



**ZIMBABWE PEACE  
PROJECT**



July 2024

# Monthly Monitoring Report

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# Executive Summary

The month of July concluded on a sombre note, marked by a resurgence of historical political and institutional violence against citizens and human rights defenders in Zimbabwe. A total of 198 human rights violations were documented, affecting 3727 victims, with 27 instances of assault and unlawful detention. Notably, 90 violations involved intimidation and harassment, among other egregious abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

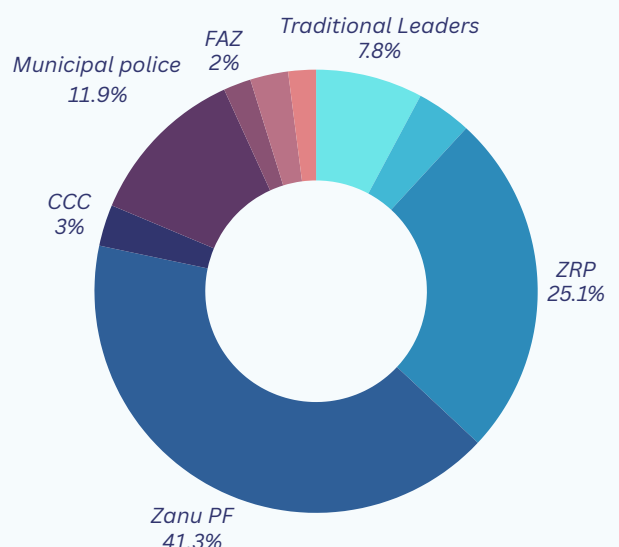
In the context of the El Nino-induced drought and the current food security crisis, partisan distribution of food aid persisted, with 24 incidents recorded in July.

On June 26, the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), other civil society organizations, and human rights defenders called on the government to ratify the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. Regrettably, these calls remain unheeded. In July, two incidents of physical torture were documented, with additional cases reported in early August. The continuation of such heinous crimes is distressing. ZPP calls for an end to repression and impunity.

Analysis of the documented incidents reveals that perpetrators affiliated with the ruling party, ZANU PF, accounted for 41.1% of violations, while members of its affiliate, Forever Associate Zimbabwe (FAZ), were responsible for 2.26%. Members of the security forces, including the Zimbabwe Republic Police (24.56%) and state security agents (2.76%), were also among the top perpetrators. Other perpetrators included Municipal Police (11.78%), traditional leaders (7.77%), members of the Citizens Coalition for Change (3.01%), War veterans (0.75%), vendors (2.01%), and individuals with no known affiliation (4.01%).

The highest number of human rights abuses (34) occurred in Manicaland Province, followed by Harare (30) and Mashonaland Central (29). The Zimbabwe Peace Project notes that the government's calls for calm and peace during the 44th Southern African Development Community (SADC) Summit, have been undermined by heavy-handed policing and unethical conduct by state security agents, resulting in violations of the SADC Treaty's principles and norms, which emphasise respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.

## PERPETRATORS



## KEY HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

### Government's violent clampdown on citizens and human rights defenders

In July, and the beginning of August 2024, human rights regression largely at the hands of state security were documented. The violations emanated from the government of Zimbabwe's attempt to unjustly silence voices of dissent ahead of the SADC Summit in August. Human rights defenders and pro-democracy activists were placed on the centre of surveillance and deliberately targeted for arbitrary and illegal arrests, torture and police brutality. In other incidents, the right to personal security was gravely disregarded as victims were brutally assaulted as well as denied their rights and freedoms of assembly and association.

The incidents are a show of how the government has been in unprovoked panic mode, fearing the citizens would exercise their constitutional right to protest during the impending SADC summit, further causing a regression in the promotion and respect of human rights.

In Mutasa District, three Zimbabwe Peace Project staff and community mobilisers were illegally detained by Central Intelligence Officers, interrogated and brutally assaulted. The victims were tortured for more than 2 hours before being released with no formal charge. A series of targeted attacks and arrests on human rights and citizens were also recorded. 44 students who are members of the Zimbabwe Students Union (ZINASU) were arrested and compelled to pay fines, admitting to disorderly conduct. The President of the student's union was twice arrested in July and on August 2, slapped with separate charges and released at the intervention of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. The sickly trend therefore suggests that the arrests have been targeted



*Robson Chere attends court*

at either deterring human rights defenders in mobilising or participating in any potential protests. However, the use of force by state security agents is unjustified, and unconstitutional. This calls for the government to revisit its commitment to upholding the human rights values and principles. If unresolved, the continued attacks on human rights defenders including staff members of civil society organizations and other political activists.

