

A ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS
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NYATSIME DETAINEE RECOUNTS **HORROR**

**MATOBO VIOLENCE: MP
WALK 10 KILOMETRES IN
THE BUSH**



**BOOK TO TACKLE
CONSTITUTIONAL
ILLITERACY**



**ZIMRIGHTS
CELEBRATE ITS 30TH
ANNIVERSARY**



FOREWORD



**By the Executive Director,
Dr Musa Kika**

I hope our October to November newsletter finds you well.

It was sad to note that after the Forum wrote a strong-worded statement in June 2022 calling on the government to put in place mechanisms to end the recurrence of politically motivated violence, the vice reared its ugly head again across the country, particularly in Matobo and Insiza, Matabeleland South provinces. The Forum issued the statement following the violence that engulfed the Nyatsime area, Chitungwiza in June 2022 in the aftermath of the murder of Moreblessing Ali. Despite ZANU-PF instigating the violence, only Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) MPs were arrested and have been denied bail since June.

The Forum however managed to secure bail for Felix Biri on 17 October, the first of the Nyatsime detainees to be granted bail. We feel the weaponization of the law to silence dissenting voices is a violation of human rights.

On October 16, 2022, ZANU-PF supporters in party-branded vehicles in a convoy of over ten attacked a CCC by-election campaign team in Ward 2, Matobo. The violence forced the CCC campaign team and some villagers to hide in the bush. Pictures of some women who were assaulted and undressed went viral, robbing them of their dignity.

CCC MP for Nkulumane, Kucaca Pulu and Hwange Central MP Daniel Mololeke were attacked in Matobo while another CCC MP Jasmine Toffa was assaulted in indiscriminate attacks on opposition supporters in Insiza ahead of the October 22 by-elections. The police issued a statement promising to investigate the matter, but nothing so far has come out of the probe of the violence that left over 30 people in need of medical attention. Since then, cases of human rights violations perpetrated by the ZANU-PF have been on the rise.

The atmosphere in Mbare remained volatile since 15 September 2022.

“As the country heads towards the 2023 elections, violence is threatening to plunge the county into anarchy and President Emmerson Mnangagwa is urged to make a demonstrable commitment towards levelling the political playing field ahead of polls.”

Tensions reached boiling point on 10 October 2022 when violent skirmishes occurred between ZANU-PF and CCC youths over control of vending space at the Mupedzanhamo market where vendors are illegally charged a daily fee of US\$5 per stall by space barons. The violence resulted in one fatality, arson, and malicious damage to property. We noted with concern that only CCC supporters implicated in the violence were arrested.

As the country heads towards the 2023 elections, violence is threatening to plunge the county into anarchy and President Emmerson Mnangagwa is urged to make a demonstrable commitment towards levelling the political playing field ahead of polls. Impunity and political polarisation are fuelling the violence. This recent wave of violence is indicative of a deepening political crisis in the country that can only escalate to greater proportions as the country inches closer to the 2023 polls if no action is taken now.

As the country moves closer to elections, we challenge the police to conduct their duties impartially to ensure that no lives are lost.

On 15 November, I lead the Forum team in a meeting with the Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General, Prof Luis Franceschi, who led a team on a fact-finding mission to determine if Zimbabwe can be readmitted into the Commonwealth. We reiterated that the Forum supports Zimbabwe's re-admission provided compliance with the Latimer House Principles which include respect for the separation of powers, human rights, and women, among others.

As you know, the Forum exists to find ways to reduce or eliminate organised violence and torture, which is a serious affront to human rights, we partnered with the Centre for Human Rights, the University of Zimbabwe and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in the launch of a constitutional booklet to simplify the Bill of Rights so that citizens fully understand their rights and will be able to report abuses.

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The Zimbabwe Republic Police manning the streets in Mbare after ZANU PF and CCC clash

The booklet is found in English, Shona, and Ndebele and I am hopeful it will play a very significant role in improving constitutional literacy and awareness in the country.

I encourage you all to work hard in defending human rights, especially in the coming months until the elections. Considering what happened in Matobo, Insiza and Chirumhanzu, prospects of a violent election are evident, and you should be vigilant.

Thank you.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL ZIMBABWE'S FOOTPRINT IN THE ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT

By Keith Sibanda

Accredited as a national chapter in 2001, TIZ has had milestones in shaping the national anti-corruption discourse over the past 25 years.

Its watchdog role has since expanded, shifting attention to empowering marginalised communities that remain disenfranchised by mutating corruption trends across the board.

