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**Statement on the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture  
Ratify the UN Convention Against Torture Now!**

**26 June 2017**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) joins the rest of the world in commemorating the United Nations (UN) Day in Support of victims of Torture. In 1997, the UN designated 26<sup>th</sup> June as the **International Day in Support of victims of Torture** to emphasize the importance of the right to personal dignity and security of all individuals around the world. The day also serves as a reminder to everyone that freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is a non-derogable right.

For the second year in succession, the UN has emphasized the importance of rehabilitating victims and survivors of torture by retaining the theme, **“Support Life after Torture”** Under the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT), States have an obligation not only to prevent torture and hold perpetrators accountable but also to provide all victims of torture with holistic and effective redress in order to restore the dignity and capacity of survivors to lead meaningful lives, and contribute actively to the development of society. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights adopted the Robben Island Guidelines for the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture in Africa. Also in March this year at the 21<sup>st</sup> Extra- Ordinary session of the ACHPR, the Commission adopted General Comment 4 on the Right to Redress for Victims of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The General Comment addresses the obligations to provide prompt, full, and effective redress; to ensure rehabilitation; to protect against intimidation and reprisals; and to provide redress for collective harms. Further, in Zimbabwe Section 53 of the Constitution guarantees freedom from torture.



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In spite of the domestic and international position on torture, state agents in Zimbabwe continue to use torture either as a form of punishment or to extract a confession. More so, the Government of Zimbabwe is still reluctant to ratify UNCAT. The United Nations Human

Rights Council reviewed Zimbabwe in 2016 during the Universal Periodic Review process. Several members states urged Zimbabwe to ratify UNCAT. Unfortunately the government has rejected these recommendations. In 2016 alone the Forum documented 318 cases of torture with impunity for perpetrators. Cases of torture are most likely to be on the increase as the 2018 elections approaches. The prevalence of torture is a threat to the country's prospects of holding free, fair and credible elections.

Thus as the world stands united against torture, the Forum urges the Government of Zimbabwe to:

- Reconsider ratifying UNCAT and it's Optional Protocol;
- Put in place administrative and legal reforms that would ensure that torture is not only prohibited in the Constitution but that any such acts are criminalized at law;
- Investigate and prosecute perpetrators of torture and other serious human rights crimes; and
- Work closely with Civil Society Organisations to restore the dignity of victims and survivors of torture through holistic rehabilitation programmes and timely compensation to survivors of tortures.