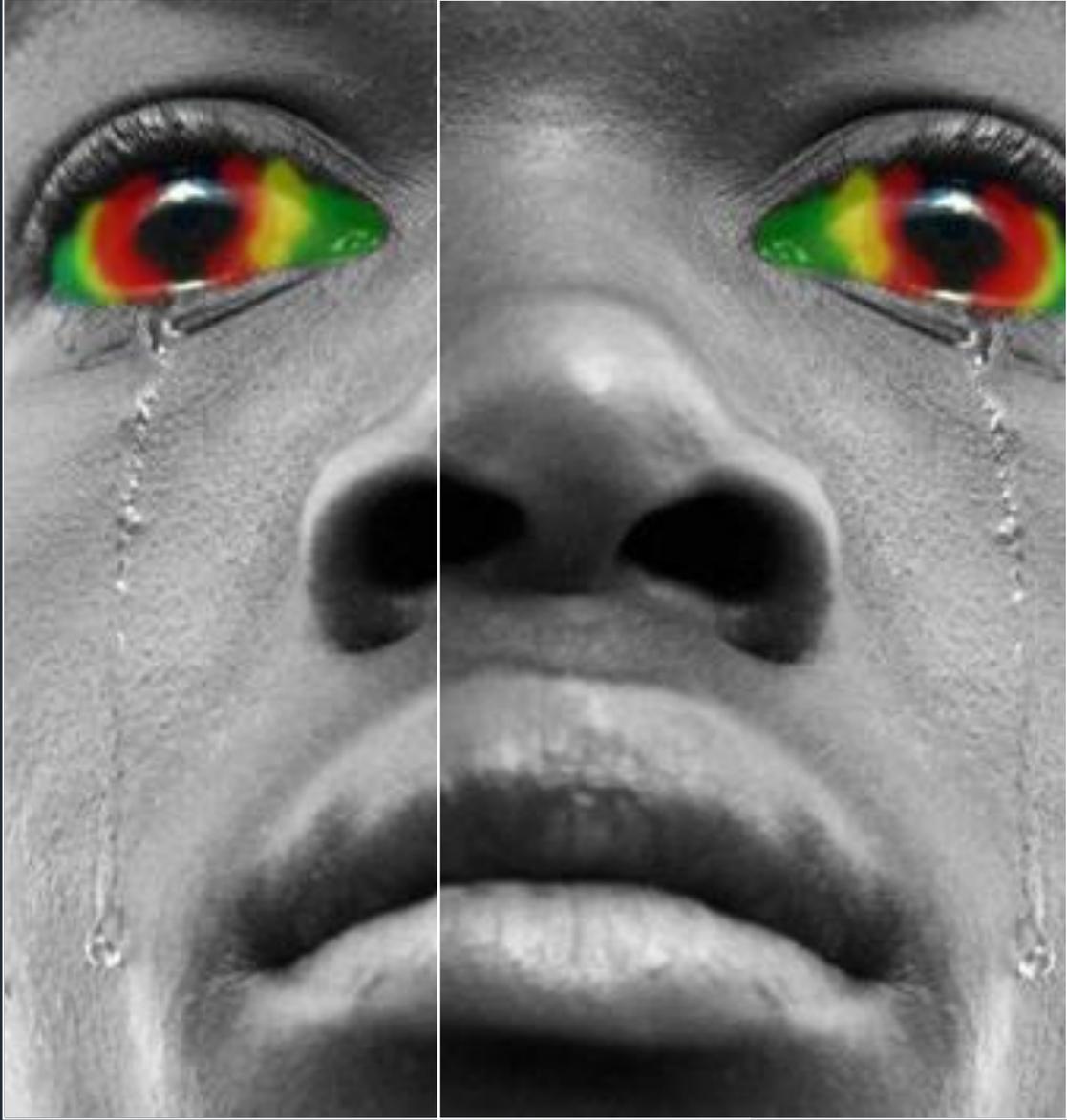




zimpeaceproject.com

Documenting
the experiences of
citizens at the mercy
of their own
government...



Smothered.
Oppressed.
& Crushed.



