

STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE RIGHT TO THE TRUTH CONCERNING GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND FOR THE DIGNITY OF VICTIMS

24 March marks the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims, a day dedicated to honouring victims, affirming their right to truth, and calling for accountability for serious human rights abuses. It underscores the obligation of states to investigate violations, provide justice, and ensure that such abuses are never repeated.

For Zimbabwe, this day carries profound significance. The country continues to grapple with a troubling legacy and ongoing pattern of gross human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, abductions, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The unresolved disappearance of journalist and pro-democracy activist Itai Dzamara, who was abducted in 2015 and remains missing to this day, stands as a stark symbol of the denial of truth and justice to victims and their families. More recently, the disappearance of Councillor-elect for Ward 1 in Chegutu, Gift Konjana, further raise concerns on the persistence of such violations.

More recently, Zimbabwe has witnessed continued reports of abductions and torture of political activists, opposition members, and citizens. Since 2026 alone, ZPP has documented 79 cases of gross human rights violations. Human rights documentation over the years indicates that government critics have been subjected to abduction and torture, often without any meaningful investigations or prosecutions further perpetuating a culture of impunity. Sadly, some of the gross human rights violations have resulted in the loss of life such as the abduction and killing of opposition activist Tapfumaneyi Masaya in 2023 further highlighting the persistence of politically motivated violence and the more urgent need for the state and all parties to protect citizens.

In more recent episodes, such as the period surrounding the SADC Summit in August 2024, planned public protests by some parties against the then proposal to extend President Mnangagwa's rule beyond the constitutionally provided two 5 year terms and succession disputes and the debates on the Constitution Amendment Bill, ZPP has documented 16 incidents of gross human rights violations such as arbitrary arrests, abductions, and torture with many of them remaining unresolved and hardly investigated.

This reflects a shrinking democratic space and the continued use of violence to silence dissent.

The continued failure to account for victims, investigate perpetrators, and provide reparations has entrenched a culture of fear and silence. Families of victims are left without closure, while survivors continue to endure physical and psychological trauma. The right to truth is not only about acknowledging past abuses, it is essential for healing, justice, and national reconciliation.

ZPP therefore calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to:

- End the culture of impunity by conducting prompt, independent, and transparent investigations into all cases of abduction, torture, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killings.
- Provide truth and justice for victims and their families, including full disclosure of the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons.
- Ratify and domesticate the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) and other key international human rights instruments to strengthen accountability mechanisms.
- Ensure security sector reforms that align and enhance law enforcement agencies with constitutional and human rights standards.

Furthermore, ZPP reiterates the urgent need for a rights-based peacebuilding model in Zimbabwe, one that places victims at the centre, prioritises truth-telling, accountability, institutional reform, and guarantees of non-recurrence. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without justice.

As Zimbabwe commemorates this important day, we stand in solidarity with all victims of human rights violations and reaffirm that truth, justice, and dignity are not optional, they are fundamental rights. Ending impunity is not only a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative for building a democratic and peaceful Zimbabwe.