



ZPP Statement on International Day of Peace, 21 September 2024

Today, the 21st of September 2024, the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) joins the rest of the world in commemorating the International Day of Peace under the theme Cultivating a Culture of Peace. This year's theme reminds us to promote a culture of dialogue, peace and resolving conflict in non-violent ways. As we reflect on the state of peace in our beloved Zimbabwe, ZPP acknowledges both progress made and the challenges that remain hindering the attainment of sustainable peace in our country.

Some of the biggest obstacles to the attainment of peace include the deepening of polarisation, the disregard of human rights and the lack of human rights accountability perpetuated by impunity. We thus call for an end to impunity! A culture of Impunity as is evident in Zimbabwe interferes with efforts to cultivate a culture of Peace.

ZPP has noted that several perpetrators of gross human rights violations such as abductions, enforced disappearances, torture and inhuman treatment of citizens, remain masked and unpunished while the victims and their families endure a long-suffering caused by such heinous crimes. In 2024 alone, ZPP documented 54 cases of gross human rights violations affecting 840 victims. These include abductions, killings, unjustified arrests, torture and displacements. However, none of the perpetrators of these heinous crimes has been arrested or punished. On July 31, 2024 Robson Chere Namatai Kwekweza and Samuel Gwenzi, courageous human rights activists, were snatched from a plane, held incommunicado for 8 agonising hours, and Robson was evidently brutally tortured but the perpetrators still roam freely. High-profile cases are merely the tip of the iceberg. Countless others suffer in silence, their ordeals shrouded in darkness. The government and all stakeholders must break the cycle of impunity and ensure justice for all.

As Zimbabwe grapples with a devastating food insecurity crisis, exacerbated by the El Nino-induced drought, the Zimbabwe Peace Project acknowledges the government's efforts to support vulnerable households. However, a disturbing reality cannot be ignored - the exploitation of power by political actors, traditional leaders, and community members to discriminate against individuals based on their political affiliation. In 2024 alone, the Zimbabwe Peace Project recorded 115 violation cases related to partisan distribution of food aid, affecting 1700 victims. This is not only a betrayal of trust but also a violation of human rights, denying people access to food and basic necessities. No one should suffer from hunger because of their political beliefs. It's time for Zimbabwe to uphold the right to food, ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most, regardless of their political affiliation.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project acknowledges the government's efforts in addressing past atrocities that still heavily traumatise victims to date, however there is need to rethink the strategies around initiatives like



the Gukurahundi community outreach in order to make this a truly peace and reconciliation seeking process, characterised by truth telling and preparedness for reparation. It is important that this process culminates in holding perpetrators accountable in an effort to deliver justice to victims and their families. To truly achieve healing and reconciliation, it is essential that the government and stakeholders prioritise the needs of victims and expedite such initiatives.

ZPP also acknowledges the National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security, which aligns with UN Resolution 1325. NAP is a step in the right direction in promoting gender equality and women's inclusion in political and peace processes. Implementation of the NAP should be expedited as there is still much work to be done including addressing the socioeconomic barriers that prevent women from participating in politics and ensuring their safety and security. The disparities in our economic systems, the inequalities in access to healthcare, education, and justice, the marginalisation of vulnerable groups – all these perpetuate a silent, yet destructive, form of violence. The hunger, poverty, and desperation that afflict many of our communities are not natural phenomena, but symptoms of a systemic failure to prioritise human dignity and well-being.

To build lasting peace, the Zimbabwe Peace Project urges all well meaning citizens to address the root causes of conflict and inequality, foster inclusive economic growth that benefits all Zimbabweans, strengthen institutions that protect human rights and promote social justice and invest in education, healthcare, and social services that uplift vulnerable populations.

On this International Day of Peace, ZPP urges the government to uphold its obligations to end impunity, protect human rights and promote sustainable peace. This includes investigating and prosecuting those responsible for human rights violations such as torture, harassment and intimidation, and crimes against humanity. ZPP also calls on the Zimbabwe government to clarify on the status of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission whose mandate to promote national healing and unity remains unfulfilled if the commission cannot carry out its mandate. ZPP calls on the state to respect citizens' fundamental rights, such as freedom of assembly and association, freedom from torture and the right to petition and demonstrate, to foster a culture of peace and national unity.

We call upon the leaders of the country to prioritise the welfare of all citizens, not just the privileged few and promote tolerance, understanding, and solidarity. Let a culture of peace be cultivated and let it prevail.

Happy International Day of Peace, Zimbabwe!

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