Investing in Accountability Monitoring Committees (AMCs) has proved to be a sustainable framework in Transparency International Zimbabwe's (TI Z) anti-corruption crusade, building solid community structures that have kept track of how community resources are being utilised.

Thus, strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms. Owing to continued efforts in capacitating societies, TI Z has recorded an abrupt increase in social liability initiatives that have lived to see a better quality of transparency and accountability in the administration of ward retention and community development funds.

Hence, it has been noted that fighting corruption from a grassroots level feed into a broader spectrum of the national anti-corruption agenda proved by testimonies shared during a 2022 crosscutting marathon of AMC conferences in TI Z's three regions.

All three regional offices conducted AMC Conferences, where community members were reflecting on the strides taken in the anticorruption mantra through existing community structures. Efforts in demanding transparency and accountability from duty bearers encompassed hosting Social Accountability Community meetings, women empowerment circles, social accountability interface meetings, and policy dialogues.

Key takeaways from community engagements include (1) the Importance of coming up with anti-corruption strategies from grassroots levels (2) having a collective stakeholder approach in the fight against corruption (3) Community-led advocacy in the anti-corruption to foster inclusion and active participation in policy formulation and implementation.



Nyatsime detainee recounts HORROR

Shoppa (in stripped golf t-shirt) chats with his lawyer Noble Chinhanu (far left) at the Harare Remand Prison soon after his release

It is about 1800hrs at the entrance of the Harare Remand Prison and the usually serene place was teeming with people.

The small car park was full of vehicles and relatives of the 14 residents arrested over the violence that rocked Nyatsime on 14 June could not hide their joy.

It is a matter of minutes before their relatives come out of restriction after spending 150 days in remand prison, denied bail over five times.

The hooting of vehicles, ululations and screams by the ecstatic relatives marked their reunion with the 14 who had spent five months in jail. They hugged and kissed with excitement, with others shedding tears of joy. It was quite an emotional event.

Chauya Shoppa, one of the 14 who was arrested on 22 June in Marondera alongside Zaphania Chinembiri, Zecks Makoni and Roan Tsoka, said he will not forget the terrible prison conditions he lived in.

"It was a painful journey. I spent 150 days in remand prison for no crime," Shoppa said soon after his release on bail on 18 November.

"It was painful.

"The situation was horrible. Before we were arrested, about 15 inmates were sharing a cell but when we were brought in, about 120 of us were sharing a single cell."

He added: "Sometimes, we spent the whole night standing and that was so painful. It was painful."

Shoppa was arrested after they were summoned by the Marondera police a few days after they went to Beatrice Police Station to report ZANU-PF activists for torching their houses.

But in a sudden turn of events, the complainants became the accused and none of the ruling party supporters who unleashed violence in Nyatsime was arrested, including a councillor Masimbi Masimbi who was captured on video declaring the area a ZANU-PF territory.

The ZANU-PF youths led violent acts, disrupting the funeral proceedings of the slain Citizen Coalition for Change (CCC) supporter, Moreblessing Ali.

Sixteen CCC supporters were arrested, including Zengeza MP Job Sikhala and Chitungwiza North legislator Godfrey Sithole. Sikhala is still in remand prison while the rest have been granted bail on charges of inciting violence. They were represented in court by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum.

This was after the 14 June violent acts by CCC supporters at the memorial service of Ali. The opposition supporters were acting in retaliation after they were attacked by ZANU-PF supporters while at the funeral wake of Ali the previous night.

"I spent three months and 21 days," Ephrage Gwavava, one of the detainees said.

"The problem is I became diagnosed with diabetes. It was difficult living with the condition in prison. I didn't know I was diabetic. It manifested while I was in remand prison. I almost died. I am now fit and ready to carry on with the struggle."

There have been concerns that Zimbabwe prisons are overcrowded, posing a health risk to inmates.

MATOBO VIOLENCE: MP WALK 10 KILOMETRES IN THE BUSH

Hwange MP Daniel Molokele said he will never forget how he abandoned his car and walked for 10 kilometres in the bush to survive an attack by ZANU-PF supporters and State agents in Matobo ahead of the 22 October by-elections in ward 2.

In the company of a fellow Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) activist Themba Dube, Molokele was forced to abandon his parliamentary vehicle at a busy business centre late on Sunday, 16 October 2022 after being trailed by a marked vehicle for more than 10 kilometres in rural Matabeleland South.

