

FACING THE FEAR

**Confronting Threats to
Personal Security and
Peace in Zimbabwe**



W/O 3/93
Campaigners for Human Rights

POLICY AND PRACTICE BRIEF
AUGUST 2023

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01. Introduction: Challenging 'Authoritarian Peace'	1
02. Background: The Birth of Fear	3
a) Colonial Experiences, Past Violence and Negative Peace	4
b) Repression, Fear and Authoritarian Peace	5
03. The Missing Link: Personal Security and Peace	6
a) Bodily Integrity, Livelihood, and Socio-Economic Well-Being	7
b) Personal security, peace and fundamental freedoms	8
04. Key Findings: The Perpetual State of Insecurity	9
a) Political Affiliation, Civic Participation and Personal Security Risks	10
b) Poverty, Structural Violence and Socio-Economic Insecurities	12
05. Unpacking the Recommendations:	
Policy and Practice Changes	13
06. Conclusion: A Call to Action	21

01

Introduction: Challenging 'Authoritarian Peace'

"Fear sometimes wears the mask of peace"

In its State of Peace Report for the year 2022, ZimRights delves deeper into the social fabric of Zimbabwean society, looking beyond the cases of direct violence to discern the subtle and covert forms of violence that have imprisoned the majority of Zimbabweans in a perpetual state of insecurity. The report makes the finding that the semblance of peace in Zimbabwe is, in fact, a manifestation of 'authoritarian peace'.

This form of 'peace' sometimes allows for the absence of direct violence but is almost always enforced by structural violence that disempowers citizens, turning them into subservient and apathetic subjects. It is a state where even if no bullets are fired, fingers remain on the trigger – perpetrators of past acts of gross human rights violations still wield the instruments of violence and enjoy impunity, while victims are denied reparation. This type of 'peace' is a facade, and it is fragile. As highlighted in the report, the fault lines of the authoritarian peace become apparent each time electoral processes beckon. In 2022, the cracks were already showing as the country geared up for elections in 2023.

The current Policy and Practice Brief is so named because it confronts the authorita-

rian peace in Zimbabwe by not only recommending policy reforms but also advocating for concrete practice changes. This is essential because realizing sustainable peace in Zimbabwe requires modifications to some of our laws and policies, as well as behavioural changes at all levels of government. Guided by the findings of the State of Peace Report 2022, this brief adopts a people-centred approach to peace and personal security, advocating for changes that are not only visible but, more importantly, tangibly felt by the citizens.

The Brief begins by recounting the historical background of the current environment in Zimbabwe, which is characterized by insecurity and fear. It proceeds to analyse the findings made in the State of Peace

Report 2022, focusing on the multiple layers of vulnerabilities to which most Zimbabweans are subjected. Then it unpacks the raft of recommendations made in the report, all aimed at achieving positive and lasting peace in Zimbabwe. The Brief elaborates on the policy and practice elements required to achieve each of the ten recommendations made in the report, translating the thorough analysis conducted in the report into strategic thinking and practical steps needed to realize significant changes.

The conclusion of this Brief recaps the main points captured in the report and encapsulates the recommendations by including a call to action for different stakeholders in Zimbabwe.

Ultimately, the message delivered by the Brief is clear:

to achieve genuine peace,
we must confront the fear
that cripples our people
from freely exercising
their fundamental rights
and freedoms.

We must not separate peace from justice, equality, and the rule of law. Zimbabwe is only truly peaceful when its people live without fear, and when those deemed weak are as secure as those who claim to be strong.

