

**MONTHLY
MONITORING
REPORT**

MARCH
2020



'Human Rights in the midst of the Covid-19 Global Pandemic: Zim in state of neglect'

Executive Summary

In March 2020 citizens were preoccupied with the Corona Virus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) which wreaked havoc across the globe with 30105¹ deaths being recorded as of 30 March. Zimbabwe, which also recorded a few official cases proved to be ill-prepared to deal with the pandemic. The Wilkins hospital, which was designated as the main referral centre for COVID-19 cases was not properly equipped to handle cases and had to be closed for renovations. The President, Emmerson Mnangagwa called for a 21 day countrywide Lockdown as a way of controlling the spread of the virus. However, there were no clear measures put in place to ensure every citizen, particularly the less privileged, are able to go through the 21 days without facing survival challenges, especially considering that Zimbabwe's economy is largely informal and people survive from hand to mouth.

There was general apprehension among members of the society as government appeared to take a laid-back approach in detecting and dealing the COVID-19 cases, leaving citizens without a full understanding of the impact and implications of the disease.

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Governor, Dr. John Mangudya announced that citizens could now transact using the United States Dollar (USD) until further notice. This received mixed reactions from citizens, some of whom believed the bank was taking advantage of COVID-19 to "sneak" back the USD.

During the first few days of the lockdown, there were widespread reports that pointed to harassment and beatings of civilians by state security agents deployed to enforce the lockdown.

Videos and images emerged of police officers beating up people, confirming the fears expressed by the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), and reaffirming the organisation's position that police and enforcement agents are supposed to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical way, and are supposed to carry out their activities with the respect of human rights in mind.

ZPP recorded a total of 145 human rights violations during the month of March. These included COVID-19 related violations, intimidation and harassment, discrimination, among others. A case of eviction of some family members was reported at Kefalos Company in Seke district, and this was reportedly done as a way of preventing the spread of COVID-19. In Kuwadzana there were reports of police assaulting citizens and some vendors reported they had lost wares during the mayhem. In Mashonaland Central there were reports of some Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu PF) supporters attempting to influence School Development Committee (SDC) selection processes and sideline Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) members from occupying positions in the committees. There were also reports of villagers being ordered to contribute towards Independence Day celebrations despite the commemorations having been put on hold. The politics of patronage continued during the month with cases of Zanu PF supporters receiving preferential treatment in aid and other resources distribution being rampant.

¹<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/8>

Introduction

The month of March 2020 will go down in history as one that was characterised by massive worldwide fatalities and spread of the Corona Virus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) also known as the Corona Virus with countries taking drastic measures to attempt to control the spread of the disease. As at March 30, the World Health Organisation recorded 30105 deaths, 638 146 confirmed cases and 203 countries with recorded cases². Zimbabwe was not spared from the pandemic with 8 confirmed cases and one death. These unfortunate cases are a clear contradiction to the embarrassing statement by the Zimbabwe Defence Minister who remarked earlier in the month that the Corona virus was a punishment from God against the West for imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe. On 27 March, President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced a 21 day Lockdown in a move to contain the spread of the highly infectious virus. Although this move was necessary in curbing the spread, the preparedness of the Government in terms of ensuring there are safety nets for the less privileged left a lot to be desired. This is more so in light of the fact that the economy is highly informal with the majority of citizens self-employed and survive from hand to mouth.

ZPP recorded a number of violations regarding COVID-19 infection mitigation responses, including a 24-hour ultimatum by management at Kefalos Farm in Seke for workers to evict extended family from the households as a way of preventing Corona virus. This infringes on cultural rights as Zimbabweans value extended family. In some reports received by ZPP, some members of Zanu PF moved around communities taking down names and promising them that Zanu PF supporters would get food aid during the Lockdown. This worrying development was followed by an announcement by the Finance minister that government had set aside funds to assist vulnerable families, raising fears that once again the funds will be distributed on partisan basis.

The state of the health delivery system came under scrutiny as it became apparent that the country's major referral hospital for COVID-19, Wilkins Hospital was not adequately prepared for admission and management of those who would have tested positive for the virus. A statement in the media from the family of the late Zororo Makamba who succumbed to the virus indicated the weak and poor state of the country's preparedness to deal with the virus. The subsequent closure of Wilkins for renovations demonstrates the lack of preparedness by the government in funding health institutions to fight the Corona virus. Instead, government has relied heavily on donations to fund the health sector.

