



International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

26 June 2018

The United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture serves as a reminder to the world that torture is a despicable crime and is universally denounced. It is a day that we honor, respect and support the victims and survivors of torture throughout the world. Today, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) joins the rest of the world in commemorating this important day.

The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture was established on the 12th of December 1997, by UN resolution 52/149. The first International Day in Support of Victims of Torture was observed on June 26, 1998 which is the same year which marked the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which proclaims that no human being shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This day was put on the United Nations calendar with the intention to eradicate torture and to ensure effective implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other, Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).

The global affirmation to end torture can be seen in the recognition of the prohibition of torture as a principle of customary international law embodied in the UNCAT. Although the Constitution of Zimbabwe prohibits torture under Section 53, it does not provide a definition of torture. The Government of Zimbabwe has also not ratified and domesticated the UNCAT or criminalized torture in our legislation.

Yet, throughout our history in Zimbabwe, torture has been used as a method of political re-education, interrogation, punishment and coercion. Acts of torture have left thousands of victims physically, mentally and emotionally scarred, whilst perpetrators of these heinous crimes continue to enjoy impunity from prosecution as the result of protection provided to them by corrupt government officials and powerful politicians. It is sad to note that the very people who are entrusted with the enforcement of the rule of law, protecting human rights and keeping people safe are the instigators and perpetrators of torture in Zimbabwe. As a nation we still bear the shame of

not ratifying the UNCAT and also the opprobrium of having blocked the entry of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture into our country in 2009.

The Forum therefore urges the Government of Zimbabwe to mark a new trajectory for the country by ratifying and domesticating the UNCAT, criminalizing torture and allowing access to UN and AU special mechanisms aimed at combating torture. The Forum holds firmly that no place on earth, especially Zimbabwe, should be a safe haven for people who commit torture. We call upon the Government of Zimbabwe to take concrete steps to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights including protections of all persons from physical or psychological torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

On the occasion of this important day, the Forum acknowledges the wrongs committed against torture victims in Zimbabwe over the years and reaffirms the self-worth of victims of torture as human beings and equal participants in civic life entitled to the full enjoyment of all rights. The Forum stands in solidarity with the men and women who survived the horrendous acts of torture who are beacons of hope and living testimonies of the resilience of the human spirit. On this important day, the Forum also honours the memory of all those who lost their lives as a result of torture. We call upon the Government of Zimbabwe, all civil society organisations and all Zimbabweans to join hands to work together towards ending torture in Zimbabwe.

Forum members

- Amnesty International-Zimbabwe
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe
- Civic Education and Network Trust (CIVNET)
- Counselling 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
- VERITAS
- 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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violations**

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