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## "Zim crisis calls for regional, continental solidarity"

YOUTHS from across the African continent have a pivotal role to play ensuring democracy and respect for citizens' fundamental rights in light of the continued political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe was plunged into a constitutional crisis following the military coup which ousted long serving leader, Robert Mugabe in 2017.

The crisis continues to worsen owing to capture and militarisation of key state institutions, arbitrary arrests which are mainly aided by capture of the judiciary, torture and abduction of civic society and opposition activists.

The democratic space in Zimbabwe continues to shrink owing to the criminalisation of civic society work.

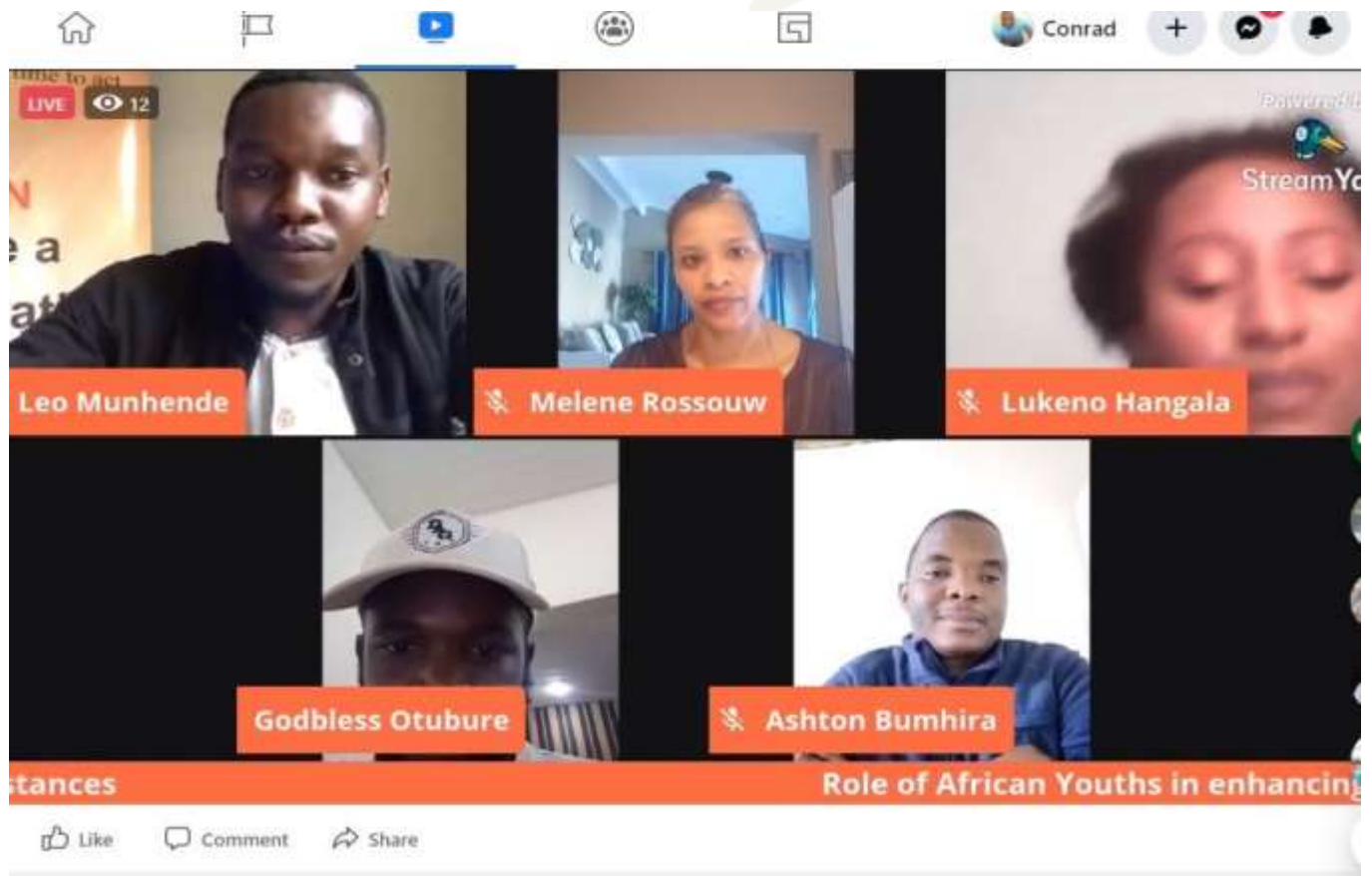
On the other hand the economic crisis in Zimbabwe has relegated many into abject poverty. The situation has been worsened by high level corruption which is apparently going on unabated.