02

Background: The Birth of Fear

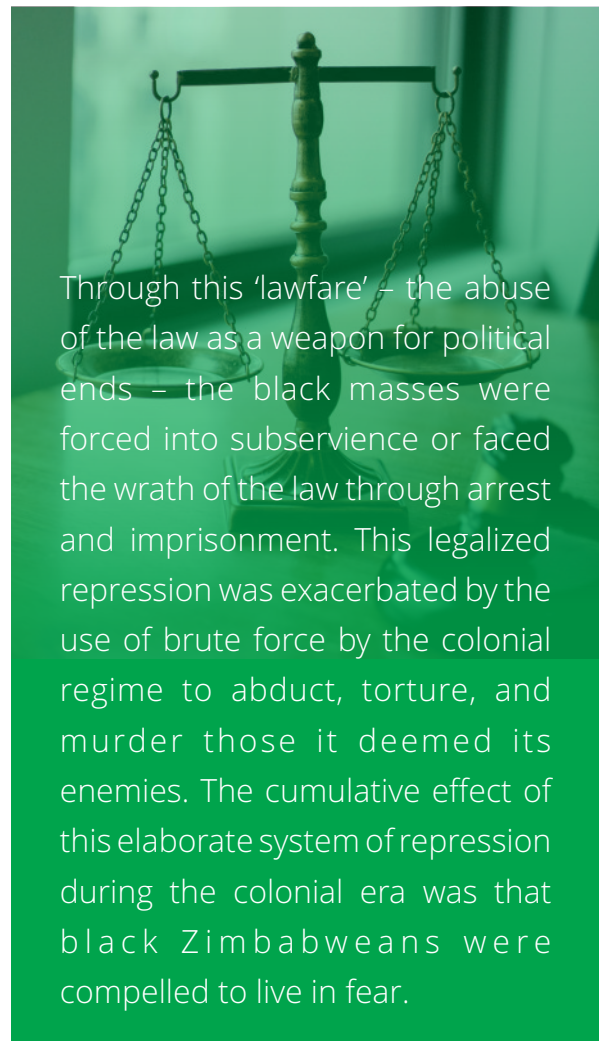
“Fear, like all things, has a beginning... and an end.”

Repression is a relic of Zimbabwe’s colonial past. To maintain its grip on political power, the racist colonial government had to disempower and subjugate the black masses. This meant more than just political disenfranchisement; it extended to economic marginalization and social exclusion through discriminatory policies and practices.

As the Pioneer Column evolved from a marauding force into a colonial government, brute force was gradually replaced by unjust laws and policies. These not only assaulted the physical integrity of indigenous populations but also undermined their socio-economic well-being. Land and ownership rights were stripped from the black masses through legislation such as the:

- Land Apportionment Act (1930),
- Native Land Husbandry Act (1952), and
- the Land Tenure Act (1969).

Freedoms of association, assembly, movement, and expression were curtailed using draconian laws like the Law and Order Maintenance Act (1960), while the Vagrancy Act (1960) criminalized so-called illegal traders and vendors who were forced into the cities after being denied agricultural land and fail to secure formal employment.



Through this ‘lawfare’ – the abuse of the law as a weapon for political ends – the black masses were forced into subservience or faced the wrath of the law through arrest and imprisonment. This legalized repression was exacerbated by the use of brute force by the colonial regime to abduct, torture, and murder those it deemed its enemies. The cumulative effect of this elaborate system of repression during the colonial era was that black Zimbabweans were compelled to live in fear.

a) Colonial Experiences, Past Violence and Negative Peace

In post-independence Zimbabwe, peace has been defined as the opposite of the violence experienced by citizens under colonial rule and during the liberation struggle. This narrow understanding of peace as negative peace, which is just the absence of violence has been reinforced through references to the suffering endured by the people under colonial rule, during the liberation struggle and episodes of politically motivated violence throughout the country's history.

This negative peace comes without meaningful efforts to ensure accountability for past abuses or provide reparation to victims and survivors. It is instead reinforced by decades of impunity for gross human rights violations dating as far back as Clemency Order (1) of April 18, 1988, which granted amnesty to state security forces and individuals involved in gross human rights abuses in Midlands and Matabeleland between 1982 and 1987.

