

## ZPP STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day (IWD) is commemorated internationally on 8 March to recognise women's achievements across the globe. The day also serves as an advocacy platform for issues that affect women. The United Nations began celebrating this day annually in 1975 although the day had been there from as early as 1909. Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) on the occasion of the 2019 IWD stands in solidarity with all women across the political, economic, social and cultural divide. The theme for 2019 is *#BalanceforBetter* where the world must seek for gender balance and wellbeing of women. Women play multiple gender roles in society including carrying and birthing the next generation and nurturing this to adulthood. It then becomes imperative to jealously guard the welfare of women. ZPP commemorates this day on the background of violence that negatively affected women during the 14 – 16 January 2019 stay away. A total of 688 incidents of human rights violations were recorded with 2723 victims, 1205 of the victims being female<sup>1</sup>; an indication that women were directly affected by the violence. The plight of women in times of conflict is further increased by factors that include biological makeup, cultural values, social norms and economic status.

Women were also psychologically affected by the violence as they witnessed their loved ones being harassed during the protests and some had to bury their relatives who fell victim to military shootings. ZPP recognises the fact that women are the primary care givers in society and that their burden of care was increased during and after the stay –away. They have had to care for the injured, and in cases of death, take care of the children left by the deceased. As is the case in many other conflicts, women were also victims of sexual violence with members of the security forces being implicated as perpetrators. A total of 17 cases of sexual violence were reported<sup>2</sup>. It is important for Government of Zimbabwe to ensure that perpetrators are brought to book and justice prevails for victims.

While Section 80 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for the rights of women it does not provide for the protection of women in times of conflict. During the stay away, women, particularly those with disabilities were negatively affected by the incidents of violence. The Constitution provides for the protection of persons with disabilities from all forms of exploitation and abuse in Section 83(c). It is also important to note that these two sections fall outside the Bill of Rights and are therefore not justiciable. The extent to which these Sections guarantee protection is therefore minimal given that the state's duty of protection is dependent on availability of resources. It is important for the Constitution to provide adequate protection for women with disabilities as their vulnerability is two pronged- being women and having disabilities.

In order to ensure total protection of women in Zimbabwe, ZPP urges the government and other stakeholders to:

- Put in place legislation that protects women, including women with disabilities especially in times of conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> ZPP January Monthly Monitoring Report

<sup>2</sup> Kubatana Newsletter 19 February 2019

- Ensure that members of the Police Service are capacitated on disability inclusion so that they are in a better position to assist women with disabilities during both the reporting process and investigation stage.
- Build and strengthen capacity of the security sector on sensitive crowd control that does not erode the dignity and integrity of women.
- Continuously and consistently celebrate women and the important role they play in society.

***If you are concerned about acts of human rights violations in your community ZPP encourages you to get in touch on WhatsApp numbers: +263 774 883 406 and +263 774 883 417 and Toll free number***

***080 80199***



A Zimbabwe where there is Peace, Justice, Dignity and Development for all.

*Mission: To work for sustainable peace through monitoring, documentation, advocacy and community peace building interventions with our members and partners*