The widespread abuses are happening at a time when dozens of opposition members have been languishing in prison for more than 50 days following their arrest on June 16 at a private residence in Harare. Among the accused, now known as the Avondale78, is a mother who is incarcerated with her 1 year 8 months old baby.

ZPP is concerned that during this period, community based human rights activists might suffer the brunt of the state’s intimidation and harassment as they often have more contact with communities on a day to day basis, further precluding their right to protect and promote human rights accountability. For instance, two male human rights activists residing in Kambuzuma and Epworth have each received calls from unknown numbers inquiring about their activities before being warned with threats of violence and abductions.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project is greatly concerned with the conduct of the government and its state security agents on the abuse of human rights and urges the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) to fulfill its promises and mandate to protect human rights in the face of widespread violations. ZPP further urges the Parliament to clarify on the mandate and operations of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC).

The recent events call for an investigation into all human rights abuses, especially at the hands of the state security forces and the subsequent delivery of justice to all victims. ZPP recommends that the Independent Complaints Commission must be operationalised in order to seriously investigate and prosecute all forces involved in the persecution of citizens during this period.

## Timeline of Clampdown events





## Partisan distribution of food aid and agricultural inputs persists

As millions of Zimbabweans face hunger and food insecurity due to the El Nino induced drought, political actors are increasingly tying food aid to political affiliations. 24 incidents were recorded in the month of July where victims were denied food aid and or were removed from the beneficiaries list for being suspected or known members of the opposition parties. The ruling party has been at the centre of the violations of the right to sufficient food as its leaders have been on record taking over the selection processes and distribution of government sponsored aid.

In acts of corruption and maladministration, ruling party members have been excluding vulnerable and needy beneficiaries by looting food aid. For instance, in Bikita East ZANU PF activists were observed awarding themselves more rations resulting in some intended beneficiaries going back home empty handed. According to government policy, a household in need is entitled to an allocation of 7,5kgs of maize (for each month) however, ZANU PF members present benefited more rations. Bikita East legislator Mr Court Zevezai was seen going away with 10x50 kgs maize while a Forever Associate Zimbabwe member Mr Jaison Mungovi got away with 3x50 kgs of maize. About 35 prospective beneficiaries went home empty handed.

In a similar exploit, 4 household beneficiaries in Guruve North Ward 5 were discriminated against at a distribution held at Chipangura Primary School for being members of the Citizen Coalition for Change (CCC). The victims, despite being listed as beneficiaries, were turned away by ZANU PF activist Tendai Gora who was in the company of Village head Luckmore Kamukaba and ZANU PF District Chairperson Fani Tembure. In other areas, village heads abuse their power to punish households or beneficiaries for other reasons-+. For example in Chegutu West, Ward 22 a village head Mr Chimbiya denied 15 families their allocated rations (50kg of maize) on the accusation that they absconded from the traditional cleansing ceremony.

Other incidents have been reported where political actors, in charge of food aid and the selection of beneficiaries wield their power, coercing victims to attend and become members of political parties or risk being excluded in government sponsored food aid and other development schemes. Incidents of such politicisation, exploits and maladministration have been reported in Bindura South, Bindura North, Hurungwe, Murehwa North and Bikita East among others.

### Recommendations



- ZPP recommends that the government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Social Welfare, take stern measures to ensure the selection of beneficiaries and distribution of food aid is done fairly and in accordance with the set standards, to ensure no politicisation or administrative actions can be done to exploit the needy beneficiaries.
- The Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission should investigate and prosecute all offenders abusing their power, and denying beneficiaries of their much needed aid.

## Forced attendance at ZANU PF cell structures meetings

In 17 recorded incidents, the fundamental freedoms of assembly and association and political rights were violated as many citizens were forced to attend and assume leadership in the ruling party's ongoing cell-restructuring exercise. The recruitment and restructuring exercise is ZANU PF's internal political activity hence should not be forced upon citizens who either do not belong to the party or are unwilling to participate in its activities. Reports documented that the affected citizens are largely from rural areas. The calls to attend and join the ruling party's local structures were accompanied with threats, intimidation and harassment. In Bindura South, village heads were at the forefront of the party's community outreach program compelling people to attend without fail. In Nekati, village head Simbarashe Zvirime instructed his subjects that failure to attend will demonstrate that one is affiliated to the opposition CCC. Such identity ascriptions are often regarded seriously hence provoke fear and forced compliance among citizens.