The Zimbabwean government has however vehemently denied there is a crisis in Zimbabwe despite the country's political and economic crises.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) in collaboration with the Africa Youths Solidarity Alliance (AYSA) hosted a discussion forum under the theme '*The role of youths in enhancing democracy under uncertain circumstances*'.

The discussion forum had a special focus on Zimbabwe.

Panelists included the Executive Director of the WomenLead movement, Melene Rossouw (South Africa), ReadyToLeadAfrica Global President, Godbless Otubure (Nigeria), Lukeno Hangala who is Protection Officer at the Southern Africa Refugees Protection (Namibia) and Deputy Chairperson of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Youth Committee, Ashton Bumhira who is also the Director of Youth Forum Zimbabwe.



AYSA is a coalition of young African leaders seeking to promote democracy through solidarity campaigns in different African countries.

Below are excerpts from the discussion forum;

Melene Rossouw: *"It is quite unfortunate that in 2020, we are still talking about dictatorship and authoritarian governments fronting as democracies in Africa. I think its time for us as African youths to be self reflective in what we are not doing to turn the ship around. What is happening in Zimbabwe is probably the worst in terms of governance on the Africa continent."*

*"We must make it clear to these governments in Africa that we will not tolerate any form of an authoritarian regime finding its dirty ugly fingers in our society. I do think that African youths can play an important role in putting pressure on the Zimbabwean government to do things differently."*

Ashton Bumhira: *"The situation in Zimbabwe is terrible. The political and civic space continues to shrink and the*

*Mnangagwa administration continues to use the COVID 19 crisis to trample on fundamental human rights.*

*What we need is solidarity. We need to unite as the SADC region and Africa at large so that we confront the situation we are facing here in Zimbabwe."*

Lukeno Hangala: *"What is happening in Zimbabwe has ramifications across the SADC region and it is up to us to step in, to try and mitigate the issues and bring some form of solutions."*

Godbless Otubure: *"I am going to work with civic leaders here (Nigeria) and engage the Zimbabwean Ambassador to Nigeria on the Zimbabwean crisis. I am going to call Mnangagwa out first and also the security apparatus in Zimbabwe. We are going to petition the African Union and the Southern Africa Development Community as a way of engaging them to see how we can have a lasting solution to the crisis in Zimbabwe."*

*Mnangagwa must know that there are people in this continent that will stand side by side with the young people of Zimbabwe."*



## State media aiding rights violations

By Crisis Reporter

ZIMBABWE has a well known record of human rights violations dating back to the 1980s when an estimated 20 000 civilians from the Midlands and Matabeleland regions were murdered in cold blood by the North Korean trained Fifth Brigade.

There has been numerous attempts from the Zimbabwean government to sweep the issue of the 1980 massacres, otherwise known as Gukurahundi under the carpet.

Since the formation of the MDC in 1999, Zimbabwe has witnessed a surge in political violence that has resulted in the deaths of opposition and civic society activists.

During the controversial 2008 elections, over 200 opposition supporters lost their lives at the hands of ruling party Zanu PF activists, soldiers and state security agents. The world also witnessed soldiers killing civilians who were protesting against electoral theft in 2018.

Since the coming in of the so called new dispensation (following the military coup that dethroned former leader, Robert Mugabe) the state has intensified clampdowns on dissent and abduction and torture of activists continues. Extra judicial killings have also been witnessed with families of the victims failing to get justice.

