



ZIMBABWE PEACE  
PROJECT

## **Political Intolerance: An Enemy of Progress/ End Intolerance, Build Peace**

**21 September, 2022**----The International Day of Peace is observed each year on 21 September. Established in 1981 by a unanimous United Nations Resolution 1367, the Peace Day provides a globally shared platform for all humanity to commit to Peace above all differences and to contribute to building a Culture of Peace. Zimbabwe has more than 16 ethnic groups, many political parties and religions and it is important to ensure citizens are aware and practice the culture of tolerance, respect and inclusivity for the achievement of sustainable peace. ZPP continues to make efforts to develop long-lasting and transformative peace initiatives in the communities it works in. ZPP uses the human rights approach to advance sustainable peace in the country. In line with the international theme this year 'End racism, build peace', ZPP has adopted 'End Intolerance, build Peace' as a response to the many breaches of peace that are increasing as a result of intolerance among political actors. This year, regrettably, the day is being commemorated under a dark cloud that could threaten the freeness and fairness of the elections expected in 2023.

The toxicity of politics in Zimbabwe remains alarming and cause for concern for the Zimbabwe Peace Project. ZPP notes with concern how Zanu PF has launched systematic threats and intimidation targeting opposition supporters in rural and urban areas. The trend has continually been witnessed in the run up to elections and other special events since independence. The ruling party has adopted concerted actions where opposition political players especially in the Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC), are threatened and in some cases physically abused. Opposition activists and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) workers have become victims of selective application of the law, constantly subjected to arrests and extended pretrial detentions. Disturbingly, journalists have also been subjected to the criminalisation of their work; they have not been spared of arrests and physical attacks by political parties especially the ruling and opposition CCC.

The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) has been biased and has continued to be selective in the enforcement of the law in favour of Zanu PF as seen through arbitrary and unlawful detentions. The ZRP continues to be an enforcer for the ruling party, ready to arrest those who do not advance Zanu PF ideologies and prepared to look away when the ruling party is on the wrong side.

ZPP has recorded at least 20 cases of politicisation of Pfumvudza inputs such as maize seed and fertilizers in 2022.<sup>1</sup> This entails the deliberate and systematic process of side-lining perceived or

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<sup>1</sup> Pfumvudza is a crop production intensification approach which was introduced by the government in the 2020-21 farming season to ensure the efficient use of inputs and labour on a small area of land. Under the programme government funds maize and fertiliser inputs to farmers

real supporters of opposition political parties. The government scheme is supposed to benefit everyone regardless of their political affiliation. In direct contravention of the Constitution, Zanu PF, government officials and traditional as well as local authority leaders charged with the distribution of inputs, conduct themselves in an openly partisan manner and show little regard for the respect of the fundamental value of equality and dignity for all. Some citizens who have attempted to call out these partisan acts have faced the brutality of the Zanu PF activists.

The culture of political intolerance in Zimbabwe is exposed by high levels of hate speech during campaigns and on social media. Hate language demeans those involved in politics other than the ruling party, hindering the full enjoyment of fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. This is seen through increased hate speech by what are known as 'varakashi' on Twitter.<sup>2</sup> The toxicity of political intolerance is seen through many addresses by Zanu PF aligned activists who are urging ruling party supporters to cause harm to known opposition CCC members.

Addressing a meeting recently one Abton Mashayanyika known as a religious leader while explaining the meaning of the 'Down with so and so' slogan went on to say 'down with Nelson Chamisa'. The slogan from the time of the liberation struggle meant the person mentioned in the slogan had to be killed. Since uttering the words, Mashayanyika has not been arrested. Recently, another religious leader said 'white people are devils.'

Those responsible for the murder of Mboneni Ncube an CCC activist slain at a rally in Kwekwe in the run up to the March 26 by-elections have not had their day in court. Many other activists were left with life threatening injuries. While the suspect in the murder of the callously murdered Moreblessing Ali, a CCC activist has appeared in court once the case seems to have gone cold.

On 27 August 2022, President Emmerson Mnangagwa insulted and labeled the CCC leader 'a mad man'. Opposition party leader Nelson Chamisa replied the next day, "I will reduce him to mince meat" The clash between the two political leaders motivated violent clashes between their party supporters. ZPP is concerned that the use of hate language drives political violence to high levels.

The Private Voluntary Organizations Amendment Bill (PVO Bill) has become a tool of the Mnangagwa administration to limit the right to freedom of expression and access to information. Zimbabwe's civil society unfortunately as evidenced by the text of the PVO Bill is viewed as an enemy whereas the mandate of CSOs as watchdogs is complimentary to entrenching democracy and delivering on accountability and transparency. The government continues to utilize the law as a weapon to quell dissent and has relentlessly attacked civil society organizations, branding them 'agents of the west and regime change' and 'purveyors of falsehoods.' CSOs including ZPP keep calling for more consultations with those affected by proposed new laws. The passing of the PVO Bill a few months before the 2023 elections is ill timed, as it is likely to result in the isolation of citizens and making it difficult for them to access information and voter education. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has partnered CSOs to roll out voter education.

Citizens have also failed to enjoy Constitutionally guaranteed socio economic, environmental and cultural rights making it difficult for anyone to consider citizens to be enjoying peace. The majority of citizens continue to struggle to access health delivery that responds to all their needs. Most public health institutions are unable to provide good services as they are operating on shoe string

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<sup>2</sup> Varakashi is a Shona word for "destroyers". They troll social media platforms especially Twitter, attacking people who challenge Zanu PF, President Mnangagwa's policies or leadership. Their overarching aim is to push Zanu PF propaganda.

budgets resulting in citizens losing lives for ailments that could be controlled. There is a raging outbreak of measles which has resulted in many children losing life unnecessarily as some members of society do not want to have their children vaccinated. The dilemma is that the most affected are the Apostolic churches who seem to be the chosen ones owing to their numbers and the pledges they have made for their many members to vote for Zanu PF.

Access to clean, potable water remains a dream for most citizens as most urban areas do not have running water and citizens have to spend many hours waiting to access water at boreholes. Some of the boreholes have become a source of conflict as those in the queues jostle to get to the front. Many parents across the country are concerned about the high cost of education for their children. While the Constitution guarantees free basic education, there seems to be more demands on parents for extra lessons that have to be paid in foreign currency. Those who cannot afford are simply ignored in class.

ZPP recommends the adoption of the following interventions to promote sustainable peace in Zimbabwe:

#### Government

- The state has the responsibility to ensure all citizens exercise their rights without limitation and regardless of their political affiliation, gender, disability, race
- The state has a responsibility to ensure that the law is applied non-selectively
- Take necessary steps to ensure citizens access reasonable health services in public institutions and access clean and potable water

#### Chapter 12 commissions

- According to their mandate generally and the NPRC specifically they need to strike alliances with relevant stakeholders to ensure that positive peace prevails
- The NPRC could take a leaf from Kenya and monitor hate language and take note of words that should be avoided
- ZGC and the ZMC are urged to ensure that women are not subjected to violence and cyber bullying

#### CSOs and the Church

- To continue working on creating awareness on peace deficits in communities
- Through community activities foster a culture of tolerance and co-existence

#### Political parties

- Desist from using hate language and perpetrating political violence
- Sanction supporters found guilty of being intolerant and perpetrating political violence

According to Johan Galtung, widely known as the father of peace there is negative and positive peace. He states that positive peace is filled with positive content such as restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population and the constructive resolution of conflict.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the absence of war is not peace.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.irenees.net/bdf\\_fiche-notions-186\\_en.ht](https://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-notions-186_en.ht)

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