Since then, impunity has manifested not only in laws that grant amnesty to perpetrators of violations in Zimbabwe (de jure impunity) but also in the form of inaction or blatant refusal to investigate and prosecute perpetrators (de facto impunity).

This culture of impunity sends a message to citizens that violators who claim allegiance with ZANU PF or are members of security services purporting to work for the furtherance of ZANU PF interests, can attack them and escape unpunished for their offences. Without the guarantee of the protection of the law, citizens are condemned to perpetual fear.

b) Repression, Fear and Authoritarian Peace

The report delineated an environment characterized by repression, fear, and authoritarian peace in Zimbabwe. It highlighted the use of criminal laws as a weapon to target dissenting voices in Zimbabwe, as seen in the judicial harassment of opposition political party members, activists, journalists, and other individuals deemed to be critics of the government. Notable cases include the arrest of Job Sikhala, Godfrey Sithole, Jacob Ngarivhume, Robson Chere, Obert Masaraure, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Julie Barnes. These arrests, which often lead to lengthy detention without trial, militate against the free exercise of fundamental freedoms. They have a ‘chilling effect’ on citizens, scaring them away from exercising their political rights and freedoms of expression, association, and assembly.

This means that ‘*peace*’, understood as the absence of direct violence, becomes the preserve of those who either openly support the ruling party or choose to remain disengaged from political activities. This ‘*authoritarian peace*’ is sustained by the State on the condition that citizens passively accept government policies and avoid political activities that challenge the status quo. It is an appearance of ‘*peace*’ that thrives on control and fear instead of

genuine civic trust. It is not built on mutual trust among citizens or on public trust in State institutions.

The report highlighted the use of criminal laws as a weapon to target dissenting voices in Zimbabwe, as seen in the judicial harassment of opposition political party members, activists, journalists, and other individuals deemed to be critics of the government.

03

The Missing Link: Personal Security and Peace

“You can’t separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom”¹

The main contribution of the State of Peace Report 2022 is to spotlight the link between personal security and peace in Zimbabwe. The report illuminates how the general lack of personal security experienced by most Zimbabweans hampers their ability to lead peaceful lives and exercise their rights and freedoms.

When people fear for their security, free will is replaced with coercion, consent is substituted with concession, and choice is supplanted by compliance.

The report outlines how thousands of Zimbabweans, who have consistently lived in environments characterized by insecurity and multiple reinforcing layers of vulnerability, may have cast their ballots regularly but have not had the opportunity to freely express their political choices through their vote.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that most areas known as hotspots of politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe are also sites of food insecurity and endemic poverty, as well as strongholds of the ruling party.

This discernible pattern reveals the complex interplay between socioeconomic vulnerability, violence, and political control.

It also points to the need to understand personal security broadly, to include all aspects of well-being beyond just physical safety.

