



## **Statement on closure of democratic space in Zimbabwe**

**27November 2014**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) is concerned about the continued systematic closure of democratic space in Zimbabwe. The past months have witnessed a systematic use of torture, harassment and intimidation by state agents on citizens exercising their freedom of association and assembly and the freedom to demonstrate and petition. These attacks are indicative of the closing of the democratic space, which is contrary to section 58 and 59 of the constitution of Zimbabwe. Further they justify why many international human rights indicators still rank Zimbabwe among the worst countries in the world in terms of civil liberties, political rights and freedoms. The recent Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranked Zimbabwe 46 out of the continent's 52 countries.

In August police violently quelled a demonstration organized by MDC-T youths demanding the promised 2.2 million jobs by ZANU PF during the run up to the 2013 elections in clear violation of the youths right to demonstrate and petition. On 06 November Itai Dzamara the organiser of Occupy Africa Unity Square and co-protesters were severely assaulted for attempting to march in Harare to raise awareness of the Occupy Africa Unity Square project. On 26 November four youths from the Occupy Africa Unity Square project were arrested and severely tortured at Harare Central Police after presenting a petition and staging a protest in parliament.

The continued violation of fundamental freedoms is not only a breach of the constitution of Zimbabwe but also of regional and international conventions to which Zimbabwe has ratified. In most cases the use of excessive force by the police and other state agents is meant to silence citizens. The Forum calls upon all law enforcement agents to show their commitment in protecting citizens by upholding rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution.

Ends//