

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION



WHAT IS FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION?

Freedom of Assembly and Association refers to the right of individuals to peacefully gather, demonstrate, protest, form, join, or participate in groups, organisations, unions, political parties, and civic movements of their choice.

This right enables citizens to collectively express opinions, defend shared interests, participate in public life, and hold authorities accountable without fear of intimidation, violence, or punishment.

LIMITATIONS AND ABUSE OF THE RIGHTS IN ZIMBABWE

In practice, these rights are often abused through:

- Unjustified restrictions on public gatherings and demonstrations
- Forced attendance of public or political meetings
- Arbitrary arrests, detentions, intimidation, and harassment of organisers and participants
- Misuse of administrative procedures to block, delay, or disrupt peaceful assemblies

Any limitation that is disproportionate, discriminatory, or punitive is unconstitutional and violates international and regional human rights standards

KEY MESSAGE

Freedom of Assembly and Association empowers citizens to organise, participate, and speak collectively on issues that affect their lives. These rights must be exercised peacefully and responsibly, and the State must ensure protection, not repression.

THE CONSTITUTION OF ZIMBABWE

Section 58:

- Guarantees freedom of assembly and association, including the right to form and join political parties, trade unions, and other associations.
- Protects individuals from being forced to belong to any association.

Section 67:

- Further protects political participation, including the right to campaign, demonstrate, and participate peacefully in political activities.

The Constitution places a positive duty on the State to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil these rights.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED?

If your rights are violated, you should:

- Document the incident (date, location, perpetrators, witnesses, photos or videos *if safe*)
- Seek legal assistance from a lawyer or legal aid organisation
- Report the violation to credible human rights organisations such as ZPP
- Seek medical attention if injured and keep medical records

ZPP encourages citizens to report violations so that abuses are documented and accountability can be pursued.

