



**ZIMBABWE PEACE
PROJECT**

August 2024

Monthly Monitoring Report

Picture by:
Costa Nkomo

www.zimpeaceproject.com



Executive Summary

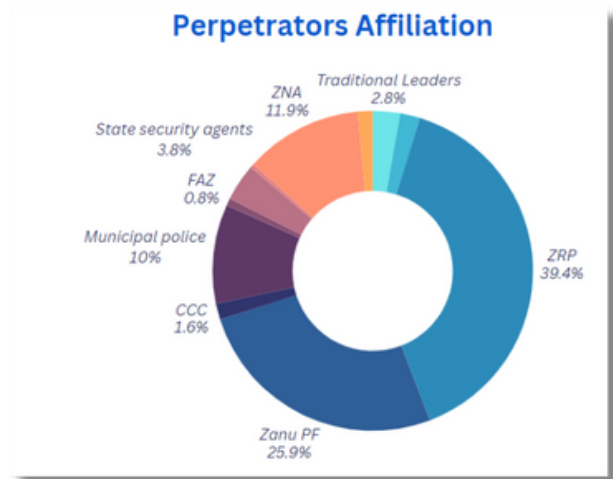
In the month of August, the Zimbabwe Peace Project recorded and documented 213 human rights violations across the country. Key violations included harassment and intimidation and unlawful detention of citizens, human rights defenders and political activists. 22 violations were committed in incidents of assault of citizens by state security agents. Other notable violations included malicious damage to property, violations of the right to equality and non-discrimination in incidents of failure of the justice system as well as in partisan distribution of food aid.

The Zimbabwe Republic Police constituted 39,4% of the perpetrators while ZANU PF affiliated perpetrators amounted to 25.91%. Other key perpetrators included officers of the Zimbabwe National Army at 11.89%, municipal police at 10.01%, state security agents 3.75% and traditional leaders at 2.75%. Other violators include 1.63% affiliated to the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), 1.5% being government officials, 0.75% being members of the Forever Associate Zimbabwe (FAZ) and war veterans at 0.38%. 2% of the total perpetrators' population could not be identified with any group. The high number of state security agents committing human rights offences were largely related to the widespread crackdown on dissent by the government whose heavy handedness accounts for unlawful arrests, arbitrary detention, torture and inhuman treatment of accused or arrested persons.

In the Towards Sustainable Peace in Zimbabwe section, we acknowledge the efforts by the Zimbabwe Republic Police and members of parliament in raising awareness and working decisively to investigate incidents of maladministration of government sponsored food aid

In our section on Ten steps backward, a new feature of this report, we analyse the effects of partisan distribution and maladministration of food aid on women and girls.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project notes with concern the reckless mockery of human rights defenders and arrested persons by senior political leaders as well as the consistent use of violent threatening language by government officials. ZPP strongly condemns the deliberate targeting of human rights defenders, and the repression of citizens in the pursuit of political gains and calls for an end to all repression.



About ZPP

ZPP is a peace-promoting organisation that uses human rights lenses in peacebuilding work having established that the deprivation and abuse of human rights poses the greatest threat to peace in Zimbabwe. The organisation was established in 2000 as a project of civil society and faith-based groups in response to the violence and human rights violations that characterised the political landscape of the time. These organisations were the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS), Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Zimbabwe Liberators Platform (ZLP) and Non-Violent Action and Strategies for Social Change (NOVASC).

Over the years, the ZPP network of members has evolved as the network welcomed new member organisations while others have developed new thematic interests or have ceased to exist. Current member organisations are the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJPZ), Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Women and Law Southern Africa (WLSA), National Association for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) and the Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ).

Contents

Key human rights violations.....	4
Towards sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.....	8
10 Steps backward.....	9
Provincial Outlook.....	10

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Government's use of force on citizens: A premeditated disregard of human rights?

The recent systematic and public attacks on human rights defenders in Zimbabwe, particularly in August ahead of the SADC Summit, raise grave concerns about the government's commitment to human rights and the rule of law. Top government officials have publicly denigrated human rights defenders, political figures, and civil society organisations, creating a hostile environment that emboldens violence and repression. More than 200 citizens were arrested between the period of July and August 2024 with most being charged with inciting public violence, disorderly conduct or some trumped up charges on suspicion of organising mass protests.