Government's failure to permanently resolve the impasse between the Ministry of Health and Zimbabwean doctors continued to infringe on citizens' rights to life and healthcare. On 25 March 2020, doctors downed tools citing incapacitation. In a letter addressed to the Government, the doctors cited lack of necessary tools and equipment to fight the Corona virus. This dire situation continues to expose citizens to the Corona virus especially vulnerable groups such as the elderly and those who already have other chronic medical conditions.

Barely a month after announcing in a Monetary Policy Statement that Zimbabwe was on track in its de-dollarisation efforts, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe released a statement legalising the use of the United States Dollar (USD) in day to day transactions. The RBZ Governor, Dr. John Mangudya cited the need to ease transactions for the public during the difficult times brought about by the Corona virus. A Statutory Instrument (SI) 85/2020 was introduced to support this re-introduction of the USD. This reintroduction has been viewed by some citizens as a reversal of the failed local currency policy, after the Government had banned use of the USD in 2019 through

²<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/8>

SI 142/2019. Following a hasty reintroduction of the Zimbabwe dollar last year, prices of goods and commodities continued to increase and inflation impacted heavily on people's general income. A loaf of bread increased on average three times during the course of the month of March. As at 31 March a loaf of bread was going for ZWL30.00 up from ZWL18.00 at the end of February. Mealie-meal, which was being sold at a subsidised ZWL70.00, remained scarce with queues still being witnessed despite the call for people to practice social distancing in order to prevent COVID-19. The announcement of the Lockdown resulted in some retailers exorbitantly hiking prices of goods and commodities. The cost of acquiring protective clothing and hand sanitisers remained out of reach for many. A survey of pharmacies around Harare revealed that some retailers are driven by an appetite to profiteer during the crisis. A litre bottle of hand and surface sanitizer cost USD 20.00 at a local pharmacy with a 100mls bottle of sanitizer costing USD 4.00. Disposable face masks were charged from US\$ 0.50, US\$1.00 and US\$5.00 each in most pharmacies around Harare. This situation has left many citizens unable to purchase protective clothing, which exposes them to the Corona virus.



Figure 1: People queue for LPG gas in Mbare. This was the trend across the country

Cases of harassment and intimidation were recorded in different communities in the reporting period.

In some cases, Zanu PF activists demanded financial contributions for the upcoming Independence Day despite the President's announcement that Independence Celebrations had been postponed. These demands are an indication of a system that has normalised exploiting citizens of their hard-earned cash.