Arbitrary arrests and capture of the judiciary have resulted in persecution by prosecution, a trend that has resulted in activists as well as journalists being detained for lengthy periods only to be acquitted later.

The situation is made worse by the fact that the state media has always acted as an appendage of the ruling party and in the process working tirelessly to undermine or most precisely, to sweep under the carpet, cases of human rights violations in the country.

It is quite evident that in Zimbabwe, the state media is complicit in human rights violations. This was the case during the Gukurahundi massacres.

The case of the abducted trio of MDC Alli-

on an issue before the courts and continues to sing from the same hymn with regime sympathisers.

That has always been the stance of the state media even on cases where activists have been charged with treason only for the cases to fall away without any conviction.

Some Journalists from state media have even turned into political activists and are amplifying voices from regime sympathisers and ruling party officials that the abduction of the MDC Alliance trio was stage managed.

It is disturbing that the state media continues to be complicit in human rights violations and thwarting efforts to create a democratic Zimbabwe.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) Spokesperson, Marvelous Khumalo said the state media complicity in rights violations is regrettable.

"Our constitution is the supreme law of the land and given that we have an extended Bill of Rights in Chapter 4 of the constitution, it means that no institution or organisation can be seen to be assisting or influencing the violation of human rights. The constitution is clear in terms of observance, protection and enjoyment of civic liberties and rights.

"So media organisations should not be seen to be writing in favour of human rights violations. It sends a wrong message both locally and internationally," said Khumalo.



Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Publicity Nick Mangwana

ance members, Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimbi and Netsai Marova reveals how the state media has aided rights violations while trying to underplay the extent of the crisis in Zimbabwe.

The state media has already given a verdict

## ED perpetuating gender imbalance and discrimination

By Crisis Report

DESPITE calls for gender balance and non discrimination, Zimbabwe's President, Emmerson Mnangagwa continues to sideline women when it comes to key ministerial appointments.

This has prompted the Women Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE) and the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) to approach the High Court for a declaratory order to be granted stating that Mnangagwa has violated Sections 17 (1) (b) (ii), 90 (1) and 104 (4) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

We highlight the court application by WALPE and ZWLA below;

"In terms of Section 17 (1) (b) (ii) of the Constitution the First Respondent (Mnangagwa) is among other things required to ensure that women constitute at least half the membership of all elective and appointed governmental bodies established by or under the Constitution and any other Act of Parliament.

In terms of Section 90 (1) the First Respondent is also required to uphold, defend and respect the Constitution as the Supreme Law of the nation and must ensure that the Constitution and all the other laws are faithfully observed.

The First Respondent is further required in terms



President Emmerson Mnangagwa

of Section 104 (4) of the Constitution to be guided by considerations of regional and gender balance in appointing Ministers and their deputies"

### FACTUAL BACKGROUND

"Since November 2019, the First Respondent has either reshuffled his Cabinet or appointed Ministers on at least four occasions. Following those appointments and re-assignments, the First Respondent's Cabinet was then composed as follows;

- The First Respondent appointed five women Ministers and eighteen men in his cabinet. In percentage terms, women constitute 21% of the said current cabinet

- That the First Respondent appointed five women Deputy Ministers and thirteen men. In percentage terms, women deputy Ministers constituted 28% of the total number of Deputy Ministers

- That the First Respondent appointed five women as Provincial Affairs Ministers out of ten. Though I note that the number five women seem to be the First Respondent's favourite for each category, I note that for Provincial Ministers, the number reflects a fifty-fifty situation which is exactly what the constitution requires"

In the application WALPE and ZWLA noted that replacements which were made by Mnangagwa for the Ministers of Health, Lands and Energy and Power Development did not change the gender composition of Cabinet as the new appointees were a case of '*a male replacing a male*'.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition stands in solidarity with WALPE and ZWLA and we implore President Mnangagwa to uphold constitutional provisions on gender balance and non discrimination.