Molokele was on a campaign trail in Matobo South ahead of the October 22 by-election. He said he was lucky to be alive to recount his ordeal.

"I am sure the assailants had managed to positively identify us," Molokele said.

"We had just finished our campaign meetings and were driving back to Bulawayo when we realised that we were being followed.

"As a precaution, we stopped our vehicle on the side of the road to allow the vehicle, which was speeding, to overtake."

But instead of the vehicle proceeding ahead, it made an about-turn ahead of them.

"That is when we realised we were in trouble. I quickly realised that we had passed a shopping centre a few kilometres before and decided to drive back. As it was getting dark, we parked the vehicle in front of the shops and waited in the car for a few minutes," he said.

The MP said before they could organise an escape plan, an entourage of over seven ZANU-PF marked vehicles arrived at the shopping centre.

With Dube, the two sunk into the darkness and managed to escape the menacing "thugs".

We noticed several cars were blocking a bridge leading to the shopping centre with one person shooting in the air. When we approached, the man pointed the gun at us, and we stopped.



Hwange MP Daniel Molokele

"We, together with Dube, decided to leave the car and disappear into the night. We walked in the bushes for more than one hour to the next shopping centre avoiding the main road," he said.

Molokele said he was very relieved when he returned three hours later to find his car "untouched".

"The shopping was now deserted, and we got into our car and drove back to safety in Bulawayo. We later realised that the same vehicles that had followed us had the same people who had attacked polling agents at the Sinkamashe polling station," he added.

Earlier in the day, Nkukumane MP Kucaca Phulu was also under attack.

Phulu said their dilemma started in the afternoon when they received a report that Honourable Nyoni's car was attacked. Two cars tried to block him, but he managed to escape, but his car was damaged.

They sent a group of about six people to go to the nearest shop to see if everything was fine.

"When they (the six) arrived, there was already violence at the shopping centre and one of the shops belonging to our supporter was being looted. A report came to us, and we decided to go there and intervene.

"We noticed several cars were blocking the bridge leading to the shopping centre. One person was shooting in the air. When we approached, the man pointed the gun at us, and we stopped. I attended to a person who was injured. I approached the guys and asked them who their leader was. As I was conversing with him, the ZANU-PF youths came to us, and assaulted us, with sticks. They whipped me and they also hit me with a stone. We treated.

He said the youth followed to the homestead where the party members were conducting training for polling agents. They attacked houses, broke all the windows and assaulted people, forcing people to hide in the bush.

He said the police were alerted but there was no response.

In Insiza, another MP Jasmine Toffa was attacked and left hospitalised.

MATOBO VIOLENCE EVOKES GUKURAHUNDI MEMORIES



Some of the women who were stripped naked in Matobo

It was a scorching hot October afternoon as Ntombizodwa Ndlovu* led us to a shade at her home which is perched on a hill near the Matobo Game Reserve in Matabeleland South.

Ndlovu sat on a bench, sighed, and shook her head. She was visibly in pain.

"You can't take my pictures, I also don't want my name to be published because they will come back for me," Ndlovu said.

After some hesitation, the 65-year-old grandmother broke her silence.

"I will never forget that in my life," she said.

"Imagine old as I am, being beaten by very young boys, young enough to be my grandchildren.

"They tore our clothes. I was left with only a petticoat. We ran and only got assistance with wrapping clothes from other women passing by.

"To make matters worse, the young boys were speaking in Shona, exporting violence. Do they want to come with another Gukurahundi?"

Images of the victims wearing bras, and others bare-breasted went viral, adding to their embarrassment.

She is one of the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) community organisers who were assaulted and stripped of their upper clothing by Zanu PF supporters ahead of recent by-elections.

They were mobilising support for their aspiring candidates contesting Local Government elections in Matobo's ward 2 and ward 4 in Insiza held on October 22.

Zanu PF won the two seats.

The run-up to the polls was characterised by violence after suspected Zanu PF activists unleashed an orgy of terror and this forced some CCC activists, including aspiring candidates to flee their homes.

Bulawayo proportional representative legislator Jasmine Toffa (CCC) was left hospitalised after suspected Zanu PF activists attacked her and left her with broken hands.

In 2008, we were assaulted (showing stitches on her head) and now, running naked with only a petticoat at my age. I will never forget this in my life.

Insiza ward 4 CCC candidate Augustine Gumede was forced into hiding and sought shelter in the bushes as the Zanu PF activists threatened to take his life.