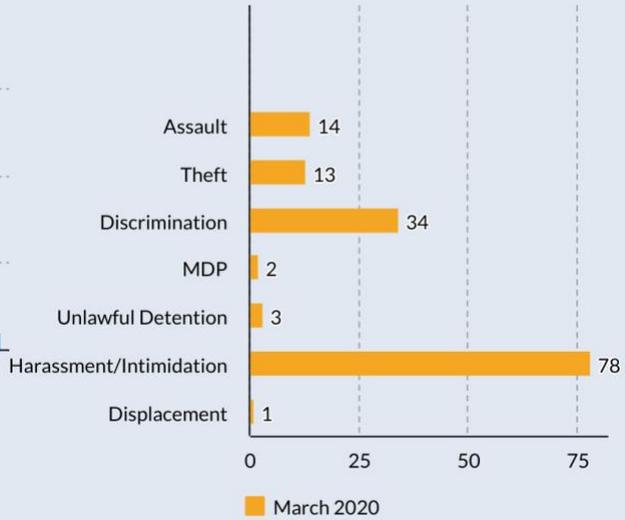
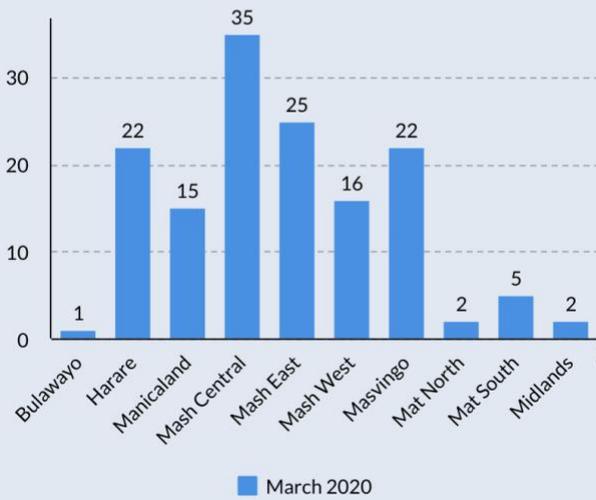
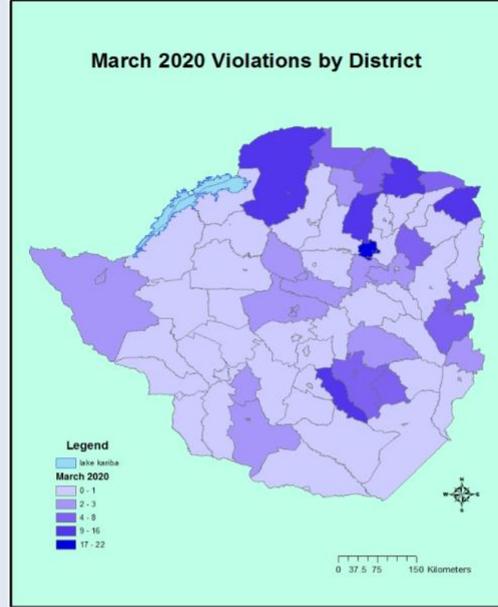
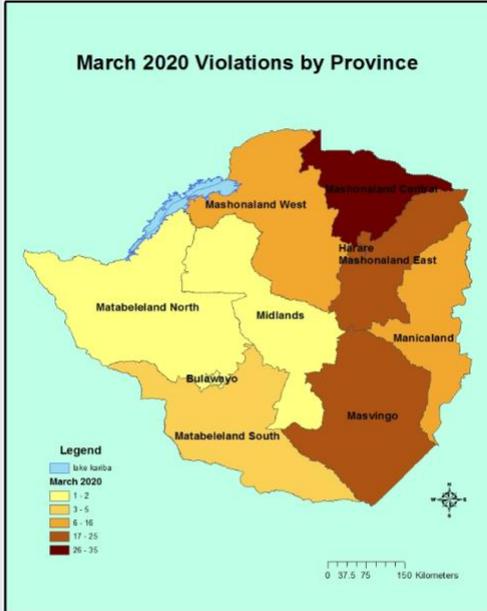
Politics of patronage also continued unabated as reports of Zanu PF supporters being given first preference in allocation of food and other resources were recorded. This goes against the tenets of good governance that encourage equity and inclusiveness and defies internationally recognised humanitarian standards of distribution.

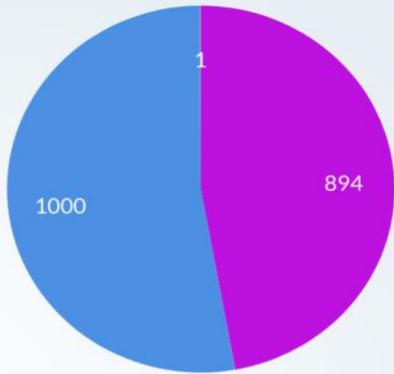
During the month under review ZPP recorded a total of 145 cases of human rights violations with the highest number of violations being recorded in Mashonaland Central province, followed by Mashonaland East. The most prominent forms of violations were harassment and intimidation cases and discrimination.

Human Rights Violations Monthly Dashboard

Report time frame: March, 2020

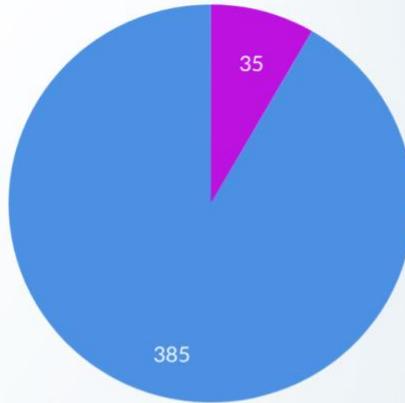
Zimbabwe Peace Project





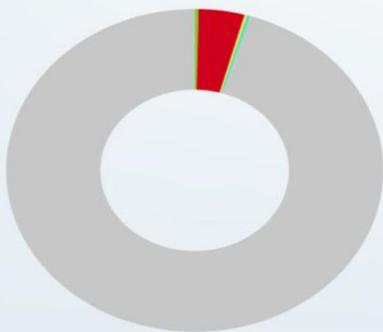
Female (47.18%) Male (52.77%)
 Male PWD (0.05%)

Gender of March Victims



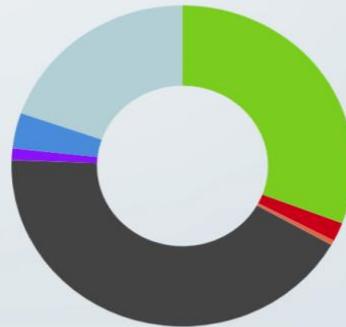
Female (8.33%) Male (91.67%)