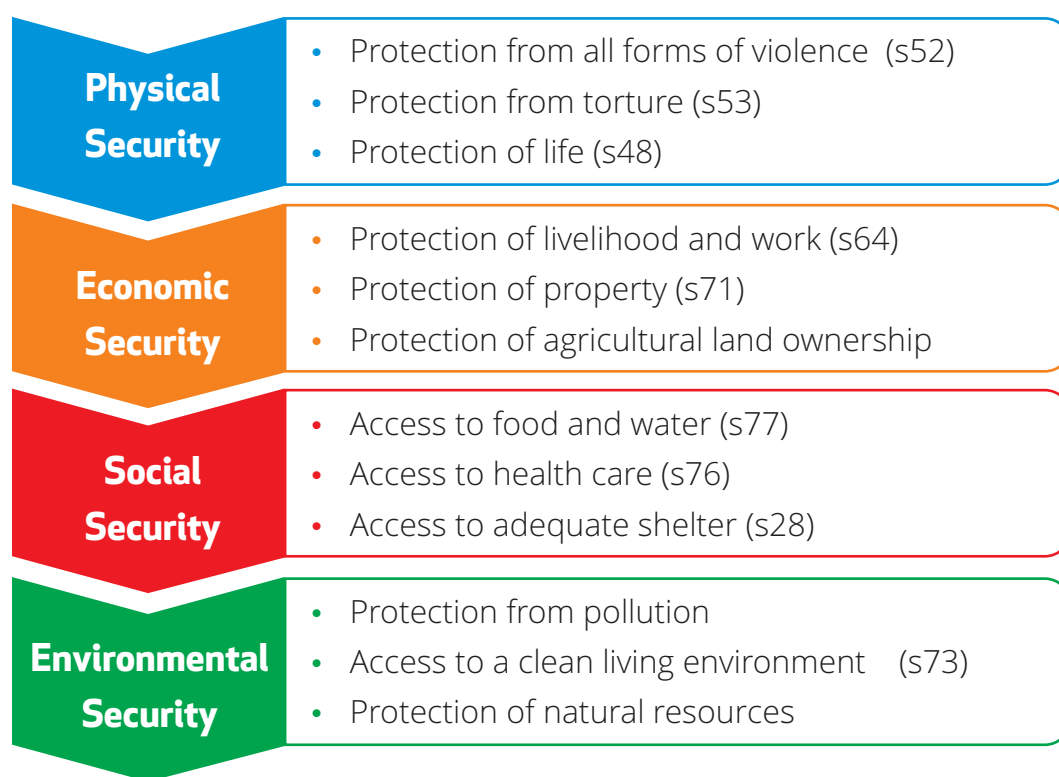
1. Malcolm X

a) Bodily Integrity, Livelihood, and Socio-Economic Well-Being

Personal security should be understood broadly to include:



The Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees all the aspects of holistic well-being, which are essential to ensure that citizens enjoy an adequate standard of living.



b) Personal security, peace and fundamental freedoms

The 2022 State of Peace Report makes a connection between the levels of personal security guaranteed to citizens in Zimbabwe, understood in the broad terms defined above, the ability of citizens to freely enjoy rights and exercise fundamental freedoms, and the state of peace in the country.

This approach bridges the divide between human rights advocates, who are concerned with the promotion and protection of rights, and peacebuilders who work to prevent violence and promote sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.

It emphasizes the importance of livelihoods and other aspects of citizens' socio-economic well-being as key determinants of personal security, peace, and the enjoyment of human rights.

This perspective shifts the focus from simply examining policies and institutions to considering the lived realities of people on the ground. This people-centred approach to personal security and peace goes beyond the legislative and institutional framework in search of answers to the question: Are Zimbabweans secure and at peace within their own country?

04

Key Findings: The Perpetual State of Insecurity

“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”²

Following extensive consultations with its members nationwide, ZimRights discovered that there is a serious discrepancy between constitutional provisions that guarantee personal security and the lived experiences of Zimbabweans. Although Section 56 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe assures all citizens of equal protection under the law, most citizens reported that they do not feel this is true in their daily lives.

The 2022 State of Peace Report unearthed how the conflation of the State and ZANU PF has compromised public institutions and led to the partisan and selective application of the law.

Additionally, the report highlighted how the capture of the government by political and economic cartels has resulted in an estimated loss of 1.8 billion in national revenue directly due to grand corruption.

Beyond this, the co-opting of public institutions to serve partisan interests has severely eroded the rule of law and weakened mechanisms that are intended to guarantee the personal security of

citizens, such as traditional leadership, the police service, and the judiciary.

Consequently, this has made the enjoyment of personal security dependent on political affiliation.



