



W/O 3/93
Campaigners for Human Rights

STATEMENT

AFTER 40 YEARS OF WHOLESAL EROSION OF RIGHTS WE ARE CALLED TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

18 April 2020

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) joins the nation in commemorating 40 years independence and calls upon the people of Zimbabwe to reflect more deeply on their role in restoring the promise of independence.

The majority of the people of Zimbabwe will not be able to celebrate this day, not so much because of the tragedy of the COVID 19 battle, but rather the painful failure of independent Zimbabwe to deliver to its people on the promise of independence.

It is tragic indeed that a once promising young democracy has now reached a 40-year milestone with nothing to celebrate. After experiencing a false start in the first decade of independence, it has since been a free fall. With over 4 million Zimbabweans having fled the country in search of greener pastures, Zimbabwe has failed to deliver the promise. The rights of the majority to a dignified life have been eroded. There are no jobs for the workers. There is no affordable health care for the sick. There are no opportunities for the thousands of graduates. The majority of the people cannot afford a decent meal for their families. The relationship between the people and the state has broken down irretrievably, only held together by blood, fear and intimidation. The single biggest achievement in the past four decades has been the 2013 Constitution. That also is now under threat as the government pushes to roll back the gains of the past decade as regards implementation of the Constitution.

Tragically, over the years, the majority of the people of Zimbabwe have started withdrawing from public life, deciding not to participate in civic engagement. In a failed economy, our hardworking and innovative communities have found a way to keep things going. And yet the current outbreak of COVID 19 is vividly reminding us that we can never ignore and resign from the role of government in our lives. We can never isolate ourselves from each other. We are all on one boat. We float or sink together. The omissions and commissions of government affect us all. We are learning, as we face the pangs of death that the plight of one must be everyone's plight. We are learning that when doctors speak, they speak for all of us. That when teachers, nurses, miners, bankers, vendors, journalists speak, they speak for all of us. We rise and fall together.

If there is a single lesson that we are learning from the 40 years of failed politics and economics, it is that as a people, withdrawal from public life and resigning our affairs to government alone is collective suicide. Those who are tortured in the streets for defying oppressive laws are as victims as the people who die in our hospitals because funds meant for healthcare have been diverted into building luxury homes for the elite. As we look and mourn the wholesale erosion of our rights during the 40 years of our independence, it is maybe not so much a time to castigate government any more than we should be castigating each other for failing our children and ourselves. It is a call to more active citizenship. We all have a role to play in restoring the promise of independence.

We wish all Zimbabweans at home and abroad a reflective Independence Day. Our thoughts and prayers are with our brothers and sisters on the frontlines of fighting the deadly virus, especially those serving in foreign lands without the comfort of family.

STAY HOME! STAY SAFE!

Takesure Musiiwa, (Mr)

Chairperson

ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION

✉ info@zimrights.org.zw

www.zimrights.org.zw

HARARE OFFICE

ZimRights House, Alverston Court
90 S. V. Muzenda Street
P.O. Box 3951, Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel: +263 242 707278/ 705898

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