The subsequent widespread arrests of citizens across the country on unsubstantiated allegations of inciting public violence are a stark illustration of this troubling trend. The Minister of Home Affairs,

Honourable Kazembe Kazembe's televised statement on the 2nd of August gives an insight into the government's preparedness to use force in quashing the voices of dissent. The minister, flanked by high-ranking members of the police, issued threats of violence saying those who seek to "provoke a heavy-handed response from the government" assuming that it 'would attract global attention and put Zimbabwe on the spotlight, should know that (the government) is 'prepared for the same'. His utterances have created a climate of fear and intimidation, undermining peace and stability in the country. Such actions contravene Zimbabwe's international human rights obligations and the principles of the SADC region.

The threats, or 'warnings', were also displayed in the widespread operations by members of the police force in public places

as well as combined military and police drills around Harare suburbs, where the forces' vehicles, including tanks and water cannons made rounds whirling sirens, typical of war zones styles. ZPP also recorded incidents where ZRP officers assaulted members of the public, vendors and other informal traders in public gatherings. In Kuwadzana, Harare, about 35 citizens were assaulted by police officers at Kuwadzana 5 Shopping centre on the 16th of August. Similar occurrences were reported in Kambuzuma, Mabvuku/Tafara, Chitungwiza and Chipinge, Murambinda.

The policing trend was in itself a violation of a host of human rights including political rights (Sec 67), freedom of expression (Sec 61) and that of peacefully demonstrating and petitioning (Sec 59) as well as the right to personal security (Sec 52).

The Zimbabwe Peace Project urges the Government of Zimbabwe to uphold its human rights obligations, protect the rights of citizens, and engage in constructive dialogue with civil society to foster a peaceful and inclusive environment for all. ZPP further implores the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission to investigate the reports of excessive use of force by state security agents, including reports of torture and inhuman treatment and prosecute all perpetrators. This also calls for the urgent operationalisation of the Independent Complaints Commission so that all cases against the security forces can be adequately investigated and acted upon.



Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services Permanent Secretary Nick Mangwana posted a gun wielding police officer on X (August 27, 2024).

Selective Application of Bail: A Concerning Trend in Human Rights Accountability

August saw an alarming surge in human rights violations, with over 160 defenders arbitrarily arrested, subjected to prolonged pre-trial detention, torture, and inhuman treatment by state security and the justice system. Elected officials, activists, and citizens faced unjust arrests, lengthy detentions, and denial of access to justice, often on politically motivated charges. The denial of the right to bail in most incidents points to a failure of the justice system to account for the rights of the accused as enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe in Sections 49, 50, 69 and 70. According to the country's supreme law in Section 49, everyone has a right to personal liberty, including the right (a) not to be detained without trial. A disturbing pattern however emerged in August, with accused persons arrested ahead of the SADC Summit being repeatedly denied bail for trivial reasons, suggesting an extension of the machinery to suppress dissenting voices. In incidents such as the arbitrary and unlawful arrest of Samuel Gwenzi, Namatai Kwekweza, Robson Chere and Vusimuzi Moyo, among other incidents, the rights of the accused were violated in many ways including the right to be treated humanely and with respect for their inherent dignity as enshrined in Section 50 (1c).

Chere's harrowing ordeal, while not the only case, is a stark reminder of the justice system's glaring failures. Visibly tortured, denied bail, and locked away in a maximum-security prison for over 30 days without trial, Chere's story is a heart-wrenching testament to the erosion of human rights. Prolonged detentions, coupled with the agonizing wait for a trial, take a devastating toll on accused persons' well-being. The denial of freedom and rights leave an indelible mark on the victims, causing irreparable harm to their physical and mental health.



The systemic failures of the justice system have far-reaching consequences, extending beyond the confines of the courtroom. They pierce the very fabric of humanity, leaving victims like Gwenzi, Chere, Kwekweza, Moyo, Timba, Ngarivhume, Nyamakanga among others to suffer in silence.

The delay in prosecution not only violates their right to a fair and speedy trial but also perpetuates a cycle of pain, fear, and uncertainty. Despite the Constitution guaranteeing an independent judiciary, executive influence and interference remain a concern. The ruling party's spokesperson, Christopher Mutsvangwa, claimed that the mass arrests were a "preventative measure" to deal with "deviates" and that

incarceration was the "right way" to stop them from creating a "sideshow" during the SADC Summit. Following these remarks, several accused persons were granted bail, raising concerns about the legality of arrests, detentions, and the justice system's violation of the right to bail.