On October 16, Ndlovu was among women who were part of a meeting where polling agents were undergoing training at the home of one of their CCC supporters, only identified as Ncube when a convoy of Zanu PF branded vehicles arrived and blocked a bridge leading to the homestead.

This is the home where the party supporters often get food handouts.

Several CCC party officials, including Nkulumane MP Kucaca Phulu, were part of the people who confronted the Zanu PF activists and asked about their intentions.

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They were also concerned that the Zanu PF activists would unleash violence at the shopping centre where one of the CCC supporters ran a shop.

When they went to the shopping centre, they found that shops had been looted and people were being assaulted.

The Zanu PF supporters were shooting in the air as they assaulted the CCC supporters, including Phulu.

They used sticks, stones, open hands, and everything they could lay their hands on.

The CCC supporters tried to retreat, but Zanu PF members pursued them and besieged the Ncube homestead where they destroyed windows, smashed vehicle windscreens and punctured vehicle tyres.

Several CCC supporters were forced to seek refuge in the bush.

Ndlovu added: "The violence that we witnessed that day is unprecedented.

"So, they (Zanu PF) want to bring another round of Gukurahundi by importing violence into our province?"

Over 20 000 people died when the late former president Robert Mugabe deployed the North Korean trained fifth brigade into Matabeleland and Midlands regions under the guise of thwarting an insurgency.

The atrocities have been a subject of emotional and political debate for years.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa has roped in chiefs from the region to resolve the issue.

Many children from the region are without birth records after their parents were massacred during the genocide, which Mugabe only described as a "moment of madness".

Ndlovu said her community has never known peace since independence in 1980 and the violence brought back gory memories of the Gukurahundi era.

"Since 1980, we have never enjoyed peace. The attack brought back memories of Gukurahundi," she said.

"During Gukurahundi, you see that rock, soldiers came and killed and harassed people.

"In 2008, we were assaulted (showing stitches on her head) and now, running naked with only a petticoat at my age. I will never forget this in my life."



Nkulumane MP Kucaca Phulu

She added: "We thank God we are alive; we never thought we would survive that ordeal.

"Even the team that had travelled from Bulawayo was left stranded after their vehicles were destroyed."

She said the levels of intimidation ahead of the October 22 by-elections were too high as she expressed fears that the run-up to the 2023 polls would be deadly.

"I don't even want to imagine how worse it will be next year," she said.

"The intimidation is so high and if this can happen just for a by-election God knows what will happen to us. People are forced to vote for ZANU-PF or face death.

"Some people remain displaced and have not returned to their homes because of the threats of violence.

"I fear that if such violence can happen in a by-election, what is going to happen next year during the general elections."

According to the CCC Matabeleland South leadership, there has been little progress in the investigations with no arrests made.

CCC Matabeleland South chairman Solani Moyo insisted that the elections were not free and fair in of the violence.

"They destroyed houses and windows in Matobo's ward 2," Moyo said.

"In Insiza the police found a stone in a television set that belonged to Gumedede.

"They came and took statements, but up to now, we have not heard anything from them.

"We know the police will not do anything to bring the culprits to book since they report to their bosses in Zanu PF."

This is not the first time that police have been accused of failing to act against suspected Zanu PF members that are linked to various acts of terror.

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In a statement on 18 October, police spokesperson Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi said the ZRP had received reports of assault from both Zanu PF and CCC supporters and was investigating the allegations.

"The Zimbabwe Republic Police is seized with reports of violent skirmishes which occurred in Matobo on 16th October 2022," Nyathi said.

Reports of assault have been received from both Zanu PF and Citizens Coalition for Change members.

"Investigations are now in progress with a view of accounting for all suspects involved in violence.

"The Zimbabwe Republic Police urges political parties and supporters to be responsible and shun all forms of violence."

No one has been arrested in connection with the Matobo violence since then.

*** Not her real name**

STOP CRIMINALISING CIVIC SOCIETY WORK, GOVT TOLD

FORTY-THREE leading international human rights and legal aid organisations have petitioned President Emmerson Mnangagwa over the shrinking of civil space in Zimbabwe as well as the criminalisation of civil society work.

The organisations include the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, African Defenders, Centre for Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa, Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organisations, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda, Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network, Namibia Diverse Women's Association, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda, Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, among others.

In a statement released on 22 November, the CSOs said President Mnangagwa's government has closed the civic space through systematic targeting of human rights defenders.