At a time when more than 5 million people face hunger, the ruling party's officials have also been threatening denial of food aid and agricultural inputs to non-party members hence forcing people to join its structures in order to be considered as bonafide beneficiaries. Some of the meetings, such as in Kotwa Ward 10, were convened on the pretence that they would be concerning food distribution for citizens only to be bombarded with party slogans and political agenda. Such forced participation in political activities violate both the political rights and freedoms of association and assembly as enshrined in respective Sections 67 and 58 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

The party's conduct has also severely affected social cohesion and adherence to constitutionalism as some traditional leaders are also coerced to participate and lead in political activities. In Mazowe North, Ward 3 of Chiweshe rural, the ZANU PF District Coordinating Committee (DCC) leaders forcefully appointed village heads as ruling party cell-chairpersons. This is direct contravention of Section 281:2(a) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which stipulates that traditional leaders must not be members of any political party or in any way participate in partisan politics. This further and in long term affects their conduct and affects their ability to 'treat all persons equally and fairly' (Sec.281:1(c) as well as fairly executing their duties, which include maintaining and promoting peace.

## Recommendations

- The Zimbabwe Peace Project recommends that the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission investigate and take decisive action, including cautioning and publicly denouncing the ruling party's conduct in violating the citizens political rights.
- ZPP further recommends that the Integrity and Ethics Committee, established by Section 287 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, should step in, investigate and protect traditional leaders from being forced to be partisan as well as admonishing them from abusing their power.

# Towards Sustainable Peaceful Zimbabwe



***In this new section of our monthly monitoring report, we feature actions by duty bearers, especially state actors, that propagate and promote Constitutionalism and upholding of human rights. The absence of these tenets poses a great threat to sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.***

The recent pronouncements by President Emmerson Mnangagwa that he will not seek to extend his service in the presidium beyond 2028 are commendable. President Emmerson Mnangagwa dismissed allegations he would violate the constitution of Zimbabwe by running for a third term. Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution limits the presidential term of office to two five-year mandates. President Munanganwa has made these pronouncements publicly at least twice so far and such iterations, if converted to actual action serve as key promoters of trust and social cohesion.

The principles and norms of democracy, an ideology Zimbabwe subscribes to, dictate that leaders abide by constitutional guidelines, are tolerant, and support alternative views and alternative leadership.

# 10 Steps backwards

*In this section, we highlight key issues that make Zimbabwe regress in the efforts to promote a culture of human rights that would lead to sustainable peace.*

The recent demands by some ZANU PF members and supporters of President Mnangagwa to disregard the constitutional two-term limit on his presidency are deeply concerning and must be rejected. Certain groups within the ruling party have been advocating for the President to remain in office until 2030, exceeding his term limit which concludes in 2028. This not only undermines the principles of constitutionalism but also threatens the very foundations of democracy and the trust placed in the elected by the people of Zimbabwe. It is essential to uphold the Constitution and respect the democratic process to ensure the country's stability and progress.

On another note, the recent targeted attacks on human rights defenders by government and state security agents suggest a desperate attempt to maintain control and suppress dissenting voices. Despite calls for peace, the government's actions indicate a lack of commitment to upholding it.

The series of violent clampdowns and repeated efforts to quash anti-government protests demonstrate a troubling willingness to use force to maintain power. This approach is not only hypocritical but also self-defeating, as it denies citizens the fundamental right to express dissenting opinions. The contrast between the government's rhetoric and actions is stark, and the consequences are alarming.

The recent SADC Industrialisation Week, intended to promote economic growth and development, was instead marred by violence, torture, and widespread arrests. This raises concerns about the government's priorities and its willingness to use brutal tactics to maintain control.

The disconnect between the government's words in regional and international forums, and actions is troubling, and it is essential to hold them accountable for their commitments to peace, democracy, and human rights.

In February 2024, during the 55th Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva, the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Honourable Ziyambi Ziyambi, asserted that Zimbabwe had made significant strides in protecting and promoting human rights.



