



5 August 2014

## **ALERT**

### **VIOLENCE IN CHINGWIZI CAMP**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) unreservedly condemns the violence that erupted in Chingwizi Camp from 31 July. The violence occurred following the government's attempts to relocate clinic facilities from the camp that has a carrying capacity of about 3 000 families to the site earmarked for resettlement, which currently has only about 600 families.

Following repeated attempts by the police to move the clinic facilities on 1 August, villagers burnt two police vehicles and disarmed anti-riot police. This resulted in acts of retributive violence by the police and army who moved into the camp and indiscriminately assaulted and arrested villagers including the elderly, children and ill people. Police arbitrarily arrested about 300 villagers and 27 of them are to appear at Chiredzi Magistrates Court today facing charges of assault and arson.

The Forum condemns both the violence by the Chingwizi villagers and the retributive violence by the police. The Forum also deplores the manner in which government has handled the planned relocation and the placement of Chingwizi residents after the floods that destroyed their homes and livelihoods in February.

The Chingwizi violence must be understood within the context in which it unfolded. The violence was a result of a government feeling threatened by villagers protesting inhuman living conditions and demanding an adequate standard of living. Instead of government addressing the flood disaster and

treating the victims in a humane manner that befits a responsible government, the victims have been exposed to uncertainty, hunger, disease and violence.

Violence in whatever form - structural or direct, is undesirable and destructive. The Forum calls upon the police to exercise their law enforcement role in a professional manner. Use of direct violence in a volatile situation only worsens the problem.

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