ZPP notes that as the country bears witness to the victims' ordeals, there is an urgent need for reform, to restore the justice system's integrity and safeguard the rights of all individuals. ZPP also joins all voices of reason in demanding the immediate end to repression of all human rights activists and innocent citizens and to release all unjustly arrested persons.



Section 50 Rights of arrested and detained persons, (1) Any person who is arrested— (d) must be released unconditionally or on reasonable conditions, pending a charge or trial, unless there are compelling reasons justifying their continued detention;

Pretrial punishment: Guilty until proven innocent?

Timba and CCC activists arrested in June. Detained for more than **3 months in detention**. **Bail denied** repeatedly. **Sept 4:** All acquitted on the count of disorderly conduct in a public place.

September 4: 12 acquitted and discharged, 65 to proceed to trial on the count of participating in a public gathering with intent to promote public violence including a 16 year old female due to write her O'Level examinations.

Transform Zimbabwe Party leader, Jacob Ngarivhume arrested in Mutare, transferred to Harare, co-accused with Bishop Kevin Gonde. They have spent over **40 days in detention**, held in Chikurubi Maximum Prison. Charged with Disorderly conduct in a public place and participating in a gathering with intent to promote public violence.

CCC Candidate (2023), **detained for 31 days** before being granted bail on Sept 3. Charged with participating in anti-government protests in 2019.

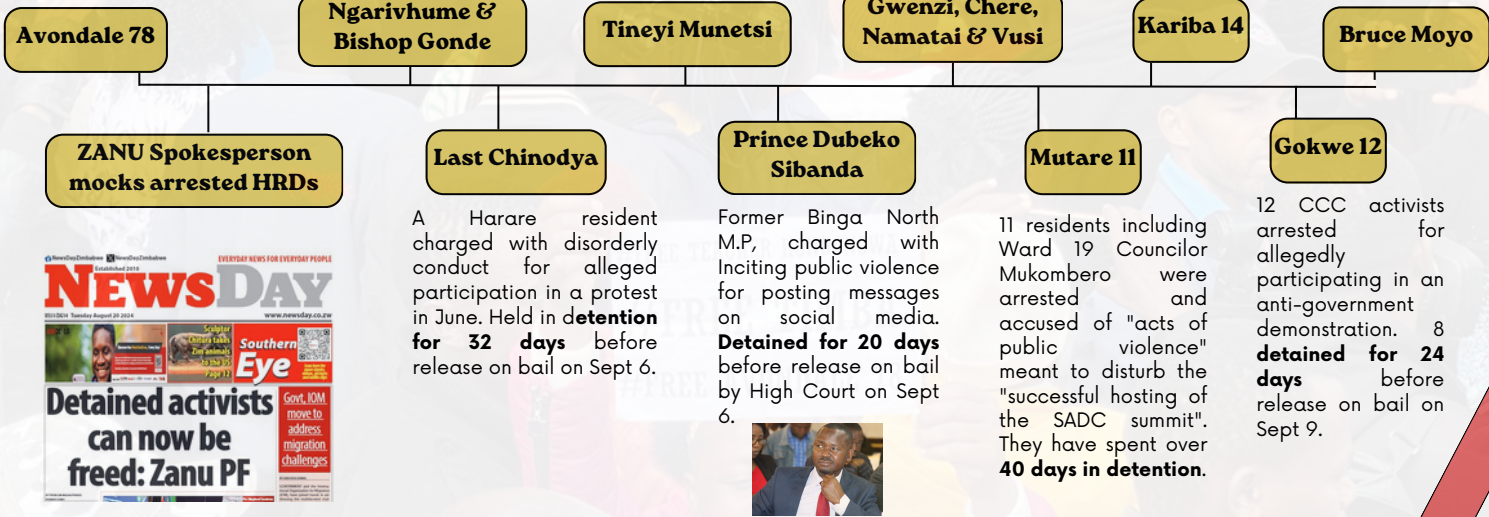


Held incommunicado for 8 hours, charged with Disorderly conduct for alleged participation in a protest in June. Held in **detention for 34 days** at Chikurubi Maximum Prison before Gwenzi, Chere & Namatai were granted bail on Sept 4.