THE ZIMBABWE
PEACE PROJECT
MONTHLY
MONITORING
REPORT

**FEB
2021**

THE ZIMBABWE REPUBLIC POLICE
CONTRIBUTED TO

59.66%

OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS,
FOLLOWED BY THE ARMY AT

12.12%

A thousand words...



This image, captured at a market stall at Gazaland, Highfields, shows the struggles of those in the informal sector as they attempted to operate under lockdown. It also shows the service and amenities delivery challenges and the collapse and neglect of public infrastructure in the urban areas.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 27 February 2021, two soldiers, who are part of the troops operating in Chipinge, near the Zimbabwean border with Mozambique, allegedly assaulted a civilian to death.

The details of the killings were kept under wraps and even as the body was taken to Chako Police Station in the area, police kept a tight lid on what transpired, in what is clearly meant to protect the assailants.

According to the information gathered by the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), the deceased allegedly got into a misunderstanding with one of the soldiers.

The soldier then teamed up with a colleague, and while accusing the now deceased of being a member of the rebel RENAMO army of Mozambique, took turns to assault him until he died.

The matter is linked to the many allegations of abuse of civilians and corrupt activities allegedly being carried out by the soldiers operating in the area.

Elsewhere, on 1 February, two Beitbridge based police officers sustained injuries after they were allegedly assaulted by army commandos deployed in the area.

The two police officers, Detective Sergeant Albert Gonye and Detective Constable Kurai Marongere of the Criminal Investigations Department were, according to NewsDay, tracking suspects believed to be stealing from haulage trucks when they were attacked and detained by a group of soldiers.

These two incidents, although appearing to be isolated, speak to the pattern observed in February, where some soldiers deployed across the country committed various human rights abuses targeting mostly civilians.

The incidents also show the impunity with which the abuses were carried out as the perpetrators were not held to account and in both cases, the authorities denied the incidents happened.

The Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), contributed to 12.12 percent of perpetrators in February 2021, and they come second after the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), who contributed 59.66 percent.

For the ZRP, the majority of violations occurred during the enforcement of lockdown measures, which the President extended to the end of the month.

Since people were required to have exemption letters in order to travel, and were supposed to wear masks, police officers took advantage of the fines, which were raised to as high as ZW\$5,000 for level 1 offences, to abuse citizens caught on the wrong side of the law.

Soon after the announcement of the increase in fines, police patrol activity targeting citizens increased and ZPP documented an increase in arbitrary and random arrests especially at businesses centres across the country.