"We urge the Zimbabwean government to desist from targeting and negatively profiling civil society organisations, which provide invaluable services to the people of Zimbabwe and play a vital role in ensuring good governance in the country," part of the petition read.

"All persons have a right to freedom of association, and this right is often exercised through the operation of, and participation in civil society organisations."

The civic groups added: "Under Mnangagwa's administration, the government has increasingly restricted the capacity of civil society to operate and continued down a dangerous path towards the near total closure of civic space.

"State authorities have engaged in repressive attacks on activists, journalists, human rights defenders, opposition party leaders and critical voices from all sections of society."

The human rights groups bemoaned the use of arbitrary arrests and detention, alleged judicial capture and intimidation of citizens by the government which they said was aimed at silencing dissenting voices.



President Emmerson Mnangagwa

"State authorities have engaged in repressive attacks on activists, journalists, human rights defenders, opposition party leaders and critical voices from all sections of society," the petition further read.

As part of the crackdown on civic space, President Mnangagwa introduced the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs) Amendment Bill which confers unfettered discretionary powers on the executive arm of government to overregulate and interfere in non-governmental organisations' governance and operations.

Civil society organisations have expressed their concerns over the PVO Amendment Bill's contravention of national, regional, and international standards of freedom of association, expression and assembly.

In December 2021, four United Nations Special Rapporteurs sent a joint communication to President Mnangagwa emphasising that the Bill granted unchecked discretion to the government to target, deregister, and ban organisations and was not compliant with Zimbabwe's treaty obligations as articulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

While the controversial bill continues to be considered, the government has sustained its attacks on civil society organisations.

The international lobby groups decried the stigmatisation of CSOs engaging in legitimate activities, including carrying out watchdog roles, especially as the country heads to the 2023 polls.

"The regional and international community should continue to put pressure on President Mnangagwa and other State officials to jettison the worrying sections of the PVOs Amendment Bill, reflect the recommendations presented by civil society, and promote a thriving civic space within the country," the petitioners said.

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However, in October, during the 73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held in Gambia, Justice ministry secretary Virginia Mabhiza denied that CSOs were being targeted.

She was responding to a presentation by CSOs that highlighted the closure of civic space in Zimbabwe and the use of the PVOs Amendment Bill to crack down on dissent.

Mabhiza described the CSOs as "rogue".

The CSOs said Zimbabwe should adhere to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and guarantee greater respect and protection for civil society organisations.



FORUM LAWYER SCOOPS 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Darlington Marange

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum public interest litigation specialist lawyer, Darlington Marange has scooped the 2022 Law Society of Zimbabwe (LSZ) young lawyer of the year award.

The annual award is sponsored by Scanlen and Holderness Legal Practitioners and is given to an outstanding young human rights lawyer under the age of 35.

The lawyer would have demonstrated courage in handling human rights work and consistently work towards promoting and protecting human rights in Zimbabwe.

Throughout the year, Marange fearlessly protected victims of organised torture and is currently representing victims of the 1 August 2018 violence who were shot by the soldiers in Harare central business district. Several victims are currently before the High Court demanding compensation.

In October, Marange secured the first bail for Felix Biri, one of the 16 CCC activists arrested over the 14 June Nyatsime violence. Biri had languished in remand prison alongside 15 other co-accused including MPs Godfrey Sithole and Job Sikhala.

Only Zengeza MP Job Sikhala is still in remand prison after Sithole, and the other opposition activists were granted bail.

Marange is the one who successfully stopped the use of spikes by the police on moving vehicles, a move that had caused unnecessary loss of lives.

He litigated before the High Court and the Supreme Court and engaged the police to end the use of spikes. Marange also provided legal support to various victims of this dangerous practice by the police. This resulted in the police abandoning this practice in May this year.

This year, Marange successfully obtained a judgment in the case of Nyasha Chiramba v Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs & Anor HH-584-22, to compel the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to craft the code of conduct for Vice-Presidents, Cabinet ministers and their deputies.

This case was filed after scandalous allegations of sexual abuse of women by former Vice-President Kembo Mohadi. This code of conduct will spell out acts of misconduct from these powerful officials and ensures accountability for such officials in cases of misconduct.

In his acceptance speech, Marange said he was humbled by the recognition he received.

"I am earnestly grateful for the recognition I have received for my work because I am very sure that every other nominee for this award was as capable if not more, of winning this award," Marange said.