Kariba residents, including former M.P John Houghton, and Ward 6 councillor Masendu were charged participating in a gathering with intent to promote public violence **detained for 33 days** before release on bail on Sept 2



Nkulumane Ward 22 Councilor, Bulawayo. Charged with staging an anti-government protest. **Detained for 26 days** before release on bail on August 28.



Partisan Politics Worsens Hunger Crisis

...as opposition supporters are denied access to government sponsored but party controlled food aid

The partisan distribution of food aid continues to exacerbate the hunger crisis in Zimbabwe, with victims facing discrimination based on their political affiliation. Five incidents of partisan distribution of food aid were documented in August. In most incidents, victims were denied food aid by either traditional leaders or ruling party activists who clung to political discrimination of either known or suspected members of the opposition political parties. At a community food aid distribution gathering in Buhera Central, ZANU PF Chairperson Simon Maunganidze and youth Chairperson Isheunopa Kashaya denied about 35 people, including 20 women food aid on the grounds of their political affiliation, distributing aid to known ZANU PF members only. Maunganidze was quoted saying, “opposition supporters should go and benefit from their leaders.” This contravenes government policy and legal frameworks ensuring fair distribution for all needy individuals.

Food aid has also been largely politicised, compelling victims to attend and participate in ruling party activities in anticipation of benefiting from the government-sponsored, but party-controlled food aid. In Chivi central, ward 16 councilor Munashe Pwanyai instructed all beneficiaries who received food aid in May to buy ZANU-PF membership cards, for US\$3 per card. In related incidents, ruling party officials and community leaders have also been recorded redirecting food aid for personal gain. For instance, in Mutasa Central, ZANU PF executive members Keresencia Benza, John Gumi, Kizito Benza, Nevide Benza, and an activist identified as Mai (Mrs) Dziruni reportedly took away 20 bags of wheat and shared 4 bags each, disadvantaging over a dozen households beneficiaries. From January to August 2024, the Zimbabwe Peace Project has recorded and documented around 115 incidents of partisan distribution across the country in which over 1700 household victims were affected, necessitating a serious investigation into how political discrimination is worsening the food insecurity situation following the El Nino induced drought affecting the region.

ZPP recommends that the responsible ministries and government departments increase their efforts to investigate and prosecute all perpetrators while forming strong monitoring mechanisms aimed at protecting the rights of the victims.



Towards sustainable peace in Zimbabwe



The Zimbabwe Peace Project acknowledges the efforts by the Zimbabwe Republic Police to investigate incidents of maladministration of government sponsored food aid. In a story titled ‘Police probe Zanu PF official for stealing food aid’ published by the Newsday on the 25th of July 2024, ZRP confirmed that they were investigating a ZANU PF official in Mhondoro-Mubaira, who was exposed by villagers for alleged theft of food. The perpetrator, Linet Chirwa, is a ZANU PF councillor for Mhondoro-Mubaira’s Ward 5. Other persons accused for theft of food aid meant for community beneficiaries included officials from Chegutu Rural District Council.

We commend the commitment exuded by the police to investigate and recover some of the bags of maize meant for drought relief in the district while some of the maize were said to have been sold to teachers at a named primary school. As cited by Newsday, “incidentally, part of the recovered maize from one of the suspects was found stashed inside empty coffins since he is the custodian of local burial society coffins.”

ZPP also commends members of Parliament, particularly Mashonaland West Member of Parliament Mutsa Murombedzi who in July raised the concern of theft and maladministration of food aid in a parliament session, attracting the attention of policy makers and government officials. Such actions are commendable as policy makers act on behalf of and for the interests of the public. In June, ZANU PF encouraged its members of Parliament to desist from being involved in food aid distribution programmes after it emerged that some party officials were diverting the grain for personal gain, leaving deserving beneficiaries hungry.

ZPP therefore calls all citizens to be vigilant, expose abuses of human rights and such acts that affect members of the public by reporting human rights, as well as responsible government and state institutions to be responsive to the concerns of the public as we all work towards sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.

10 Steps backwards

The Gendered Impact of Food Aid Maladministration in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) highlights the devastating impact of partisan food aid distribution on women and girls in Zimbabwe. In August, 52.5% of the 213 recorded human rights violations targeted women and girls, with many cases linked to the maladministration of government-sponsored food aid.