Gender of March Perpetrators



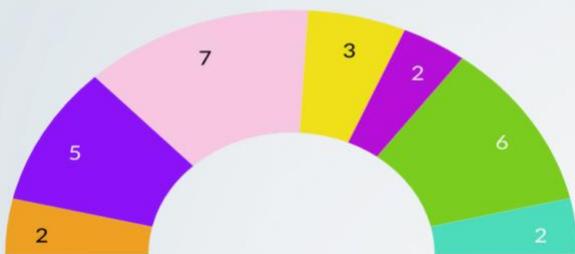
Zanu PF (0.32%) MDC (3.96%)
 PF ZAPU (0.21%) NPP (0.32%)
 Unknown (95.15%) War Vet (0.05%)

March Victims Affiliations



Zanu PF (30.81%) MDC (1.9%) CIO (0.47%)
 ZRP (42.42%) War Vet (1.18%) ZNA (3.55%)
 Unknown (19.67%)

March Perpetrators Affiliations



Harare (7.41%) Manicaland (18.52%)
 Mash Central (25.93%) Mash East (11.11%)
 Mash West (7.41%) Masvingo (22.22%)
 Mat South (7.41%)

March Food & Other Aid Violations



Zanu PF
 March Intra Party Violence

Overall Analysis

The unpreparedness of the Government to deal with COVID-19 is an indication of a state that has not invested enough in improving the country's health delivery system. The health sector has for long been in shambles as doctors frequently go on strike for long periods citing incapacitation and a shortage of drugs and equipment for use in public hospitals. The announcement by health personnel on 25 March that they were downing tools again reflects a government that does not take seriously the welfare of its workers and of the citizens who are supposed to be taken care of by those professionals.

Failure by Wilkins Hospital to have basic equipment and tools such as an electrical adapter and oxygen ventilators is regrettable and is a grim reflection of how public health institutions have been neglected for long. This is evidenced by the fact that it has become a norm for government officials and their families to go abroad to seek medical attention.

The refurbishment of two private hospitals in Mt Pleasant and Avondale is an insult to the majority of Zimbabweans who rely on public institutions for medical attention. This move to refurbish the two institutions is an indication of a society that cares more for the welfare of the elite at the expense of the majority. The move to announce a 21 days Lockdown is welcome but the preparedness of the Government and the Zimbabwean populace for such a move is questionable. For starters, citizens are grappling with effects of a poorly performing economy and find it very challenging to put food on the table. Accessing services such as water, health and electricity is a nightmare. Locking down citizens without a proper plan on how they will access such services and be able to feed their families becomes retrogressive as the citizens will most likely break the directive to stay at home in order to fend for their families. The following is a video link showing citizens who were trying to get mealie meal at Makokoba bus rank in Bulawayo on 31 March: [A mealie meal queue at FortWell Supermarket near the Bus Rank in Makokoba718/?sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=e](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Still on COVID-19, the lockdown period of 21 days started off with sad images of beatings of people by the police and ZPP continues to implore government to ensure that while enforcing their duties, police are supposed to act with strict restraint and must refrain from wanton beatings and harassment of citizens.

Below are pictures showing citizens going about their business on 31 March, day 2 of the Lockdown:



Figure 2: Epworth residents searching for water on 31 March (PC ZPP)



Figure 3: Marondera residents queuing to get into a shop on 31 March (PC ZPP)



Figure 4: A long queue of vehicles as LPG gas wholesalers defied the lockdown and went about their business

The Government could have taken lessons from other countries that have ensured their citizens do not go hungry during the Lockdown. The deployment of security forces to enforce the Lockdown needs to be closely monitored considering that the same security forces have unleashed violence in their previous deployments. It is also unfortunate to note that the security officers are executing their duties with no protective gear and are in the process exposing themselves to contracting or transmitting the virus.