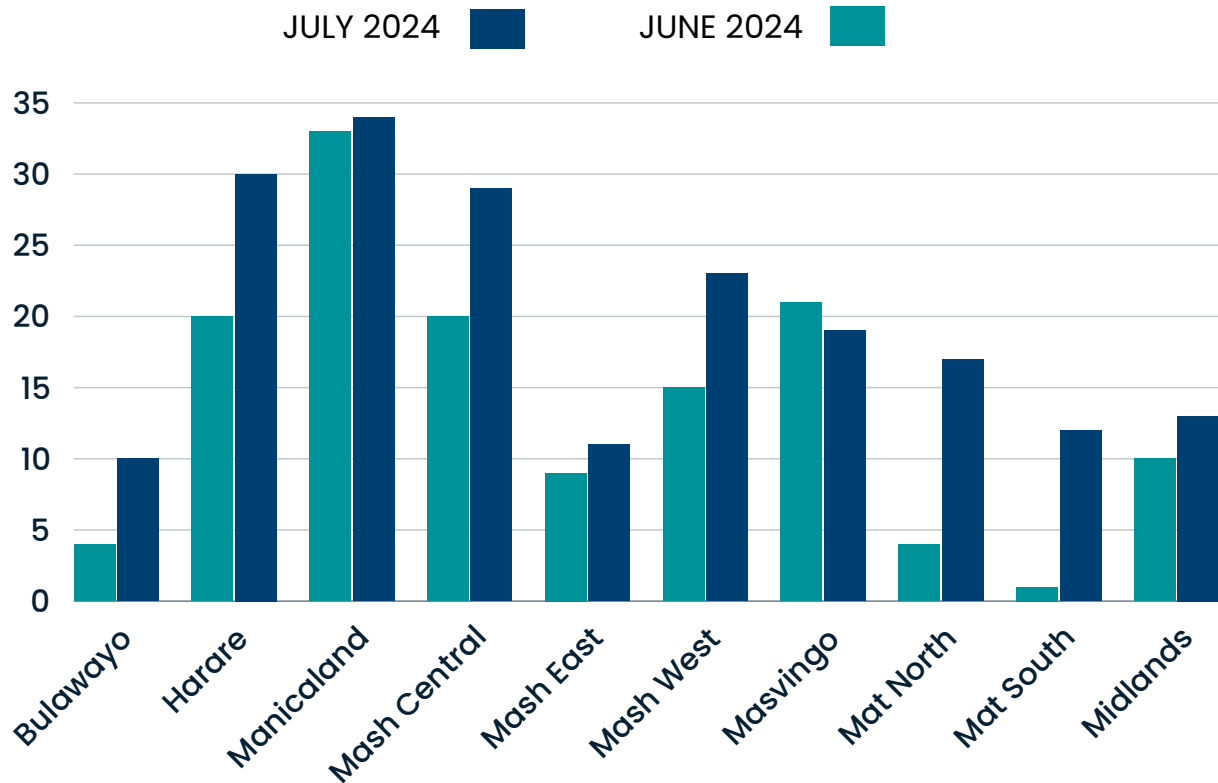
Minister Ziyambi highlighted the country's legal reforms aimed at fortifying human rights realisation. However, the government's actions contradict the Minister's claims. The deliberate delay in bail hearings and trial commencement for politically related cases, as well as the excessive use of force in arresting human rights defenders and political activists, suggest a regression in human rights realisation.

Furthermore, the ineffectiveness of independent commissions established under Chapter 12 of the Constitution, such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), in promoting human rights accountability is notable. The ZHRC has not exuded conduct to show its forcefulness in intervening to stop human rights violations, particularly when politics is involved. This contradicts the commission Chairperson's vision of creating a culture of human rights that pervades every aspect of Zimbabwean society.

The ZHRC's inaction suggests a reluctance to engage with politically sensitive human rights issues, undermining its mandate and the principles of human rights accountability. This disparity between the government's rhetoric and actions, as well as the ZHRC's ineffectiveness, raises concerns about Zimbabwe's commitment to human rights.



# PROVINCIAL VIOLATIONS



## Manicaland

The province persistently reported the highest incidence of human rights violations, with 34 cases documented in July, closely mirroring the 33 abuses recorded in June. The violations encompassed a range of rights, including: right to equality and non-discrimination, right to personal security, intimidation of ordinary citizens, predominantly by ruling party actors, assault and forced attendance at political activities. Notably, in this province, staff members of the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) endured torture at the hands of Central Intelligence Officers in Mutasa District. Additional prominent cases included partisan distribution of food aid, which raises concerns about discrimination and unequal access to essential resources as well as corrupt practices in the distribution processes, further exacerbating the vulnerability of affected communities. These findings underscore the need for heightened attention and action to address the persistent human rights abuses in this province.