The ongoing trend where government sponsored food aid is stolen and politicised exposes the systemic gender inequality and discrimination that perpetuates hunger and poverty among women and girls. The partisan distribution of food aid has disproportionately affected women, who are often the primary caregivers and breadwinners in their families.

The theft and diversion of food aid for personal gain by political officials exacerbates the existing food crisis, leaving vulnerable women and girls and persons with disabilities, among other vulnerable populations, without access to essential resources. This not only violates their human rights but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and hunger.

ZPP commends the efforts of the government to raise resources to support vulnerable communities, however more needs to be done to address the systemic issues perpetuating partisan food aid distribution and associated human rights abuses. Only through collective action can we hope to create a more just and equitable society where women and girls have access to essential resources and can thrive.

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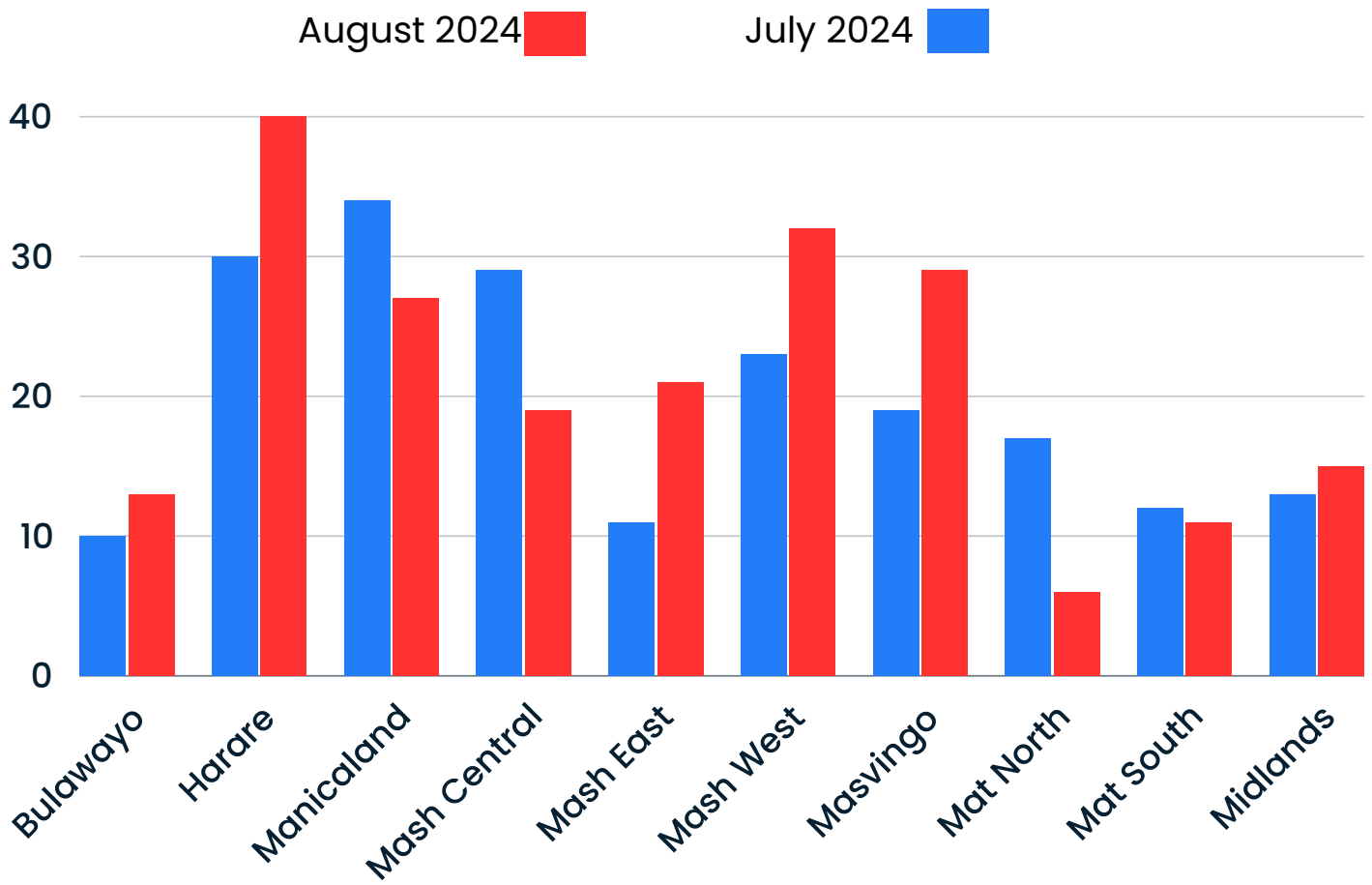
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PROVINCIAL VIOLATIONS