"I want to thank the Law Society of Zimbabwe and the Scanlen and Holderness Legal Practitioners for recognising my work.

"Winning this award would not have been possible without the inspiration I have received from my seniors and my colleagues, for whom I have the deepest respect, and from whom I have derived the strength to challenge myself and perform better at each stage. I sincerely thank the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum for giving me this opportunity to shine."

ZIMRIGHTS CELEBRATE ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) has celebrated its 30th anniversary, with national director Dzikamai Bere underscoring the need for government to embrace and respect human rights.



ZimRights Director Dzikamai Bere

ZimRights was founded in 1992, becoming Zimbabwe's first post-independence indigenous human rights advocacy group.

The commemorations, held on 17 November at ZimRights House, were marked with several activities, including a human rights exhibition curated by award-winning photojournalist Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi. The exhibition paid tribute to Itai Dzamara, a human rights activist who disappeared in 2015.

The event also saw the laying of a foundation stone for the Human Rights Village and a Movement Builders Masterclass on Learning from 30 years of Grassroots Organising.

The exhibition featured an interactive dialogue with ZimRights community activists telling their stories of human rights in Zimbabwe for the past three decades.

Speaking on the right to protest, Bere reflected on the work that ZimRights did including organising regular street marches to pressure the government on important human rights issues

"Human rights remain abstract until they have been embraced and are practised," said Bere.

"This is why ZimRights has worked with other organisations over the years to ensure that people marched in the streets of Zimbabwe every 21 October, every 10 December."

He said the culture of protests was dying because of the use of violence by the government which has created a culture of fear in the people.

"While we commemorate 30 years today, we remember all activists who disappeared because of their commitment to human rights," Bere said.

"The ZimRights street billboard with Itai's image could not be erected along Fourth Street because the company contracted to do so feared backlash from the state."

ZimRights national chairperson Takesure Musiiwa said ZimRights played a huge role in school concertizing pupils about human rights through drama and theatre.

“While civic space is shrinking, if we go back to the people, we can even as it is seemingly getting dark, we can expand the space if communities play a leadership role in advancing and sustaining a culture of human rights.”

"In 2015, the Ministry of Education increased grade seven exam fees, making it difficult for many children to write their exams. ZimRights mobilised communities to march against the increment, prompting the government to reverse the decision," Musiiwa said.

He added: "Those who violate human rights many times have the power of money and violence on their side. The people have nothing but each other. In our shifting power to the people strategy, we are making a new commitment to deepen our connection with the communities upon which we were founded."

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He said as a symbol of this commitment, and a bold declaration of presence, ZimRights was starting the transformation journey from ZimRights House to ZimRights Village.

“As we lay the foundation stone of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Village, we are inviting each other back to those values that bring individuals and communities together, saying, it takes a village to raise a child.

“While civic space is shrinking, if we go back to the people, we can even as it is seemingly getting dark, we can expand the space if communities play a leadership role in advancing and sustaining a culture of human rights.”

He added: “Today, as we celebrate 30 years since our birth, we lay a new vision, of taking a bold step to challenge ourselves as the ordinary people of Zimbabwe to build a new village. In this village, we must commit to re-imagine the way civil society works.”

Human rights expert Arnold Tsunga, who was Zimrights chair from 2001 to 2004 linked the historical ZimRights to the contemporary generation of human rights defenders.

He explained how his generation faced the unique challenge of reconciling the movement side of ZimRights driven by the people and the organization side of things driven by the secretariat which is required by such stakeholders as funding partners.

He said it was important for ZimRights, even as it searches for partners and resources, to remain a peoples’ movement as is the thrust of the current strategy. Sometimes, over-professionalization of a movement can be counter-productive, he warned.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE CONTINUES TO RISE - ZPP

The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) recorded 255 human rights violations, a decrease from September's 257.

Of these, 42 were in Harare, followed by 37 in Mashonaland East and 35 in Manicaland and Midlands. During the month, 3 546 victims were identified (2625 male and 921 females, including 15 PWDs). Assault cases were topical in October, with documented incidents increasing to 44 from 42 the previous month.



Arnold Tsunga

Academic and development practitioner Dr David Kaulem, Dean of Education and Leadership at Arrupe Jesuit University reflected on lessons the human rights movement can learn from the world's biggest mass movement – the Christian Church.

He underscored the need for human rights to be part of the people's culture.

“What can the human rights movement do, for people to choose to throw away those elements of their culture, that are in contradiction to human rights values? This is the task for ZimRights in the coming years. To challenge each other as Africans, to see everything through the human rights lens,” he said.