**The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women's groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.**



## Students under siege as government intensifies clampdown

By Crisis Report

FOLLOWING several cases of arrests and harassment of tertiary students and their union leaders, The Crisis Report had an interview with the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) Tapiwanashe Chiriga who expressed concern that students were under siege as the government has decided to label them as a "terrorist organisation".

ZINASU President, Takudzwa Ngadziore was harassed by suspected state agents while addressing a press conference on September 18, 2020. Ngadziore was later arrested after the assault. The suspected state agents also assaulted journalists who were covering the event.

On September 14, 2020, nine students from ZINASU were arrested at the Harare Magistrates Court.

The students had gone to show solidarity

with Ngadziore in a case in which he is accused of staging a demonstration at a car hire company whose vehicles are allegedly being used to abduct opposition and civic society activists.

*"We have been treated as a terrorist organisation by Mnangagwa who purports to be our Chancellor. It is however to be expected that fascist regimes in their twilight will out of paranoia persecute anyone who dares question their misgovernance."*

*"Our President (Ngadziore) is a victim of Zanu PF's thuggish barbarism. Our entire leadership has been threatened, arrested or are under constant surveillance,"* said Chiriga

He implored the government to consider students as key stakeholders in terms of democracy and economic development as well as to uphold academic freedom.

CiZC Position- *"Crisis in Zimbabwe Coal-*

*ition calls for an end to persecution of student union leaders and we implore the government to respect and uphold academic freedom and other fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution of Zimbabwe."*



### Zim youths robbed of their future

By Crisis Report

HOPES of a better tomorrow continue to fade among Zimbabwean youths owing to the continued economic, social and political crises in the country.

Youth Forum Zimbabwe noted that the continued perpetration of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe dents prospects of Zimbabwe getting out of its multi faceted crisis and this paints a bleak future for the youths.

*"This generations' future is being stolen by massive political, economic and social mayhems. The government has failed to institute both political and economic reforms that speak to a better future. Our future has been robbed,"* said YFZ Director, Ashton Bumhira.

He said that the militarisation of key state institutions continues to stifle the democratic space in Zimbabwe.

*"Civic space continues to shrink at greatest speed and civic society activists and human rights defenders are struggling to play the watchdog role. Human rights defenders are being persecuted for doing their duties,"* said Bumhira.

According to Bumhira, the Zimbabwean crisis requires a genuine all stakeholders dialogue. He blamed the government for implementing piecemeal reforms and failing to come up with holistic approaches to the problems facing Zimbabwean youths.

CiZC position- *"The Zimbabwean crisis is a call for youths to coalesce, find common ground and come up with a collective approach to issues that affect them collectively. It is imperative for the youths to resist political manipulation and unite in dealing with issues that affect them."*

### Churches urged to speak out against rights abuses

By Crisis Report

THE Zimbabwe Divine Destiny (ZDD) says churches have a critical role to play in speaking out against the continued human rights violations in Zimbabwe as well as bringing authorities to account.

Bishop Ancelimo Magaya said it is a great betrayal for churches to keep silent while citizens are being persecuted.

He also bemoaned the fact that some churches had chosen to keep silent or side with the government at a time the country continues to plunge into deeper crisis.

*"It is one thing for a nation to be in limbo economically, politically and socially but it is also another matter when the church which is supposed to be the moral campus of any nation is not only divided but unable to shout at evil besieging the nation. Historically and Biblically, the church has been the most respected pillar of society when it raises its voice against injustice and other*

evils.

*"The level of anarchy manifesting through unlawful arbitrary arrests, torture of political victims, denial of justice and the killing with impunity of civilians by state agents especially from November 2017, is unparalleled and the church is obliged to admonish those in rulership,"* said Bishop Magaya.

He said that 'suspicions are rife that a certain section of the church is captured and serves the interests of those in political power'.

*"Zimbabwe Divine Destiny opines that unless the church solidifies its new found unity of purpose, it risks further divisions thereby weakening it and losing its saltiness. If there has been a time when the church needs to understand that together it can send a thousand to flee it's now,"* said Bishop Magaya.