Harare



The province recorded a surge in human rights violations, recording 40 violations, the highest in August. The province was the epicentre of government crackdown ahead of the 44th SADC Summit. Human rights activists, Civil Society Organisations, leaders of political parties, and ordinary citizens were the target of the government's desperation to 'maintain law and order' albeit the heavy handedness. Notable cases

include the raids into various CSOs in Harare, such as Crisis Coalition, ZINASU, and Heal Zimbabwe Trust by CIO agents. Prior to the August 17, 2024, SADC Summit, state security agents were intimidating people in beer halls and other public places. ZRP police assaulted 13 women and 25 men at a bottle store on August 17, 2024, in St. Mary's ward 4 at the Chigovanyika shop, claiming it was an illegal gathering. In response to rumours that Zimbabwean citizens would stage a protest on August 17th over rights violations, state security forces launched a crackdown in an attempt to maintain peace ahead of the SADC summit.

Manicaland

In Manicaland 27 violations were recorded, a drop from 34 recorded in July. Among the violations were the partisan food distribution. There were incidents of intimidation and harassment of citizens by members of the ruling party and state security personnel. In most districts, there were reports of patrolling soldiers and security personnel carrying firearms. In some areas such as Buhera, the operations led to assaults. Partisan food distribution of food aid has exacerbated food insecurity already caused by the El Nino induced drought. Some of the victims interviewed by ZPP displayed their dismay, fear and desperation citing the need for a revisit of the system and the protection of victims who report discrimination and corrupt tendencies regarding food aid. Manicaland has a high rate of human rights violations, with more than 19 incidents of partisan distribution of food aid having been recorded recently.

Midlands

There were 15 human rights violations in Midlands Province, up from 13 in July. State security agents harassed CCC party leaders and volunteers. Some of the notable cases include Felix Rambanapasi, a CCC activist, who narrowly escaped from an attempted abduction by four ZANU PF youths. On a different occasion, 6 ZANU PF members confronted a Nelson Chamisa supporter in Chiwundura ward 11, harassed him and urged him to find another clinic, denying him access to medical care at St Patrick clinic. Two other people in Gweru, who are influential supporters of the Blue Movement which supports Nelson Chamisa, reported that they were being monitored by individuals they thought were state agents driving two unregistered vehicles. This suggested a persisting culture of political intolerance in Zimbabwe.

Matabeleland North

Six violations were documented in Matabeleland North in August, compared to seventeen in July. Partisan distribution of food aid and agricultural inputs and intimidation and harassment were among the key violations documented. Among the notable incidents is the intimidation of civilians by police and military patrols in places like Lupane West and Hwange Central before the SADC Summit. In an incident affecting the citizens' access to agricultural land, over 60 non-ruling party members were discriminated against as the Agritex staff from the Binga district, allocated community plots of land to grow vegetables, an exercise which benefited only ruling party supporters. The equitable sharing of national resources, including land, and the upholding of fundamental freedoms and rights are some of the constitution's founding values and principles, however the disregard of such rights and principles.

Mashonaland Central

There was a notable reduction in human rights violations in August in Mashonaland Central, as the province reported 19 cases, compared to 29 in the previous month. The rights to personal security, malicious damage to property, and freedom of assembly and association were all infringed upon in August. Notably, a ZANU PF conference, at which the first Lady Auxilia Mhangagwa was attending resulted in municipal police and ZRP damaging the stalls of informal traders in a bid to tidy Bindura town. Vendors operating around Chipadze Stadium were instructed by vendors for ED Chairman Mr. Tunje not to show their merchandise to customers resulting in council municipal police damaging the stalls of vendors who did not comply. Around thirty-five women were affected. Respecting vendors and figuring out peaceful means of communication is vital for the municipal police to avoid damaging property or interfering with business operations.