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## Harare

The province experienced a significant surge in human rights abuses, with 30 violations reported in July, a notable increase from the 20 incidents documented in the previous month. The rise in tensions was marked by a higher frequency of unlawful detentions and violations of the right to personal security. Prominent cases included the detention and harassment of two Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) members by state security agents at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport, followed by the disruption of a ZINASU meeting in Harare, resulting in the arrest of 44 students. Additionally, Glen Norah CCC Councillor, Mr. Matafi, suffered a violent attack by unknown assailants wielding machetes at his residence, highlighting concerns regarding the right to personal security. Other incidents involved the use of excessive force by municipal police in dispersing informal traders in various locations to give SADC Summit delegates an impression of a smart city with only formal employment. This has serious ramifications on the economic situation of informal traders, many of whom earn their living by daily sales. The heightened tensions have been exacerbated by the state's efforts to maintain law and order in anticipation of the August SADC Summit, which has led to an intensified crackdown on perceived dissent.

## Bulawayo

The province reported 10 human rights abuses, with several notable cases highlighting concerns around excessive use of force and neglect of vulnerable populations. Key incidents included Municipal police officers' heavy-handed treatment of vendors, raising concerns about the use of disproportionate force in law enforcement. The denial of education to 104 school children due to non-payment of tuition fees, highlighting issues around access to education and economic vulnerability. A visually impaired individual suffered injuries after being struck by a vehicle involved in a high-speed police chase, underscoring concerns about police accountability and the protection of vulnerable groups. These incidents demonstrate a need for increased scrutiny and action to address human rights abuses in the province, particularly in relation to law enforcement practices and the protection of vulnerable populations.

## Mashonaland East

In Mashonaland East, 11 human rights violation cases were documented, involving the denial of food aid based on political affiliation, intimidation of villagers, and coercion into attending ruling party cell restructuring meetings. Notably, in Chikomba West, Chief Seke engaged in partisan political activities during ZANU PF celebrations in Beatrice, violating the Traditional Leaders Act and the Constitutional of Zimbabwe, that mandates traditional leaders to remain non-partisan. Chief Seke chanted ZANU PF slogans and promoted the party's 2030 slogan, "anenge achiripo," (he will still be there) before stating that President Emmerson Mnangagwa should remain in power until 2030. The involvement of traditional leaders in partisan politics is a clear contravention of the constitution and may compromise their ability to perform their duties impartially. This behavior has the potential to undermine the integrity of traditional leadership and perpetuate political polarisation in the community.



## Mashonaland Central

The province reported a significant increase in human rights violations in July, with 29 incidents recorded, up from 20 in June. The violations encompassed a range of issues, including forced attendance at political activities, intimidation, harassment, disruption of educational activities by ZANU PF activists, and discrimination in food aid distribution. Notably, several food aid distribution processes were politicised, with ruling party propaganda being disseminated during the events. In one instance, during a community food aid distribution in Bindura South, ZANU PF Chairperson Abraham Mhembere coerced beneficiaries into singing and chanting ruling party slogans as a precondition for receiving aid. Mhembere further instructed the beneficiaries to remain loyal and support ZANU PF, implying that continued access to food aid was contingent upon their political allegiance. This politicisation of food aid distribution raises concerns about the exploitation of vulnerable populations and the manipulation of aid for political gain, undermining the principles of impartiality and neutrality in humanitarian assistance.



## Masvingo

In the province, 19 human rights violations were recorded, encompassing partisan distribution of aid, denial of education, restricted access to community development facilities, intimidation, and intra-party violence. Notably, in Mwenezi East and Zaka East, ruling party officials commandeered community boreholes and gardens established by non-governmental organisations, discriminating against non-ruling party members and denying them access to clean water. In a concerning incident in Zaka East, Muchatiza Gomo prohibited villagers in Hudube village from hiring a plumber to repair water pipe leakages in a community garden, claiming that only ZANU PF members would address the issue. Gomo further stated that only Zaka South MP Chidwa and his team would resolve the problem, effectively discouraging community involvement in the project. These actions constitute a blatant politicisation of essential services and community resources, undermining the principles of equal access and community participation. The denial of clean water and impediment of community development projects based on political affiliation is a clear violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.