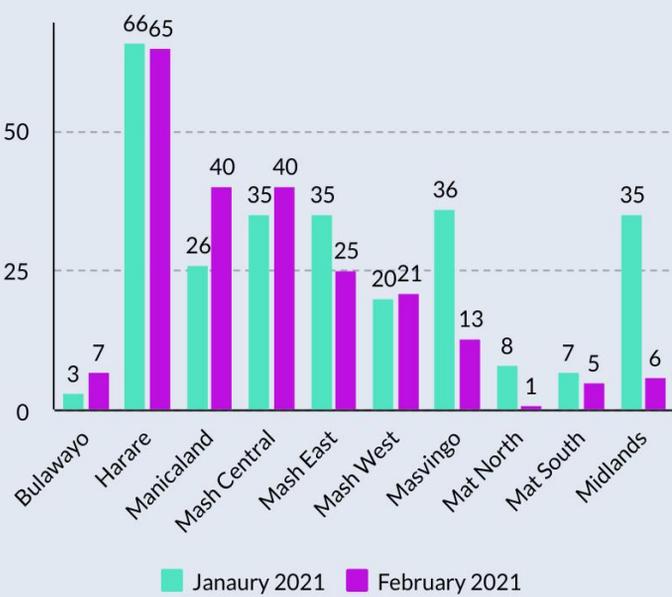
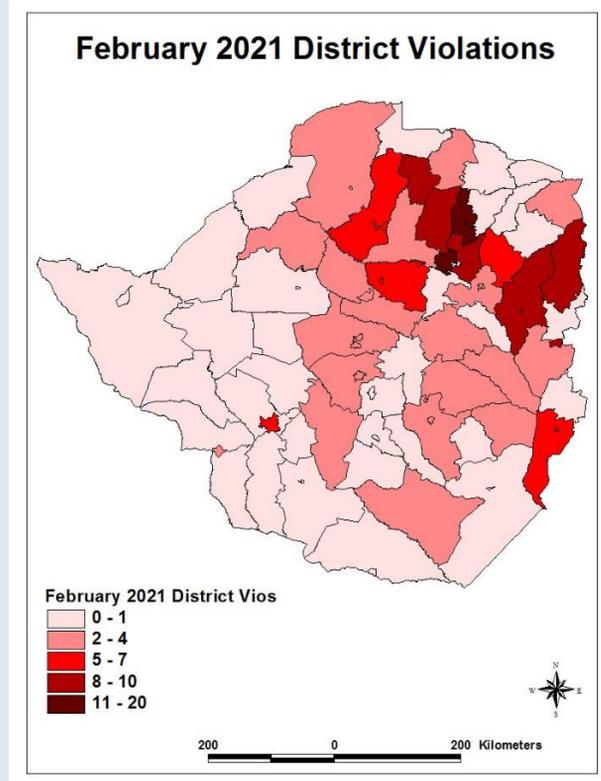
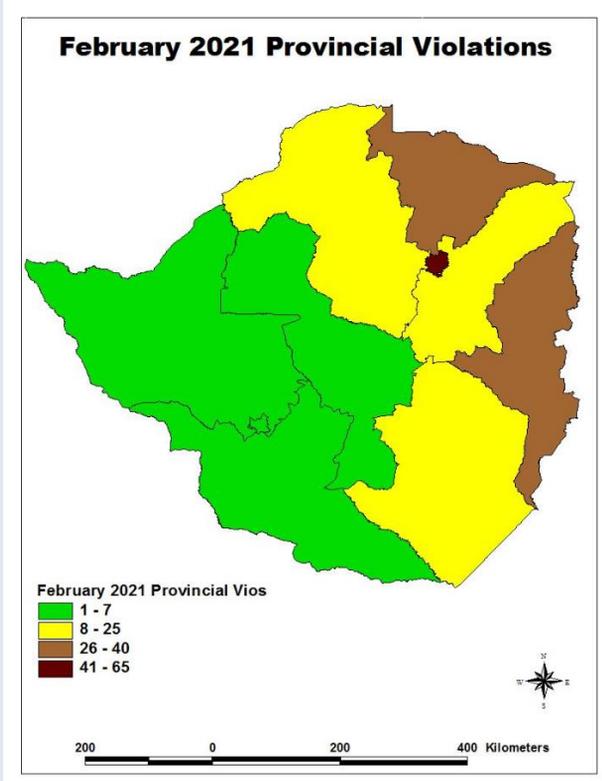
Just as with every other month before, February was marred by increased density of human rights violations, and increased vulnerability among citizens.

So, in addition to being on the receiving end of state security agents' penchant to violate human rights, citizens spent yet another month under lockdown, hungry and unable to open their informal businesses in a clear case of a population that remained smothered, oppressed and crushed!

