



Statement on the occasion of the

# International Day of Peace

21 September, 2025

The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) joins the world in commemorating the International Day of Peace, a moment to reflect on the meaning of peace, recommit to building it, and reimagine how sustainable peace can be achieved in contexts such as ours. This year's global theme, "Act Now for a Peaceful World," calls us to urgent action. It resonates strongly with ZPP's vision of "Re-Imagining Sustainable Peace in Zimbabwe." While we celebrate the resilience of our communities, who continue to hold onto hope and strive to live peacefully together, we must confront the realities that undermine peace in Zimbabwe. The 2025 Global Peace Index ranks Zimbabwe 114 out of 163 countries, a clear indicator of the fragile state of peace.

As ZPP, we believe this ranking reflects, in part, the unresolved human rights situation in the country. In contexts such as ours, where there is no war or substantial violent conflict, it would be remiss to mistake that with peace. The extent to which every person, regardless of class, race, status or any other distinguishing factor, is guaranteed dignity is indicative of whether a society enjoys peace or not. Valuing human dignity is the foundation that enables each person to be guaranteed freedom, justice and fair treatment.

Our society continues to grapple with threats to peace in the form of persistent human rights violations, especially during politically sensitive periods, where violence, intimidation, and exclusionary tactics expose the fragility of peace at a time when our collective tolerance is most needed. This year alone ZPP has documented 891 human rights violations, and these have affected over 38 400 people across provinces (38 417 people affected, 20627 women, 17790 men with 553 PWDs). The frequently occurring and most dire being related to freedom of assembly and association, partisan distribution of food aid and other restrictions to access social services, breaches of the right to personal security, inhuman treatment and violations of the right to equality and non-discrimination.

Equally troubling is the growing polarisation among traditional leaders. As custodians of culture and unity, traditional leaders should serve as impartial peacebuilders. Yet, too often, they are dragged into political battles, deepening divisions instead of bridging them, and weakening the very social fabric they are entrusted to protect. Peace cannot thrive where institutions are captured, rights are selectively applied, and politics is placed above people. Despite these challenges, there are beacons of hope. ZPP recognises and applauds the tireless efforts of community peace ambassadors across Zimbabwe, ordinary citizens who mediate conflicts at grassroots level, hold difficult conversations, and defend human dignity, often at great personal risk.

ZPP acknowledges the work of state institutions such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and the Zimbabwe Gender Commission that have demonstrated willingness to engage constructively in peacebuilding. At the same time, we encourage these and other constitutional bodies, such as the Zimbabwe Independent Complaints Commission (ZICC), to become more visible, proactive, and accessible in the disposition of their mandates. Greater presence and engagement will build trust and restore confidence in public institutions.

ZPP makes a direct appeal to political leaders across the spectrum: sincerity must replace rhetoric. Leaders must prioritise policies that safeguard human rights and deliver essential services. Peace is not built on slogans but on people's lived experiences. When citizens see equitable distribution of resources, functioning social services, and policies that uphold dignity, they are more inclined to build peace among themselves and extend it to others. Without this, political promises ring hollow, fueling frustration and disillusionment.

The enjoyment of socio-economic rights is central to peace. A hungry, unemployed, and excluded population cannot be expected to prioritise peace when survival itself is at stake. Zimbabwe must therefore align both domestic and international trade policies with the protection and advancement of socio-economic rights. Peace will flourish when citizens are empowered, livelihoods are secure, and communities benefit tangibly from national resources. In turn, this will nurture social cohesion, an ideal already envisioned in National Development Strategies.

On this International Day of Peace, ZPP calls for concrete and collective action:

- To Civil Society and Community-Based Organisations: Deepen grassroots peacebuilding, document violations, and hold duty-bearers accountable while fostering inclusive dialogue across divides.
- To Political Parties: Put the nation above partisan interests. Uphold non-violence, fairness, and transparency in all political processes.
- To State Institutions and Independent Commissions: Strengthen accountability mechanisms, protect rights without fear or favour, and build trust with citizens.
- To the International Community: Support Zimbabwe's peacebuilding initiatives with technical, diplomatic, and financial assistance, ensuring that human rights and socio-economic justice remain central to development partnerships.

Peace is not an abstract dream; it is the practical outcome of justice, fairness, and accountability. It thrives when leaders are sincere, when institutions serve impartially, and when communities are empowered to prosper.

On this International Day of Peace, ZPP urges every Zimbabwean, leaders, institutions, civil society, and communities, to recommit to peace, not only in words but in action. Together, we can reimagine and realise a Zimbabwe where peace is not fragile but firm, not conditional but guaranteed, and not postponed but lived every day.