The human rights group, which is a member of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum hosted a Masterclass on Movement Building and Civic Engagement which brought together community champions from all ZimRights 11 regions.

At the Masterclass, the new ZimRights handbook - We Believe in Human Rights - was launched.

Campaign activities for the October 22 by-elections were characterised by assaults of opposition leaders and supporters, making the elections and subsequent outcome unfair and less credible.

The percentage of victims decreased to 0.2% for female persons with disability and 0.23% for males in October. Most human rights cases were perpetrated by ZANU-PF, responsible for 48% of the violations, followed by Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) at 32%.

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The general citizens populated the highest percentage of victims, at 88%, and Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) supporters followed at 15%. Law enforcement agents and the ruling party continue to subject Zimbabwe's citizens to gross human rights violations.

The violence reported around the October 22 by-elections in Matobo Ward 2 and Insiza Ward 4, resulting in CCC members sustaining severe injuries, confirms the political environment's toxicity in Zimbabwe.

The details include inter-party and intra-party violence and threats to candidates and campaign teams. These violent incidents negatively affect the electorate's participation in democratic political processes, especially among vulnerable groups. Most citizens would rather not relive the violent elections of 2008, thus easily intimidated, and pressured into supporting ZANU-PF.

The gendered nature of the violence reported in an incident where four women were stripped of their clothing is one of the worrying barriers to women participating in politics and governance. Images of the violated half-naked women went viral on social media.

The assault of women with booted feet makes more women apathetic to politics. The growing suspicion that the perpetrators are coming from outside the area is worrying.

The practice is not new. In years past, bussed perpetrators unleashed violence in territories where their identity is unknown.



CCC Bulawayo Proportional Representative MP Jasmine Toffa

The Matabeleland South victims report that most assailants were men armed with guns, spoke Shona, and drove cars emblazoned Mashonaland Central.

In October, there was a noticeable rise in the politicisation of educational resources and the exploitation of children as political pawns. The organisers of the Teachers for ED (Economic Development) launch ordered some schools to avail buses to ferry teachers from different parts of the country to the venue at Harare International Conference Centre (HICC).

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education assigned teachers to organise students in various regions of the nation to perform art at the anti-sanctions march on October 25. In Mwenezi District, each school was expected to contribute USD\$10 by October 18 to the Teachers for ED initiative. The forced mobilisation of students led to the loss of valuable class time, especially when many were writing their Ordinary and Advanced Level Public.

NGO FORUM MEETS COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT OVER ZIM RE-ADMISSION TO THE GROUPING



On 15 November, the Forum led by its executive director Dr Musa Kika met with the visiting delegation of the Commonwealth Secretariat led by Assistant Secretary-General Prof Luis Franceschi.

Zimbabwe has applied for readmission into the Commonwealth and the secretariat had come to assess the country's preparedness to rejoin the grouping.

The Forum supports Zimbabwe's re-admission provided compliance with the Latimer House Principles, which among others, advocates for the separation of powers.

Zimbabwe was forced out of the grouping by the late former president Robert Mugabe in 2003 after it raised concerns over the deteriorating human rights situation caused by the land reform programme.

BOOK TO TACKLE CONSTITUTIONAL ILLITERACY

Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum executive director Dr Musa Kika said there is a need for people to be empowered with knowledge of the constitution because they are the primary stakeholder in the governance charter.

Dr Kika made the remarks on 16 November during the official launch of the Zimbabwean Constitutional Literacy Booklet by the Centre for Human Rights working together with the Forum and the University of Zimbabwe which simplifies the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. The simplified booklet was launched in English, Shona, and Ndebele.

He said the most crucial step in sustaining constitutionalism is to explain the constitution to the people in simple terms so that they understand their rights. The people, Musa said, cannot demand something they don't know, and this is where the book becomes essential.

"The law protects the vigilant and therefore the importance of knowing the constitution to limit the governors from abusing their power excessively. I can't stress the importance of this booklet enough," Dr Kika said.

"We want meaningful engagement. The people must self-govern. The people are the ultimate supreme." He added: "It is the people who define the social contract. If the people are not at the centre, that is the beginning of the death of constitutionalism, that is the death of democracy."

"The people must demand their rights. Most human rights have been earned after a struggle. These include social equality and universal equality. All constitutional is a result of the struggle. The struggle starts when we have the document, we now want to actualise everything in the document."