Human Rights Violations Monthly Dashboard

Report time frame: February, 2021

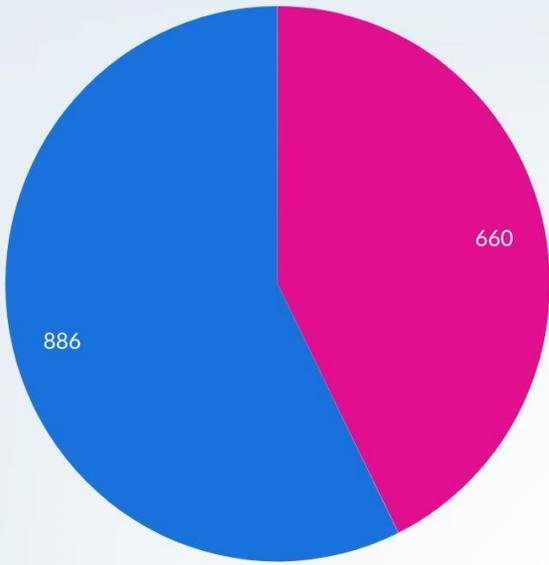
Zimbabwe Peace Project



VIOLATIONS UNPACKED

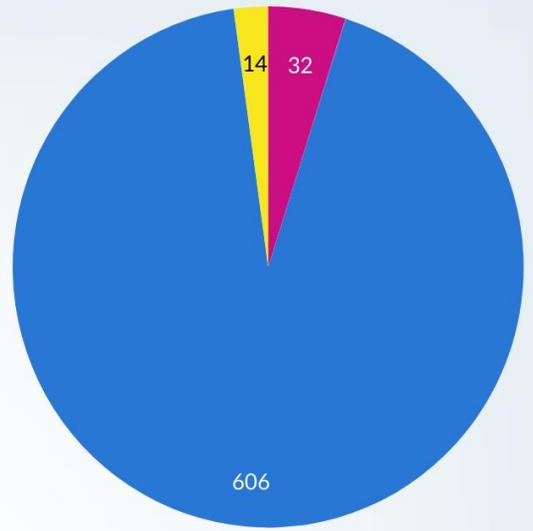
ZPP this month recorded 221 human rights violations, 83 of which were harassment and intimidation of citizens, mostly by the police deployed to enforce the lockdown. The organisation recorded two killings, two attempted murders, one abduction, 21 cases of unlawful detention, and 35 cases of assault, most of which are attributed to state security agents.

Harare recorded the highest violations at 65, followed by Manicaland at 40 and the Matabeleland region recorded the lowest number of violations as indicated in the maps below.



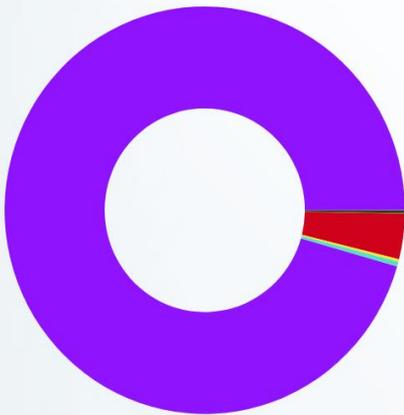
Female (42.69%) Male (57.31%)

Gender of February Victims



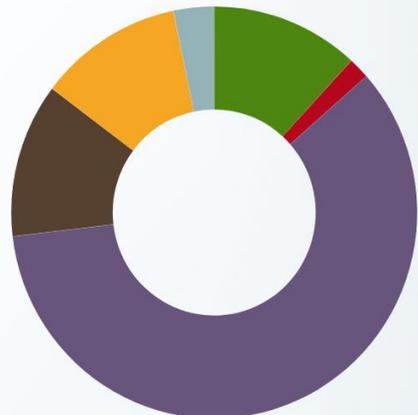
Female (4.91%) Male (92.94%) Unknown (2.15%)

Gender of February Perpetrators



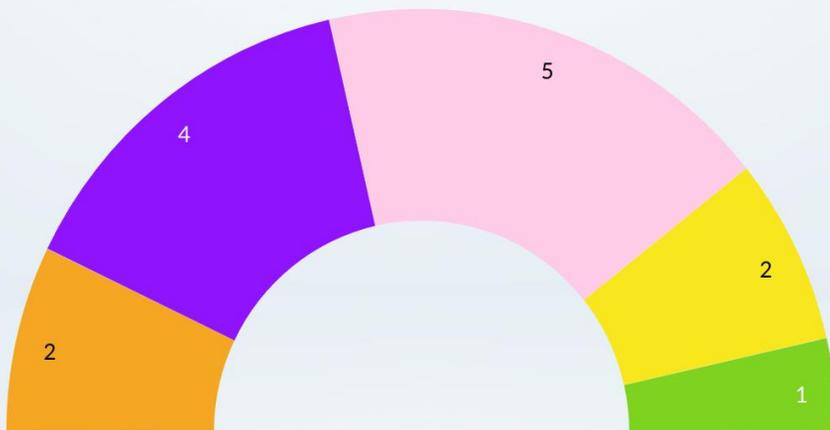
Zanu PF (0.26%) MDC Alliance (3.62%)
MDC-T Khupe (0.19%) ZRP (0.39%)
Unknown (95.54%)

