



Zimbabwe
HUMAN RIGHTS
NGO Forum

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Attention: African Diplomatic Community

RE: The Escalating Security Situation in Zimbabwe following July 30 2018 Elections

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) is a coalition of Twenty two (22) human rights organisations operating in Zimbabwe. Since 1998, the Forum has worked with victims of organised violence and torture to ensure justice, accountability and non-recurrence.

The Forum has been following with grave concern the deteriorating security situation in the country and we write to request your urgent intervention.

Following the relatively peaceful 30 July 2018 harmonised elections, the situation in Zimbabwe has deteriorated grossly. On 1 August 2018, the military was deployed into the streets of Harare following protests by opposition political party supporters who were protesting the perceived delay in the release of the results of the Presidential Election. Reports indicated that the ZRP were in control of the situation when military vehicles were observed driving into the central business district. Gunshots were fired randomly throughout the central business district. Forum observers witnessed soldiers randomly firing live bullets and beating up bystanders who were not involved in the protest. Six (6) people lost lives and about thirty-five (35) others were seriously injured.

It is our submission that the military's conduct was in violation of international standards in controlling protesting crowds. Since that tragedy, the Forum notes the continued presence of military personnel in residential places in Harare and around the country, and the continued violations of human rights.

On the evening of the 2nd of August 2018, several high- density suburbs of Harare were turned into war zones. Soldiers were reportedly indiscriminately assaulted civilians, while others were abducted, tortured and later released. Areas like Highfields, Kuwadzana, Dzivarasekwa and Chitungwiza were overnight turned into battle zones and curfews were put in place. Shop owners were ordered to shut their businesses while those found in beer halls were randomly assaulted.

The Forum has noted with concern the efforts by the authorities to conceal evidence and evading responsibility regarding the victims of the army shootings. According to the relatives of one of the victims of the army shooting, authorities at Parirenyatwa Hospital indicated on the BD12 form of the victim, that the victim succumbed to stab wounds. It was only after the intervention of lawyers that the cause of death as recorded on the BD12 was changed to become gunshot wounds.

On 4 August 2018, following military raids in Chitungwiza, the Forum visited Chitungwiza Hospital and was reliably informed that the Hospital has been turning away victims of military brutality. Three victims were tracked and received treatment. Such behaviour is regrettable and deplorable to say the least. Life is precious, in Africa and anywhere else in the world. We call upon the governing authorities to stop their recurring tendency of apportioning blame and take responsibility for their actions.

A total of forty **(40)** civilians were assaulted during the military raids while sixteen **(16)** people were abducted. For example, in Highfields, four individuals were abducted by armed men who were looking for Hapymore Chidziva, the MDC- Alliance youth leader, they were tortured and later released.

We also note that the police have so far arrested thirty two **(32)** people in connection with the protests following the perceived delay in the announcement of the Presidential election results. Twenty seven **(27)** have since been released no bail. We urge the police to accord those arrested their rights as provided for in Section 50 of the Constitution which outlines the rights of accused persons.

The Forum reiterates its position that since the 15 November 2017 military intervention, human security in Zimbabwe remains at risk and that the military remain the paramount political force. The Forum questions who gave orders to the military to embark on the civilian clampdown. The Forum notes with regret this behavior by the military as it douses all hopes of a new democratic Zimbabwe that respects and promotes human rights for its citizens being achieved.

The Forum further notes that since the announcement of the Presidential results, there has been an outbreak of violence also in the rural areas mainly targeted at supporters of the opposition, particularly the polling agents. The perpetrators are mainly from the ruling party. There have been several attacks on human rights defenders including raids at homes and offices. The assailants on human rights defenders are suspected to be members of the military and police. Four **(4)** human rights defenders have since been evacuated to safety while many are still in hiding fearing for their lives.

The Forum values the solidarity of the international community, especially our African brothers and sisters who have been present in the country to observe the elections. The Forum wishes to reiterate that elections are not an event but a process. An assessment on the credibility of an election that does not take into consideration the security of voters after casting their votes, remains questionable in itself. The escalating security situation in the country calls upon the region to act with haste and compassion, not simply to the leadership of Zimbabwe, but to the people of Zimbabwe whose lives are at the mercy of a powerful military force.

The Forum remembers too well the tragedy of 2008 when over two hundred **(200)** people were killed in political violence within a space of 30 days.

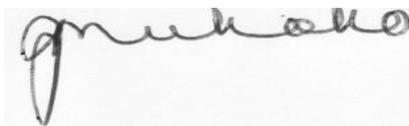
We therefore appeal to the African diplomatic community to raise its voice against these gross violations of human rights mainly by the state and its apparatus. For a government with a powerful state machinery like Zimbabwe, it is difficult to sustain the argument that the people killing civilians on our streets are unknown to the government. Forum observers witnessed these encounters and the government must take responsibility.

In that regard, we therefore request the African diplomatic community to do the following to assist the people of Zimbabwe:

- a. To engage all relevant parties including the military leaders and put mechanisms to address violence.
- b. Facilitate a return to peaceful dialogue between the key political players
- c. To continue engaging the government to end the violence and targeted attacks, harassment and intimidation of oppositions supporters and follow due process where it is required.
- d. To call upon the Government of Zimbabwe to bring to account persons responsible for the killing of civilians on 1 August 2018 and those responsible for that massacre and the violence that is spreading across the country.
- e. To call upon the Government of Zimbabwe to urgently reach out to the families of the persons killed by the military and those who were injured to ensure that they receive support to help them in these difficult times.
- f. To ensure that the victims of political persecution who may seek asylum in other African countries are accorded safe protection and that their rights at international law are respected and protected.
- g. At regional and continental level, the Forum requests that the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) immediately convene the necessary organs for the purposes of activating the regional mechanisms for resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis before it is too late.
- h. It is critical that a mediation process be commenced to restore Zimbabwe to stability.

In conclusion, the Forum which has so far handled over one hundred and ninety nine (**199**) violations of human rights since 1 August 2018 to date, plead with the African diplomatic community to intervene. History tells us that African governments tend to listen and respond positively when the message comes from their fellow African brothers and sisters. And they increase repression when there is silence. The people of Zimbabwe will be truly grateful for such intervention. The Forum remains committed to provide any assistance necessary to alleviate the security situation in Zimbabwe.

Faithfully,



Mukoko Jestina (Ms)

CHAIRPERSON

ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM