



**From the Office of The
Secretary General**

The Change You Trust



44 Nelson Mandela Ave
6th Floor, Harvest Hse
Harare

Tel: +263 4 780301/2
+263 4 770543

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The Chairperson
Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
148 Samora Machel Avenue
HARARE

Dear Sirs,

Re: **GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE**

On the 14th of January, 2019, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and other Civil Society groups called for a general stay away throughout Zimbabwe. It is common cause that this call was in response to the immense economic hardships being endured by the people of Zimbabwe. The immediate cause of the national outrage was the announcement by government of massive fuel hikes. These had great ripple effects especially on the commuting public. There is no doubt that many people heeded the call for the stay away. From the information given by the police over 600 people were arrested on various charges including public violence. It is also common cause that the army was deployed to deal with situation.

However during and after the stay away, gross and sadistic human rights violations were committed by the security services against members of the public. We hereby bring to your attention some of the gross violations of human rights committed.

a. **DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY TO DEAL WITH LAW AND ORDER**

According to our constitution the duty to maintain law and order rests with the police and not with the army. Therefore the deployment of the army to deal with law and order situations should be done only in very exceptional circumstances. However it is clear that it has become the habit of the government to deploy the army to deal with law and order issues. This is improper.

b. USE OF LIVE AMMUNITION ON UNARMED CIVILIANS

What is very disturbing is that in an apparent attempt to contain the demonstration, the army and the police fired live ammunition on the members of public. This resulted in the deaths of more than 12 people and injuries of scores of civilians. This use of live ammunition is clearly excessive and is a gross violation of the right to life. There were other less lethal methods of containing the demonstration that could have been employed.

c. MASS BEATINGS OF PEOPLE BY THE ARMY AND THE POLICE

The Security Services embarked on a sadistic exercise of raiding people's homes and beating and torturing unarmed civilians. This was rampant in Epworth, Mabvuku, Tafara, Glen Norah, Budiro, Warren Park, Dzivarasekwa suburbs in Harare. It was also rampant in Chitungwiza and some parts of Bulawayo. Beating and torturing people is subjecting them to inhumane and degrading treatment.

d. MASS ARRESTS OF MEN BETWEEN THE AGE OF 15 AND 65 IN EPWORTH AND OTHER AREAS

In some instances men between the ages of 15 and 65 were rounded up and arrested. In terms of our law people are arrested on the basis of reasonable suspicion that they have committed offences and not on the basis of their ages.

e. TARGETING MDC ALLIANCE MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS FOR ARREST

The Security services have been systematically targeting MDC members for arrest, torture and beatings. Some of our Members of Parliament including our National Organising Secretary are currently in custody. Our point is that demonstrations were carried out by members of the public including members of Zanu (PF). Targeting the MDC members only becomes discrimination on the basis of political affiliation. It must be emphasised that the MDC as a lawful political party has a right to exist. The actions of the Security Services amounts to attempts to decimate the party. This is totally unacceptable.

f. MASS FAST TRACK TRIALS

An outrageous development in the aftermath of mass arrests have been the state and the courts fast tracking the mass trials. The accused persons in Harare in three different courts had their cases fast tracked and did not have enough time to consult with their lawyers. Zimbabwean accused persons have the right to fair trials before impartial courts. That more than 7 magistrates sitting in different courts and parts of the country can make identical judgments to fast track these mass trials raises a genuine fear of the manipulation of the justice system by the state.

g. BLAMING MDC WHEN THE MATTER IS SUB JUDICE

It is common cause that most of the accused persons are members of the MDC. The trials are actually going on. However most state officials including the state president have with the full knowledge that the matters were being heard in court sought to blame the violence on the MDC. This has had the dangerous effect of prejudicing the minds of the Magistrates trying these cases.

h. ZBC PROPAGANDA

Unfortunately, the ZBC has embarked on a crusade blaming the MDC for the violence that took place on the 14th of January, 2019. It has been spreading false allegations that the stay away was organised by the MDC. Unfortunately the MDC has not been afforded the right of reply. This is unconstitutional.

i. CONCLUSION

The MDC is committed to peaceful resolution of Zimbabwean Crisis. However the state has to respect human rights and the rule of law. It is our hope that your good offices look into the issues we have raised with view of finding a lasting solution to same.

Yours faithfully

DOUGLAS TOGARASEYI MWONZORA
(SECRETARY GENERAL)

Cc chairman, National Peace and Reconciliation Commission

Cc President E.D Mnangagwa