February Victims Affiliation



Zanu PF (11.81%) MDC Alliance (1.69%)
ZRP (59.66%) ZNA (12.12%) Unknown (11.5%)
State agents (3.22%)

February Perpetrators Affiliation



Manicaland (14.29%) Mash Central (28.57%) Mash East (35.71%) Mash West (14.29%) Masvingo (7.14%)

February Food & Other Aid Violations

2.2 SUSTAINED TARGETING OF DISSENTING VOICES.

On 17 February 2021, State security agents arrested pro-democracy campaigner Makomborero Haruzivishe in what has been described as a mafia style.

Haruzivishe was ambushed by men in two unmarked vehicles and shots were fired as they subdued him and later took him to Harare Central Police Station where they surrendered him to the police.

Haruzivishe is among the faces of dissent and resistance against the government's suppression of human rights and has been on the forefront of leading demonstrations against the abduction of Tawanda Muchehiwa and the involvement of the state-security-linked Impala Car Rental in the abduction.

Haruzivishe is being charged with kidnapping, participating in a gathering to promote public violence and contravening COVID-19 protocols.

Earlier, on 11 February, outspoken Norton Member of Parliament Temba Mliswa was arrested at his Borrowdale house while addressing a press conference on his alleged relationship scandals. MDC Alliance youth activists Joanna Mamombe and Cecilia Chimberi were also arrested by the police who accused them of undermining their authority. The duo petitioned the police to release the protestors citing that they risked infecting them with Covid-19 as there was no social distancing in the overloaded police vehicle. They were detained for eight days before being released on bail.

Zimbabwean authorities on Friday 26 February 2021 arrested student leaders, juveniles and a journalist in a fresh crackdown on human rights defenders.

First to be arrested by ZRP officers, were three students namely Richard Paradzayi, Paidamoyo Masaraure and Liam Kanengoni, who were apprehended at Harare Magistrates Court on allegations of unnecessary movement.

Paradzayi, Masaraure and Kanengoni were detained at Harare Central Police Station.

ZRP officers also arrested Kumbirai Mafunda, a freelance journalist inside Harare Magistrates Court, where he was covering the appearance in court of Haruzivishe.

Earlier in the month, police in Machipisa, Highfields, Harare, had briefly detained NewsDay journalist Simbarashe Sithole and disregarded his pleas that he was a media practitioner rightfully conducting his duties.

These cases just go to show how the State continues to use the police and the judiciary to stifle the voices

of human rights and political activists, and journalists.

Every person has a right to personal liberty, as enshrined in Section 2 of the Constitution, and where that liberty is to be deprived, it has to be done lawfully ' upon reasonable suspicion that he or she has committed or is about to commit a criminal offence.

Where someone is arrested, they have, according to Section 69, "the right to a fair and public trial within a reasonable time before an independent and impartial court."

What is being witnessed in Zimbabwe is where opposition political activists and civil society actors being arrested and detained for weeks without getting bail in what clearly an attempt to subdue alternative voices.

WE RECOMMEND

In respect of the above, Zimbabwe cannot continue to be in the spotlight for human rights violations as this affects, not just its image, but also stifles any growth and development.

Citizens cannot continue to live in fear as this country is supposed to be a fully-fledged democracy where the freedom of expression is guaranteed, and where ideas can flow, and where civil society, political parties and the general population play their role of contributing to a better Zimbabwe without fear of any repercussions.

- We repeat our calls for government to do the right thing and open up democratic space and allow citizens to express themselves as espoused in the Constitution of Zimbabwe.
- It is only in a society where citizens are free to express themselves that development, economic, political and social, takes place. Government needs to adopt and accept criticism as constructive and allow a free flow of ideas
- The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission should be proactive by not only acting on complaints received, but by compelling government to observe human rights. As a commission that is supposed to be independent and is meant to protect the people from human rights abuses perpetrated by those in powerful positions, the ZHRC should take a bottom up approach, and deal with the human rights violations targeting the general, defenceless population.

