



### **Africa Human Rights Day**

## **CELEBRATING THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**21 October 2012**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) joins the rest of Africa in commemorating Africa Human Rights Day and in particular, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission).

The Africa Human Rights Day has been set aside by the African Union to commemorate the coming into force on 21 October 1986 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (the African Charter). Every 21 October of each year, Africa commemorates this day, reflecting on the solemn declaration by the African leaders to respect, promote and protect human rights on the continent.

This year's commemorations are particularly significant in that it marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the African Commission, a body established in terms of the African Charter to oversee the promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the African Charter. The establishment of the African Commission is a testament to the fact that human rights are not alien to the African continent and African citizens should take pride in having an institution that is mandated to promote and protect their rights.

As Zimbabweans commemorate the anniversary of this great institution that seeks to empower and exhort African states to honour their human rights commitments to their citizens through the African Charter, it should be borne in mind that the realisation of our rights is feasible when we mobilise, unite, find common ground and make firm resolutions as citizens which we follow up with our elected representatives.

It is sad to note that 25 years since the establishment of the African Commission, acceptance by some African states most notably Zimbabwe to confer rights on their citizens has been downright low. In Zimbabwe, socio-economic rights remain beyond the reach of the majority who for the past decade has had to live with limited access to clean and safe water, basic education and health care, amongst others. Harare and Bulawayo the two major cities experience perennial shortages of water resulting in the recurring outbreaks of typhoid and cholera.

The last decade has seen a proliferation of gross human rights violations by the state against its own citizens and the manipulation and or rebuff of regional human rights mechanisms that attempt to influence positive change on the country's human rights situation. Fundamental rights and freedoms of expression, association and assembly enshrined in Article 9 of the African Charter continue to be systematically violated by the Government of Zimbabwe, which has also maintained repressive legislation on her statute books despite the numerous calls by the African Commission to repeal such legislation that curtails the freedoms and liberties of the people. It is thus prudent for the Government of Zimbabwe to urgently consider signing and ratifying the **Protocol to the African Charter** establishing the **African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights**. This is the surest way of affording justice to victims of human rights violations

As the country prepares for the constitutional referendum and elections in due course, the Forum urges the Government of Zimbabwe to also consider ratifying the **African Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG)** and adhere to the **SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections**, that provide for the fundamental principles on good

governance and democracy. The Government must also respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as take positive steps to protect and promote rights and freedoms as enshrined in the African Charter.

### **Forum members**

- Amnesty International-Zimbabwe
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe
- Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
- Justice for Children Trust
- Legal Resources Foundation
- Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe
- Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe
- Nonviolent 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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