



Africa Day: Fighting for a better Africa

25 May 2014

Africa Day is the annual commemoration of the 1963 founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU). The 54 member states of the AU aim to establish a platform through which African countries can collectively address challenges on the continent. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) joins the continent in celebrating Africa's long held objectives of self-determination, observance of human rights, rule of law and democracy.

The AU has since its formation, made efforts to ensure political and economic integration among its member states, reduce poverty, bring Africa into the global economy and promote respect for human rights, dignity, equality, and justice for all. Despite such efforts, the continent is still grappling with the perpetual problems of poverty, corruption, social and income inequalities, high unemployment levels, violence and power struggles among the elites.

A challenge that has faced Africa recently is the abduction of an estimated 276 girls from a school in Nigeria. It is sad that the African Union delayed making a response to acknowledge this crisis and only did so after Western countries had expressed alarm and outrage over the abductions. A summit to discuss intervention approaches to the abduction has been held in France without the involvement or participation of the AU. Unless African countries make concerted efforts to resolve African problems, the mantra 'African solutions to African problems' will remain an ideal.

As Zimbabwe commemorates Africa Day, the Zimbabwean government must comply with its obligations and commitments under the African Charter on

Human and Peoples' Rights to give effect to the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Charter. In so doing the government should address the socio-economic challenges facing the country to avoid social and political upheaval. Economically the country is sitting on a time bomb evidenced by the liquidity crunch, high unemployment levels, company closures, endemic corruption, deteriorating health and education standards as well as lack of safe and clean water amongst other socio-economic challenges.

Furthermore, simmering political violence exemplified by the resurgence of inter-party violence in Epworth, Harare in recent weeks calls for strong leadership and a commitment to fulfill citizens' fundamental rights to freedom of assembly and association. In this regard, the Forum calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to work towards the development of strong institutions that promote, and protect human rights and uphold the rule of law.

Lastly the Forum, reminds the AU to take a keen interest in the affairs of its member countries and subscribe to its own standards and policies for the realisation of a better continent that promotes, protects and safeguards rights for Africans.

Forum members

Amnesty International-Zimbabwe
Catholic Commission for Justice
and Peace in Zimbabwe
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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