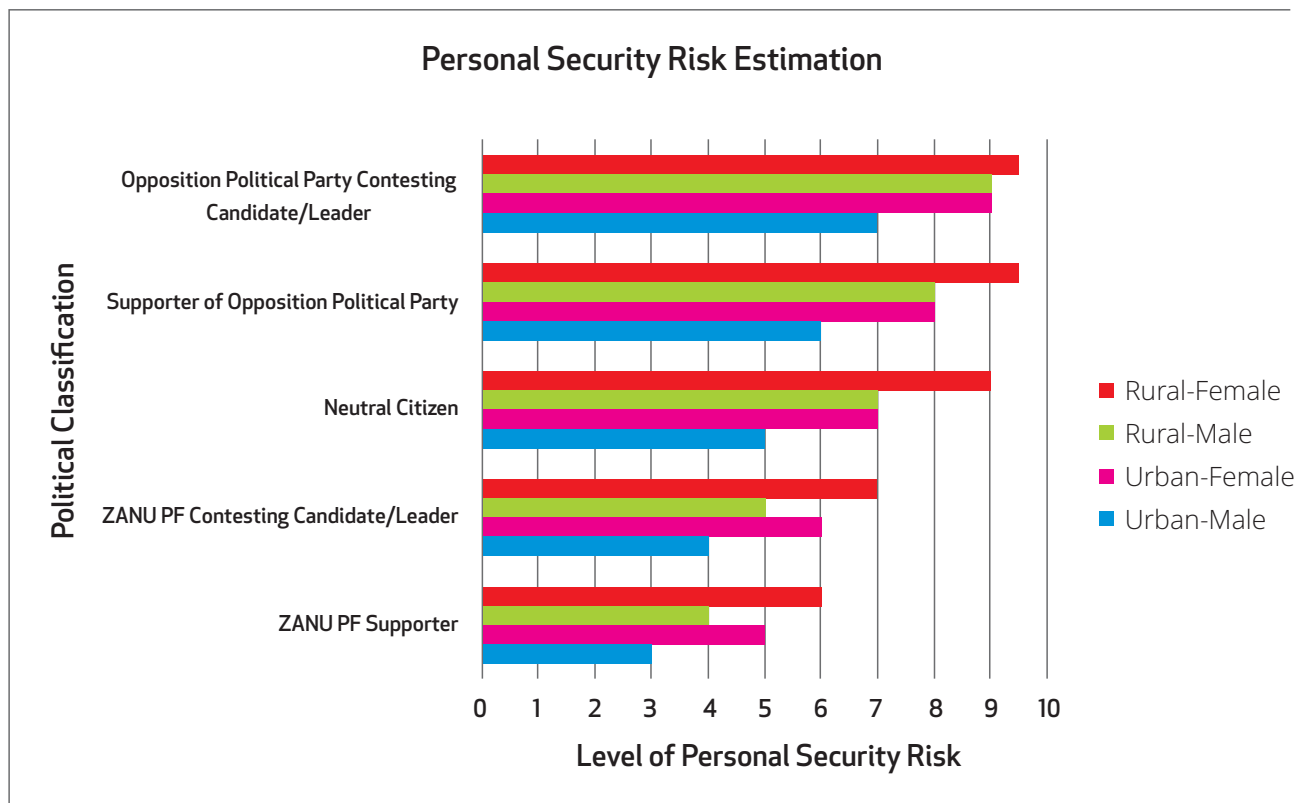
1.8 Billion

Estimated loss in national
revenue due to grand
corruption

2. George Orwell, Animal Farm, 1945

a) Political Affiliation, Civic Participation and Personal Security Risks

Utilizing its Community Human Rights Monitoring architecture, which connects Local Chapters to Regional Chapters and culminates in National Action Zones, ZimRights was able to evaluate how political affiliation and varying degrees of political participation correspond to levels of personal security risks at both the community and national levels.



The 2022 State of Peace Report investigated how political affiliation and civic participation affected personal security in Zimbabwe and arrived at the following general findings, which were confirmed by citizens who participated in a series of focus group discussions convened by ZimRights:

GENERAL FINDINGS

The following are the general findings from the 2022 State of Peace Report.

01.

Politically active individuals, whether candidates or leaders face an increased risk to their personal security.

