages of solidarity from around the world to activists in Malawi.

CSCQBE has been at the forefront of campaigning, monitoring and implementing education in Malawi for many years. The coalition has however regularly received threats and persecutions preventing it from carrying out such a vital role. The coalition has promoted quality, equity, access, and management of the education sector in line with Malawi Vision 2020, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and the country's education sector strategy. CSCQBE is also widely known for its contribution towards transparency and good governance in the education sector through its budget tracking and advocacy initiatives.

The coalition, many NGOs and their lead individuals have received recent verbal and physical threats. The threats are abusing not only their rights but greatly restricting their meaningful contributions towards ensuring quality education for all. CSCQBE Executive Director, Mr Benedicto Kondowe, has received threats to his personal safety.

The Global Campaign for Education and ANCEFA are very concerned that civil society organizations and movements are no longer free to express themselves in general and exercise their democratic right to demonstrate as enshrined in the country's constitution. We received with disbelief the news that those wishing to demonstrate have to pay a huge sum of money in advance, which is not in line with the country's laws. We are also concerned that there are no good mechanisms to address the rift that has arisen between government and university lecturers over the exercise of academic freedom.

GCE and ANCEFA therefore categorically condemn the unprecedented crackdown on civil society activists and academics as unacceptable and retrogressive to socio-economic development in Malawi. The fight to educate nearly 5 million illiterate youth and adults, and 600,000 out-of-school children cannot go well if civil society cannot work or voice their concerns, without fear of persecution. If not checked, this can only serve to derail the democratic foundations revived in Malawi since the dawn of multiparty democracy in the country.

GCE and ANCEFA congratulate CSCQBE and their member CSOs on their work to date. We call upon the government to take a lead on both providing good quality education for all but also a good working environment to enable CSOs, academics and civil society to participate in a safe, meaningful, and constructive way. We urge for all threats and persecution to immediately stop and for the investigation of cases to date.