Masvingo

The province recorded 29 human rights violations, a sharp rise from the 19 noted in July. Intimidation and harassment, partisan food distribution, and the right to personal security were among the recorded infractions. In Gutu on August 13, CCC Coordinator of the Gutu cluster Lloyd Mufudze fled after discovering that police were planning to detain him on charges of planning a demonstration. A disturbing trend has emerged where village heads have been appointed as chairpersons of local cells, tasked with maintaining registers that catalogue residents' political affiliations. In a climate of fear, many individuals are coerced into declaring their support for ZANU-PF, a violation of their political rights. This tactic is a blatant attempt to intimidate and suppress opposition voices ahead of potential new polls.

Bulawayo

The province of Bulawayo recorded 13 human rights violations, up from 10 in July. Water shortages, harassment and intimidation of citizens and arbitrary arrests of activists were among the noteworthy breaches. Former senator Gideon Shoko of the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) in Bulawayo was taken into custody on August 1 by law and order investigators from the Criminal Investigations Department in Bulawayo. Shoko's detention, like other activists, displayed the state's tactics of stifling local dissent by targeting members of opposition parties. The infractions raise concerns of the country's commitment to constitutionalism and the persisting abuse of the law.

Mashonaland West

Mashonaland West Province witnessed a disturbing surge in human rights violations, with reported cases rising from 23 in the previous month to 32 in August. The majority of these incidents involved the denial of fundamental rights, including access to food and water, personal security, freedom of assembly and association, and protection from intimidation and harassment. A notable incident occurred in August 2024, when 14 members of the CCC, led by former MP Mr. Houghton and George Masendu, were arrested and harassed by police and CID officials while holding a meeting at the information centre near Kariba airport. The authorities falsely accused them of planning a demonstration ahead of the SADC summit, and denied them timely access to essential medication. This trend of using law enforcement as a tool to suppress political opposition is a clear violation of constitutional rights. Urgent intervention is necessary to prevent further abuses and ensure that the police remain impartial and respectful of citizens' rights.

Mashonaland East

Mashonaland East witnessed a concerning increase in human rights violations, with 21 cases reported in August, up from 11 in July. The most notable abuses included the partisan distribution of food aid, coercion to attend ruling party meetings, and intimidation and harassment. In a particularly egregious incident, Mr. Chikwana, Chairperson of ZANU PF, and Chief Seke in Seke, compelled village chiefs to force villagers to contribute USD 1 per household towards Heroes Day celebrations. Those who refused to donate were blacklisted, labelled as opposition supporters, and denied access to government drought relief programs. This coercive tactic affected 60 individuals, including 25 men and 35 women, who were forced to contribute against their will. The involvement of traditional chiefs in political affairs is a clear violation of their constitutional duties and undermines their authority. Their participation in partisan activities erodes trust and perpetuates human rights abuses, highlighting the need for urgent intervention to protect the rights of vulnerable communities.



Matabeleland South

Eleven violations were documented in the province of Matabeleland South including an incident where life was lost. Artisanal miners are infamous for a culture of violence. A group from the Skuta region broke into mines in Khayanyama on August 26, which is in search of gold claims. In order to seize control of a particular mine, the small-scale miners broke in and engaged in a fight with the mine's proprietors. Both the victims and the offenders were between the ages of 18 and 35, There were four recorded deaths in the altercation. The incident was not immediately reported to the police. ZPP condemns using force or violence to resolve disputes and calls for stricter measures where lives have been lost.

Concluding Note

As Zimbabwe bears witness to the alarming rise in human rights violations in August, ZPP reminds all citizens that the struggle for freedom and dignity is for all to take part in and demand as enshrined in the constitution. Each violation represents a person, a family, and a community torn apart by harassment, intimidation, and violence. The perpetrators may be powerful, but the citizens, the people, are stronger. ZPP calls on every individual to stand up for their rights, to demand justice, and to refuse to be silenced. We urge you to support human rights defenders, to amplify their voices, and to join hands in solidarity as well as reporting all human rights violations. Together, Zimbabweans can create a society where every person can live without fear of persecution, where every voice is heard, and where every human right is respected.



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The advertisement features a hand holding a smartphone displaying a WhatsApp chat interface. The chat shows a greeting from the 'Zimbabwe Peace Project' chatbot, followed by a selection of languages (English, Shona, Ndebele) and a detailed message about the project's mission to report human rights violations. The background is dark blue with a grid pattern.