02.

Women are subject to higher personal security risks than men.

03.

Individuals in rural areas experience higher personal security risks compared to those in urban locations.

04.

Supporting the ruling ZANU PF party is associated with lower personal security risks compared to affiliation with opposition parties.

05.

Although neutrality offers some protection, it is still riskier than supporting the ruling party but safer than backing the opposition.

06.

Within political parties, leaders and candidates face higher risks than general supporters.

07.

Opposition party candidates or leaders endure the highest personal security risks.

08.

Rural female opposition leaders face the highest personal security risk.

09.

Neutral citizens' are often misconstrued as supporting the opposition, thus enhancing their risk.

10.

Personal security is a major concern in the socio-political fabric of the country.

b) Poverty, Structural Violence and Socio-Economic Insecurities

ZimRights' study on personal security in Zimbabwe highlighted that while acts of direct violence often feature prominently in discussions around personal security and peace, structural factors leading to socio-economic vulnerability, which are often understated, play a significant role in determining personal security and peace in Zimbabwe.

An overwhelming majority of the people engaged by ZimRights in local communities stated that economic hardship resulting in multidimensional poverty, seen in the lack of money and limited access to necessities such as food and shelter, were significant causes of insecurity on family and community levels. Socioeconomic insecurities in their communities included food insecurity, which caused impoverished communities to rely on food aid for survival.

The report also noted that over

90%

of workers in Zimbabwe are informally employed, primarily as vendors and informal traders.

Therefore, the politicization of vending spaces was a significant concern. People

living in informal settlements across Zimbabwe also confirmed that the lack of legal title to their land created a serious insecurity as they lived in constant fear of eviction and demolition of their homes.

Zimbabweans living in rural areas reported vulnerability due to residing on communal lands vested by law in the President, making them susceptible to overbearing traditional leaders, most of whom they reported to be aligned with ZANU PF. Villagers also complained about mining and extractive companies exploiting their lands without regard for people's homesteads, pastures, sacred lands, and farming fields.

The 2022 State of Peace Report conclusively showed that the wide range of socio-economic insecurities which most people in Zimbabwe are subjected to, are vulnerabilities often manipulated by political elites to control them. It also showed that these socio-economic factors worsened by political polarization are the main conflict drivers in Zimbabwe. It became apparent that mitigating personal security threats and addressing threats to peace also required measures aimed at addressing poverty and other structural factors that place citizens in a seemingly perpetual state of insecurity.

05

Unpacking the Recommendations: Policy and Practice Changes

“Policy is the what, practice is the how. Both are needed, but the latter will determine the success of the former.”

Guided by input received from local communities and feedback from its membership, ZimRights crafted a set of ten recommendations addressed primarily to the government aimed at achieving sustainable peace in Zimbabwe, which is not built on fear but on the solid foundations of civic trust, inclusive development, and respect for human rights.

Some of the key policy reforms and behavioural changes required to implement these recommendations are detailed below. It should be noted that this

list is not exhaustive but is meant to provoke further engagement aimed at realizing meaningful changes that will be felt by the people of Zimbabweans.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Personal Security Guarantees and Human Rights Protection

Implement measures to safeguard personal security and promote human rights, including protections for political opposition members, activists, and citizens, to prevent arbitrary arrests, torture and other forms of indirect attacks on personal security.

Policy Reforms

- Revise legislation that restricts the free exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act and the Patriotic Act.
- Amend the Communal Land Act to protect the rights of villagers living on communal lands.

- Revise the Mines and Minerals Act to ensure that the rights of villagers living on communal lands are protected, that people living in the vicinity of the mines benefit from the operations, and that ecological damage caused by extractive operations is minimized.
- Amend all laws and regulations governing vending to decriminalize petty offences and life-sustaining activities.