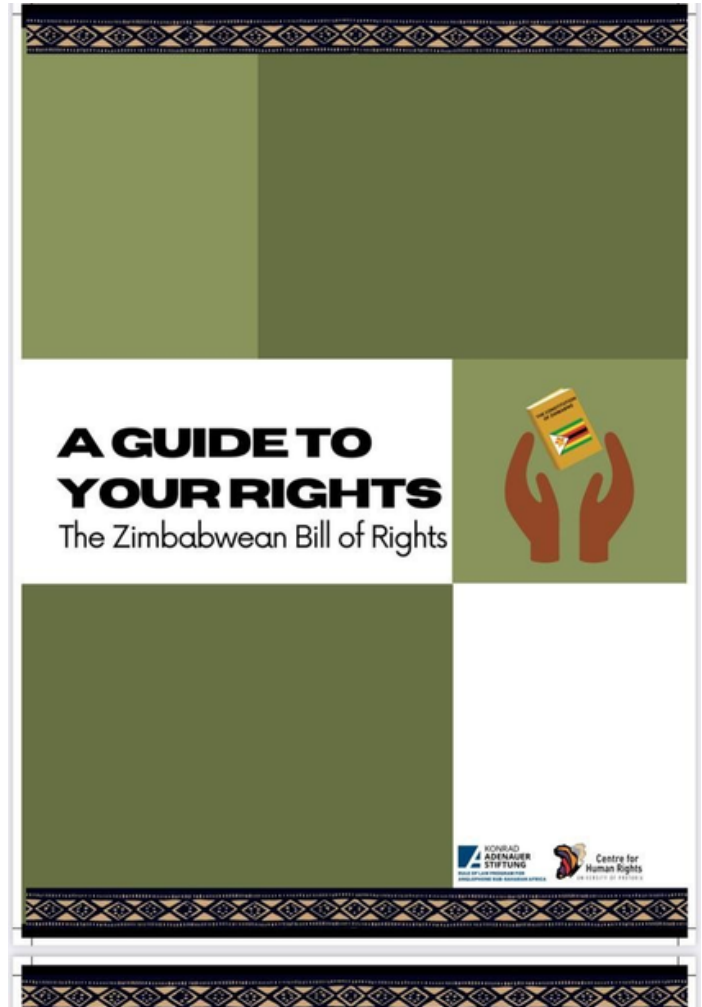
Dr Kika said a constitution by its very nature is a sight of a power struggle and "its interpretation is never fixed; the boundaries are never static and new truths emerge every day and so are our realities."

He said the booklet goes beyond to show impractical terms of how the constitution has been and can be operationalised. It operationalised the Bill of Rights.

Centre for Human Rights deputy director Lloyd Kuveya said constitutional illiteracy threatens democracy.

"If people have constitutional awareness and literacy, they are able to vindicate their rights."

"That is why we decided to simplify the bill of rights in the constitution."



He said there was a need for governments to understand that civil societies are not enemies of the state.

"Civil society organisations and the human rights commissions partner with the state and advance the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of the community and if we do that together, we will achieve much," Kuveya said.

"We have seen already in Zimbabwe there is a retrogression where we have seen attempts to restrict the civic society space, which is an anathema to democracy."

Blessing Nyamaropa, the Forum board chair said the Bill of Rights is important because it puts citizens at the centre.

He said courts play an important role in the protection of human rights and expressed concern that few people approach the courts for remedy if they are violated."

WELEAD Trust director Namatai Kwekweza said poor constitutional illiteracy is a danger to society and democracy.

"We should act as a society to ensure that more and more people are aware of the constitution and therefore their rights," Kwekweza said.

She said countries introduce many draconian laws, but only citizens with constitutional literacy will be able to fight them.



The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum is a coalition of 22 human rights organisations that was formed in 1998 as a mechanism to react to the many human rights violations that arose from the food riots. The coalition over the years has become a strong network with organisations working in different humanrights fields all to promote the human rights agenda in Zimbabwe. It liaises closelywith its colleagues and peers such as the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisation (NANGO), the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Membership of the Forum is open to any organisation which is based in Zimbabwe, and which is bona fide concerned with human rights, with the elimination of organised violence and torture. After realising that Zimbabwe's legacy of violence goes beyond the daily violations and goes to the roots that hold the pillars of social trust, the Forum, in 2008, launched the transitional justice advocacy programme to motivate more comprehensive redress of the root causes of violence.

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