



**Oral Statement on the adoption of Zimbabwe Universal Periodic Review
Working Group Report**

34thth Session of the UN Human Rights Council

16 March 2017

Mr President,

CIVICUS and Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum welcome the Government of Zimbabwe's continued cooperation with the Universal Periodic Review process, including its acceptance of a number of important recommendations to improve the human rights situation in the country.

However, the greatest sign of commitment by the government is not merely attending UPR sessions and accepting recommendations. The ultimate evidence of commitment is positive change in the human rights environment.

We are saddened that despite consistent participation by Zimbabwe in successive UPR sessions, the situation on the ground remains dire with state authorities showing disregard for basic freedoms, particularly the freedoms of assembly and expression.

While we welcome the decision to repeal criminal defamation laws, harassment of journalists continues unabated. Human rights defenders also continue to face harassment, arbitrary arrests and torture for exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and expression. State institutions such as the police, military and the intelligence also continue to wilfully perpetrate a number of human rights violations despite assurances by Zimbabwe to provide security service with human rights training.

We urge the Government of Zimbabwe to fully investigate human rights abuses highlighted during the Universal Periodic Review process. In particular, we urge the government to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of prominent human rights activist Itai Dzamara on 9 March 2015.

In addition, we remain concerned by the slow pace which with the government is seeking to align existing laws with the 2013 Constitution. We urge the government to expedite this process and to reconsider the recently introduced Constitutional Amendment Bill no.1 which, if passed, would considerably weaken independence of the judiciary.

We thank you, Mr President.