The Corona virus also brought with it heightened human rights violations, typical whenever Zimbabwe is faced with a crisis. On 26 March 2020, some residents in Kuwadzana and Highfields constituencies were assaulted by anti-riot police officers (at nightclubs, bars and other social spaces) following President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s ban of public gatherings of more than 50 people. Reports confirm that city dwellers and vendors at



Figure 5: A screenshot from one of the videos featuring police beating up civilians. The videos have since gone viral on social media

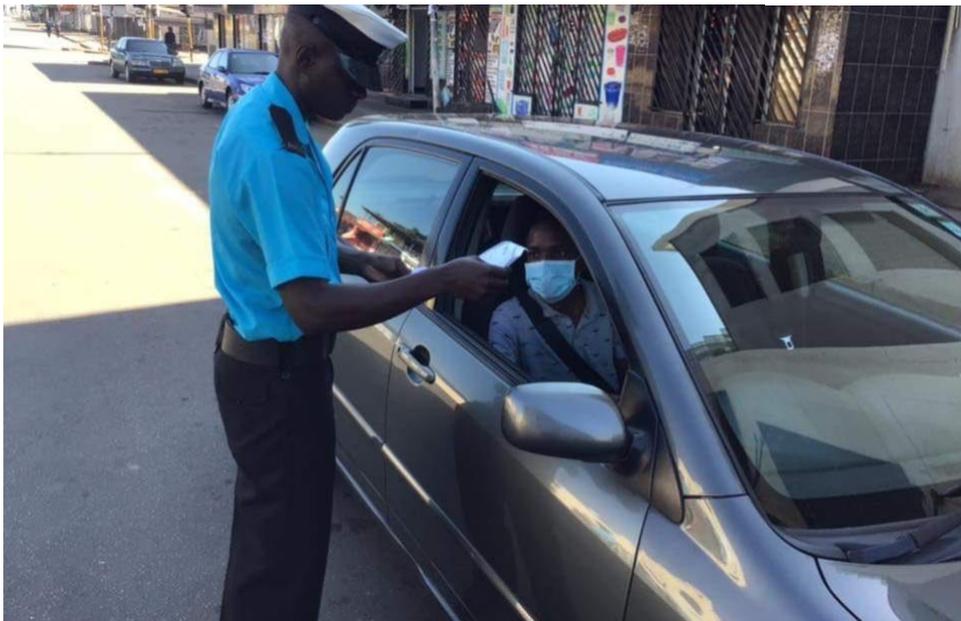


Figure 6: A police officer speaking to citizens and he has no protective clothing - Pic: twitter.com

Kuwadzana 4 shopping centre in ward 28 were assaulted with batons at around 1930hrs while revellers at Gazaland were assaulted at about 8pm. Many vendors reportedly lost their wares and some escaped with serious injuries. The police (estimated number of 50) who were dispersing people at the shopping centre ended up confiscating vendor wares.

On 23 March, the management at Kefalos Company in Seke Ward 10 treated their employees' families in an inhuman and degrading manner. It was reported that employees who reside in the company compound with children other than their own were instructed to remove them from the compound immediately. This left many children vulnerable and without any guardians considering that government has no social safety nets for children. The eviction was also against the local culture and social structure, which fosters an extended family system.

breeds the seed of generational hatred resulting negatively on the development agenda schools thus dividing communities. In some communities villagers were still forced to contribute towards Independence Day commemorations despite these celebrations having been postponed. As in a case in Mt Darwin East, Mafundirwa village, Zanu PF activist Artwell Vhirimhu called for a meeting of traditional leaders on 19 March 2020. He tasked them to collect ZWL 10.00 per household towards the Independence Day commemorations. Some villagers approached Vhirimhu citing economic hardships he turned a deaf ear to their complaint and instead he threatened unspecified action to those who would fail to contribute. The economy is hitting hard on families and expecting them to part with the little they have is inconsiderate.

In a report received from GlenView 1 on 29 March 2020, Zanu PF youth political commissar Archford Mavhima went around Glenview 1 and 2 areas recording names of residents in ward 32 and informing them that Zanu PF had purchased mealie meal to cater for its supporters only during the 21 days Lockdown period. A crisis knows no political party affiliation and communities must instead come together to win the fight against a crisis like COVID19.

supporters are also given preference in accessing resources such as land.

Various communities recorded similar patterns of intimidation and harassment during SDC processes. In some of the cases, MDC supporters were blocked from getting positions in the SDCs and were accused of being political sellouts. This points to the deep levels of polarisation that exists in communities, where people can politicise every aspect of community life. This divides communities and

On 25 March nurses and hospital staff at Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital deserted the facility after two suspected cases of COVID -19 were reported at the institution. Patients were left unattended as health workers fled. It was reported that staff members and nurses left all patients unattended as they declined to provide services without the personal protection equipment necessary.