2.3 SPOTLIGHT ON THE CONDUCT OF STATE SECURITY AGENTS

Unprofessional conduct by the state security has become one of the biggest threats to enjoyment of human rights in Zimbabwe.

Apart from the proliferation of videos of state security agents – mainly the police- exhibiting signs of being drunk while on duty, there has been an increase in the way state security agents continue to treat citizens in an unprofessional way and getting away with it.

For example, on 11 February an image of a woman arrested with her children and standing in an outside cell went viral.

This was after police at Rhodesville police station had apprehended and detained a woman with two minors for allegedly violating lockdown regulations.

It was only after the image went viral that the police issued a statement promising to investigate the matter.

Nothing has been heard of the investigation to date and like many other cases involving the police this is likely to die in its tracks. The police owe it to citizens they are mandated to protect to make known the findings of their ‘investigations.’



On 5 February police officers reportedly threw teargas canisters into a commuter bus that was carrying over a dozen passengers along Seke Road in Harare. Police officially denied the incident despite the overwhelming evidence:



“We were waiting for transport and we ran in all directions after teargas had been thrown into the bus. Smoke is still stuck in my throat.”
“No one was run over or hit by cars since the drivers stopped their cars after seeing commotion, but what surprised me is that there were also other police officers who were waiting for transport at the scene where teargas was thrown into a kombi.”
According to a passenger on the bus.

In other reports, on 9 February 2021 at 13:00hrs about 35 anti-riot police officers’ raided vendors in St Marys Chitungwiza at Chigovanyika Shopping Centre and vandalized vending structures and destroyed the agricultural produce that was being sold. The police officers allegedly went on to confiscate a vendor’s money and goods.

In another incident, on 28 February, Police in Gweru allegedly caused the death of a detained man.

Police arrested the now deceased, Tatenda Pasinyore (28) for throwing stones on the roof of an elderly woman’s house in the area.

Officers allegedly searched the deceased and found him in possession of the illicit drug, methamphetamine commonly known as mutiro. Pasinyore attempted to run away but he was re-arrested, assaulted and taken to the station, where he was detained with two other suspects. At about 5 am, Pasinyore’s cellmates allegedly dragged him into a shed seeing as it was now raining and he was cold. He started vomiting and died soon after. His body had bruises on both hips, a deep cut on the right wrist, a scratch on the leg & bruises under the armpit.

The incidents are growing in number, and it must be recalled that in October 2020, police threw teargas into a loaded bus along Bulawayo Road in Harare and the ZRP claimed the offending officers had been arrested and promised to update the public on the progress of their prosecution. Yet to this day, nothing has been heard of the case and the only official statement has been from Police spokesperson Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi, who said during a radio programme on politicking on ZIFM Stereo that ‘lawyers offered to assist the accused police officers’

These cases, together with the allegations that soldiers in Chipinge assaulted a man to death, are of great concern.

WE RECOMMEND

The professionalism of the state security agents is not just a human rights issue, but an important matter of national security.

- Government should institute investigations of all serious human rights abuses and ensure that citizens get justice. State security agents who have acted outside their mandate should be brought to book without fear or favour.
- All interventions should be done in line with national law and international standards. The government should also take urgent steps to reform the state security sector as spelt out in the recommendations of the Motlanthe Commission, and as promised by President Emmerson Mnangagwa in 2017. Law enforcement agents should arraign and hold to account all those responsible for human rights abuses. That way, it creates a culture of accountability and responsibility within the state security sector.



PARTISAN EVERYTHING

Numerous cases of partisan distribution and looting of government aid were also reported in Mashonaland East and West provinces.

In Murehwa North, MDC Alliance activists were left out in the registration of those who were to receive mosquito nets.

The registering authorities, who included the local leadership, allegedly told the opposition supporters that any aid coming from government was meant for Zanu PF members only.

