
11 January 2016

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum is concerned by the disturbing escalation of human rights violations between December 2015 and January 2016, a sign of further escalation of violence due to the current economic and political climate. Some events and incidents that created this anxiety are as follows:

On 9 and 10 December 2015, Harare City Council (HCC) demolished 250 homes in Budiriro and Aspindale, some of them with standard and approved paperwork from HCC as well as the Ministry of Local Government. The HCC had no court orders for the demolitions in accordance with section 74 of the constitution, which guarantees freedom from arbitrary eviction. Movable property that could have been saved was damaged violating section 71 on property rights. With Zimbabwe’s high demand for housing, as demolitions continue, more illegal structures continue to sprout. Pseudo authorities, corrupt council staff and land barons are exploiting homeowners by issuing false paperwork for housing stands. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights obliges State Parties to take all steps to achieve progressive realisation of the right to housing. Government appears to focus on creating homelessness and strife.

On 23 December 2015 ZANU PF supporters in Chitungwiza abducted six members of People First, subjected them to beatings with wooden planks, electric cables, booted feet, fists and open palms, punitive action for defecting from ZANU PF. The victims sustained extensive injuries that required medical attention. Section 58 on Freedom of Association and Assembly and Section 67 on political rights guarantee the rights to political participation and the freedom to join and belong to a particular political party. The case was reported at Chitungwiza Police Station but was not actively investigated. The State is reminded of its obligation to protect the right to life and personal security in accordance with sections 48 and 52 of the constitution.
On 27 December 2015 in Kuwadzana 2 in Harare, police officers arrested members of some workers unions and civil society organisations (CSO), who were planning collective job action in response to the non-payment of salaries by government. The arrested were beaten with batons and subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment while under police custody. Prohibition of collective job action violates section 65 guaranteeing Labour rights. Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment is prohibited under section 53 as well as section 50 on the rights of arrested and detained persons. Through legal interventions the victims were able to access medical treatment, and bail on 29th December at Mbare Magistrate’s Court.

On 4 January 2016 over 150 workers unions and CSO activists demonstrating in Harare over non-payment of salaries by government were beaten up by police with batons, booted feet and fists. This was in violation of section 59 on freedom to demonstrate and petition which provides that “Every person has the right to demonstrate and to present petitions, but these rights must be exercised peacefully”. Police suppression of demonstrations resulting in injuries additionally violates section 53 on Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment. The state security agents opted for violence in lieu of political solutions to address social and economic challenges.

On 5 January 2016 ZANU PF youths assaulted commuter omnibus operators, including Chitungwiza residents, after the operators protested against a $100 transport operator’s fee imposed on them by Chitungwiza Municipality. Police interventions involved property damage and indiscriminate assaults and arrests of residents. Over 30 victims sustained significant injuries from the assaults and required medical intervention while 40 were arrested. The arrested were further subjected to torture in police custody. Police failed to act within their mandate of protecting and securing lives in accordance with Section 219 (c). Further, they acted in a partisan and unprofessional manner in violation of Section 219 (3) of the constitution. The police also violated section 53 on Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment.

Current human rights violations suggest a lack of commitment by the state to respect, promote, protect and fulfil human rights in accordance with the country’s constitution and international human rights treaties. Some of the violations took place on 10 December, the United Nations International Human Rights Day. Social unrest is a symptom of unresolved conflict and persistent poverty and socio-economic pressures. The State should not repress citizens but become accountable and seek sustainable solutions. Human rights fulfilment is just, feasible and socially legitimizes governance by the State. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum calls on the government of Zimbabwe to make progressive efforts towards realisation of all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Zimbabwe and improve people’s living conditions.

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1 the Zimbabwe Activists Alliance, ZINASU, Hospital Doctors Association, Zimbabwe Nurses Association and Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (RTZU)
2 from Zimbabwe Activists Alliance, ZINASU, Hospital Doctors Association Zimbabwe Nurses Association and Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (RTZU)
Forum Members
Amnesty International-Zimbabwe
Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe
Civic Education Network Trust
Counseling Services Unit
Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
Justice for Children
Legal Resources Foundation
Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe
Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Non-violent Action and Strategies for Social Change
Research and Advocacy Unit
Students Solidarity Trust

Transparency International-Zimbabwe
Women of Zimbabwe Arise
Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender
Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights
Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust
Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
Zimbabwe Peace Project
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association

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