

Zimbabwe prize-winning novelist acquitted over anti-government protest

By [Nyasha Chingono](#)

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Acclaimed Zimbabwean novelist Tsitsi Dangarembga was acquitted on Monday by the country's High Court for staging an anti-government protest in 2020, for which she had initially received a six-month suspended jail sentence and a fine.



File photo: Zimbabwean novelist, Tsitsi Dangarembga, whose latest book "This Mournable Body" has been nominated for a Booker Prize, speaks during an interview with Reuters in Harare, Zimbabwe, 4 August 2020. Reuters/MacDonald Dzirutwe

Dangarembga was found guilty by a lower court in 2022 on charges of participating in a public gathering with intent to incite public violence while breaking Covid-19 protocols, after a protest criticising the government's efforts to deal with corruption and a struggling economy in July 2020. Dozens of political activists were arrested at the time.

"I can confirm that she has been acquitted. As her lawyers we are grateful because she had not committed any offence in the first place," said lawyer Harrison Nkomo.

He said the High Court judges did not immediately give reasons for the acquittal.

A fierce critic of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government who has been fighting for years against corruption and demanding reforms, Dangarembga had maintained during the trial that Zimbabweans have the right to demonstrate.

Not all protesters were treated with leniency. Zimbabwean courts have handed out a wave of harsh sentences against political activists ahead of general elections later this year.

Opposition leader Jacob Ngarivhume, who was arrested at the same time with Dangarembga for organising protests, was last week sentenced to four years in prison on charges of inciting violence.

Dangarembga's first novel, *Nervous Conditions*, won the African section of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1989. Her book *This Mournable Body* was nominated for a Booker Prize in 2020.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reporting by Nyasha Chingono; editing by Nellie Peyton and Emelia Sithole-Matarise

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