



W/O 3/93

Campaigners for Human Rights

ZimRights House, Alverston Court
90 S. V. Muzenda Street
P.O. Box 3951, Harare, Zimbabwe
+263 242 707278/ 705898
+263 242 707277
info@zimrights.org.zw
www.zimrights.org.zw

ZHRC We Want Campaign

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Citizens Call on the Selection and Appointment of Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Commissioners

The Parliament, through the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders (CSRO), has shortlisted a total of 23 persons for interviews out of a list of 32 nominated for possible appointment to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC). This is to fill four vacancies that have arisen upon the expiry of the incumbents' term of office. The interviews will be carried out on the 3rd of July 2020 at the National Assembly Chamber, Parliament Building Harare.

The ZHRC is one of five independent commissions provided for in Chapter 12 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. In line with the United Nation's Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles), the ZHRC is meant to play a critical role in the promotion and protection of fundamental rights in Zimbabwe. The ZHRC is mandated to ensure citizens are aware of their rights in terms of its promotional mandate and to also provide redress for violations of human rights as part of its role to protect human rights. This makes the ZHRC a key and strategic institution in Zimbabwe's human rights discourse.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) has been involved in the campaign that gave birth to the ZHRC and has over the years supported the mandate of the ZHRC. ZimRights takes note of this development and applauds the Parliament of Zimbabwe for speeding up the process of selecting and replacing retired commissioners who had served the ZHRC with dignity, respect, and honour. Earlier this year, ZimRights launched the *Commissioners of Integrity Initiative*, under the *ZHRC We Want Campaign*, aimed at defending the integrity of ZHRC by ensuring that the Commissioners to be appointed meet the criterion established by the Constitution. Under this campaign, ZimRights has engaged grassroots communities to understand their preferences on the persons suitable for appointment to the ZHRC. In these engagements, communities expect and prefer commissioners who are independent, fair, and knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities. Communities have noted that the commission must balance knowledge of human rights and be reflective of the diversity of the country in gender, knowledge, and geographical spread.

ZimRights urges the Parliament of Zimbabwe to observe and consider the following

- i. **A commissioner must be a person of integrity**, which means that the individual concerned must be honest and trustworthy.

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BULAWAYO OFFICE

4 ESAT House, Fort Street
Between 12th & 13th Avenue,
Bulawayo
Tel: +263 292 61826/ 63721

MASVINGO OFFICE

ZIMRE Centre
Cnr Hughes/ S. Mazorodze
2nd Floor, East Wing, Masvingo
Tel: +263 392 266224/ 0772 318 047

- ii. **A commissioner must have knowledge, understanding, and experience** relating to the particular mandate of the commission which they intend to work for. The constitution provides for specific requirements relating to commissioners of each commission. For instance, concerning the ZHRC, all commissioners are expected to have knowledge and understanding of, and experience in, the promotion of human rights.
- iii. **A commissioner must not be actively involved in politics.** Commissioners should not be members of any political party and are not supposed to act in a manner that seems to suggest they support any political party. While the Constitution allows a member of a political party to resign if they are to be appointed to the ZHRC, ZimRights disapproves of any politician being appointed to the Commission because of conflictual loyalties that may follow them to the Commission even if technically they may have stopped being a member of the political entity.
- iv. Transparency of the process. ZimRights encourages that the process for the appointment of commissioners to ZHRC is handled in an open and transparent manner.

ZimRights, therefore, implores the Parliament of Zimbabwe to vigorously and diligently select untainted, uncompromised and non-partisan individuals to serve as Commissioners of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission.

ZimRights members are very much appreciative of the role played by the retired four commissioners in the promotion of human rights.

ZimRights continues to monitor and observe the selection process to ensure independence, transparency, and effective accountability of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission.

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