## **Matabeleland North**

In Matabeleland North, 17 human rights violations were recorded, including incidents of intimidation, partisan distribution of food aid, and discrimination in the selection of vulnerable children under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). In Binga North, ZANU PF Chairperson Leonard Muzamba publicly stated that BEAM is a government facility and should exclusively benefit children of ZANU PF supporters. During the selection process, Muzamba ensured that children of parents perceived as sympathetic to the opposition were excluded from the final list. Consequently, approximately 18 deserving learners were omitted from the program, placing them at risk of dropping out of school due to economic challenges prevalent in the community. This discriminatory selection process undermines the principles of impartiality and equal access to education, potentially exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and perpetuating political polarisation. The exploitation of government programs for partisan gain raises concerns about the integrity of social protection initiatives and the protection of human rights.

## **Midlands**

In Midlands Province, 13 human rights violations were documented, encompassing physical assault, political discrimination, intimidation, harassment, and threats of violence. Several instances involved ZANU PF activists harassing known leaders of the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), accusing them of mobilising communities to engage in public protests during the August SADC summit. A notable incident occurred in Chiwundura, where a supporter of the Blue Movement, aligned with Nelson Chamisa, was brutally assaulted by two ZANU PF members, Norman Zinzombe and Peter Mtombeni. The perpetrators attacked the victim with clenched fists, accusing him of mobilising people to demonstrate ahead of the SADC summit. These violations of individuals' political rights and personal security warrant further investigation and accountability, including the prosecution of perpetrators. Ensuring justice and protection for victims is crucial in upholding human rights and promoting a culture of tolerance and political pluralism.

## **Mashonaland West**

Mashonaland West Province experienced a notable increase in human rights abuses, rising from 15 cases in the previous month to 23 in July. The majority of these violations pertained to the right to food and equality and non-discrimination, specifically in relation to food aid distribution. Several members of opposition political parties and non-ruling party affiliates faced discrimination, with a particular incident reported in Ward 16 of Hurungwe West. Members of Forever Associate Zimbabwe (FAZ) were seen moving around distribution points in unmarked vehicles, instructing village heads to withhold assistance from opposition supporters. This resulted in over 200 individuals being denied aid. Furthermore, cases of maladministration and suspected theft of aid were reported, including an incident in Hurungwe West where 400 kilograms of maize went unaccounted for, intended for disadvantaged beneficiaries. These findings highlight concerns around the politicisation of food aid, discrimination, and mismanagement of resources.

## Matabeleland South

In Matabeleland South Province, 10 human rights abuses were documented, primarily involving the denial of the right to education, suppression of freedom of association and assembly, and infringement of political rights. A concerning incident occurred in Beitbridge West, where ZANU PF activists coerced teachers into joining the "Teachers for Economic Development" (ED) movement, affiliated with President Emmerson Mnangagwa. A WhatsApp circular instructed school heads to compile lists of teachers to attend a workshop at the Dadaya training centre, facilitated by ZANU PF leaders. Reports indicate that school heads were also directed by the District Schools Inspectors to attend the workshop using school resources. Furthermore, ZANU PF youth leader Munemo mobilised ruling party youths to join teachers at the workshop, held on July 23, 2024. These intimidatory tactics are unacceptable and must be addressed to ensure that teachers and citizens can exercise their political rights, freedom of association, and assembly without coercion or duress. The use of school resources and infrastructure for partisan purposes raises additional concerns about the politicisation of education and the blurring of lines between political and professional spheres.

## Concluding Note

The Zimbabwe Peace Project expresses grave concern over the alarming breaches of constitutionalism and human rights in the country. We urge the government and all institutions responsible for promoting and upholding human rights accountability to reaffirm their commitment to this fundamental cause. The persistent violation of human rights not only hinders Zimbabwe's development but also erodes the dignity of individuals and has far-reaching, detrimental social impacts on communities. ZPP is particularly troubled by the escalating levels of politically motivated violence, the deliberate employment of excessive force, and the unethical conduct of state security agents.

Therefore, we call upon all responsible forces to take deliberate, mitigatory, and remedial actions to ensure peace and enact reforms that guarantee the realisation of human rights in Zimbabwe. It is imperative that we collectively work towards a culture of accountability, transparency, and respect for human rights to foster a just and equitable society.

# Report Human Rights Violations



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