In Hurungwe at Sengwe Business Centre Zanu PF activists and Zanu PF Councillors reportedly looted top dressing fertilizers meant for villagers.

In Goromonzi a misunderstanding ensued between Zanu PF and MDC Alliance members over the distribution of government inputs.

It is alleged that Zanu PF officials hijacked the distribution process, using their own beneficiaries list, which did not include MDC Alliance members, and this resulted in tensions.

These cases are not isolated, but a deliberate process to use aid as a political tool.

In Gwanda North, Stanmore Ward 4, a Zanu PF activist identified as Collen Moyo, addressing villagers who had gathered for food distribution issued threats to MDC Alliance members.

Moyo allegedly called the MDC Alliance members 'dogs' that require food from Zanu PF and yet they later criticize the party.

ZPP remains concerned by the persistence of food aid violations as these point to a situation where government can deliberately let people die of starvation for simply, and rightfully belonging to a political party of their choice.

“
Moyo allegedly called the MDC Alliance members 'dogs' that require food from Zanu PF and yet they later criticize the party.
”

WE RECOMMEND

- The Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees civil and political liberties to all, and as such, everyone is free to affiliate themselves to any political party. Government, on the other hand, is charged with the responsibility to provide for all, regardless of which political party or religious group they belong to.
- We therefore urge government to address the discrimination happening during the distribution of food aid by using the appropriate structures and technical staff within the relevant ministries and by ensuring that political party officials do not preside over the distribution of aid. The line between the ruling party and government should be clear from the top to the bottom.
- In the interest of transparency and accountability, we also urge government to publish statistics of beneficiaries and resources allocated to each ward for public audit purposes.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Zimbabwe Peace Project reiterates its call for, among other things, genuine security sector reforms.

The conduct of the security services has a bearing on the political, social and economic state of the country and government should therefore take necessary measures to ensure that the security sector is reformed to be an apolitical, professional and people-centred institution.

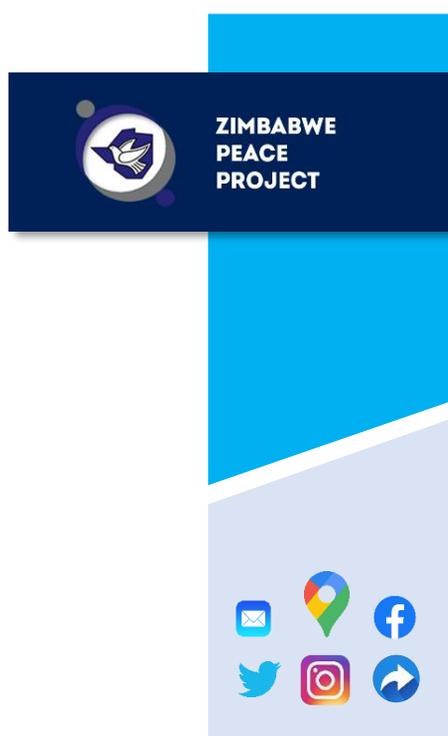
This is because the human rights violations that ZPP has continued to record in the past year, all point to the members of the state security as the major perpetrators of human rights violations.

Government should also act to deal with the inequalities in communities – especially rural areas- where some services and processes like the distribution of aid, are politicised, and where political party activists control such processes, which should be left in the hands of professional government services.

Zimbabweans are, in essence, under attack from their own government. In light of the sustained attack on civil society players, political party activists and any perceived government and ruling party opponents, there is an urgent need to mobilise critical democratic forces for joint actions to compel the government of Zimbabwe to return to constitutionalism, democracy and security sector reforms.

Government should implement the Constitution to its fullest and that includes Section 210, which stipulates that there must be an Act of Parliament to provide an effective and independent mechanism for receiving and investigating complaints from members of the public about misconduct on the part of members of the security services, and for remedying any harm caused by such misconduct.

This act is long overdue as it will provide room for the thousands of Zimbabweans whose rights have been violated with impunity by state security agents.



RESPECT

INTEGRITY

SOLIDARITY

EXCELLENCE