The politics of patronage is endemic and opposition supporters have long been side lined from accessing aid and other resources. Communities continue to face the effects of the El Nino induced drought, and are dependent on food and other aid from the government, so there is need for equitable distribution of aid as everyone is vulnerable. The reasonable expectation was, after the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food in November 2019 such food violation cases would stop. Unfortunately ZPP continues to record cases where Zanu PF supporters are given first preference in aid distribution. The

In a case that was recorded during the month under review, Zanu PF through some Zaka legislators and party activists hijacked the parcelling out of new flea market stalls at Jerera Growth Point, Ward 19, Zaka Central. They took over production of a card system from Zaka Rural District Council giving the stalls to its membership in the district. This was despite a pre-existing agreement to allocate stalls to individuals who had paid the required fees 3 to 4 years prior, in favour of card carrying ZANU PF members. In some of the reported cases, traditional leaders were again responsible for perpetrating discrimination with some being holders of positions within the ruling party; which is against provisions of the Zimbabwe Constitution. ZPP continues to remind traditional leaders that they are custodians of culture and must be a uniting force instead of facilitating divisions among citizens.

Food discrimination case file- In Simangani Village at ward 10 of Hwange East, a Zanu PF activist, known as Ambrose Shoko a village head, told opposition members to excuse themselves during a food distribution exercise. Shoko told opposition members to receive food aid from their political party

as they continue to disregard the leadership of President Mnangagwa.

In Mazowe South, two Zanu PF Councillors reportedly harassed a villager at Rujeko High School during an Annual General Meeting where parents were electing new members for the SDC. On 1 March, the two councillors refused to accept the election of the victim as the new SDC Chairperson for unspecified reasons. They humiliated Gova in full view of parents, calling him derogatory names before instructing him to leave the school premises. They also undermined the School Headmaster and Deputy Headmaster who were in charge of the proceedings and stated that they will soon replace the victim with a ruling party candidate.

On 19 March, about 12 Zanu PF activists led by Dick Kwanona summoned parents and guardians at Tsengurwe Primary School in Mt Darwin South to re-elect members for the School Development Committee (SDC). Kwanona told the audience that they had dissolved the current SDC committee claiming that it was dominated by MDC supporters. Reports confirm that they tried to coerce parents to select a new SDC committee led by Zanu PF District Chairperson Frank Dick but villagers defied their orders. Kwanona and his colleagues left the school threatening retributory action against all those who had defied their orders.

Other Aid Discrimination Case File- on 25 March Vongai Kufa and Wilson Charamba of Charamba village in Zaka East, ward 20 denied a villager pesticide that they were entitled to receive under the government army worm program citing that the pesticide was only for those who attended ruling party meetings. This was despite the fact that the inputs were from the presidential input scheme that is supposed to benefit everyone regardless of political party affiliation.

Barely a year after imposing a ban on the multi-currency system, the RBZ Governor announced that the USD could be used for purchasing 'essential goods'.

On 25 March that citizens were now free to use the USD in their day to day transactions so as to ease transaction pressure during the crisis period. The move was also meant to promote social distancing, a requisite in the fight against the spread of Corona virus. What is not clear to citizens is what will happen after the crisis has passed? Will the ban be re-imposed? Such lack of clarity in policy makes Zimbabwe unstable for investment and negatively

impacts on the growth of the economy. Will government then pay civil servants in US dollars during this period? It is high time the Government and the RBZ come up with long lasting measures that drive economic growth.

As the country continues to fight COVID19, ZPP calls for the following:

- The Government must ensure that citizens have enough food, water and access requisite services during the Lockdown.
- Citizens must take seriously the call to stay at home and social distancing in order to reduce the spread of the virus.
- Security services who have been deployed to enforce the Lockdown to do so with respect to the Human Rights tenets of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and must do so using minimum force
- The Government to provide protective equipment for the deployed forces.
- The Ministry of Health and Child Care should provide timeous, truthful information on the virus so that citizens are well informed and act accordingly
- Information dissemination on the virus needs to be intensified as citizens in some communities seem not to understand the meaning of staying at home and social distancing

ABOUT ZPP

The organisation was founded in 2000 by church-based and human rights organisations. The current members of ZPP are Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET), Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), National Association for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) and Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA).

ZPP was established with the objective of monitoring, documenting and building peace and promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts. The Zimbabwe Peace Project seeks to foster dialogue and political tolerance through non-partisan peace monitoring activities, mainly through monitors who document the violations of rights in the provinces.

The monitors, who at full complement stand at 420, constitute the core pool of volunteers, supported by four Regional Coordinators. The Regional Coordinators relate with the national office headed by the National Director and programme officers in various units.