Behavioural Changes

- Cease the abuse of criminal law to harass those who oppose or criticize the government.
- Refrain from co-opting traditional leaders to serve as party officials or act in support of partisan interests.
- Regularize informal settlements to ensure that residents have legal title to the land on which they live.
- Establish vending spaces that are administered professionally and transparently, without partisan influence or bias.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Rule of Law and Judicial Independence

Strengthen the rule of law and ensure the independence of the judiciary to guarantee fair and impartial handling of cases, reducing judicial harassment and promoting citizens' trust in the legal system.

Policy Reforms

- Repeal Constitutional Amendments, and refrain from adopting any laws, rules, policies, or practices that restrict judicial independence or violate the separation of powers.

Behavioural Changes

- Stop interfering with the decisions of judicial officers.
- Uphold independent and transparent processes for the appointment,

dismissal, and extension of tenure of judges, without executive interference.

- Members of the judiciary must act professionally and impartially at all times to protect the rights of citizens, including due process rights and the right to bail.
- The government and all other actors must refrain from efforts that could compromise the impartiality of the judiciary, whether through threats or favours.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Reform of Security Sector Institutions

Undertake comprehensive security sector reforms to ensure that security services uphold the rule of law, are accountable to civilian authorities, and protect the rights of all citizens irrespective of their political affiliations.

Policy Reforms

- Align all laws and policies regulating the conduct of members of the security services with the Constitution of Zimbabwe.
- Establish a credible and effective Independent Complainants Commission to investigate misconduct by members of the security services, and provide remedies to victims of such misconduct, as envisaged in Section 210 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Behavioural Changes

- Stop the abuse of security services to serve partisan interests or to clamp down on the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms.
- Empower security services to discharge their mandates effectively and impartially.
- Investigate and prosecute perpetrators of human rights violations within the security services and provide victims with reparation.
- Implement the Motlanthe Commission's recommendations fully.

RECOMMENDATION 4:**Media Freedom and Access to Information**

Ensure media freedom and access to unbiased information, enabling citizens to make informed decisions and fostering an open and informed public discourse.

Policy Reforms

- Revise legislation that restricts media freedom and access to information, including laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Broadcasting Services Act, Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act, and the Official Secrets Act.

Behavioural Changes

- Stop the harassment of journalists and respect their right to conduct their duties freely.
- Open the airwaves and allow independent media houses to broadcast on radio and television.

RECOMMENDATION 5:**Economic Development and Inclusive Growth**

Pursue policies that foster economic development and inclusive growth, reducing socio-economic inequalities and addressing root causes of poverty and economic marginalization.

Policy Reforms

- Revise all relevant laws including the Natural Resources Act, Mines and Minerals Act, and Public Finance Management Act to ensure that all matters concerning national resources and public expenditure are subject to effective parliamentary oversight and scrutiny.
- Develop a genuinely national development blueprint focused on alleviating poverty, enhancing service delivery, and fostering development in underserved and marginalized communities.

Behavioural Changes

- Clamp down on corruption, including embezzlement and abuse of national resources.
- Stop engaging in secretive 'mega-deals' that have implications for the country's resources.
- Depoliticize national development initiatives, refrain from using infrastructural development solely as a campaigning tool, and instead roll out a coherent national plan of action.
- Decriminalize livelihoods and protect the rights of Zimbabweans working in the informal sector, allowing them to conduct their business without harassment and intimidation.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Youth Empowerment and Employment Opportunities

Create sustainable employment opportunities and empower the youth through skill development and entrepreneurship, reducing their vulnerability to recruitment by violent groups.

Policy Reforms

- Revise all national youth policies and provide a binding legal framework that ensures that all government policies related to the youth align to achieve results-based youth empowerment. This framework will also ensure that all institutions and agencies are held accountable for discharging their youth-related mandates.

Behavioural Changes

- Invest in education and vocational training to equip the youth with marketable skills.
- Ensure that the National Youth Service Program is not appropriated for partisan interests but instead fosters patriotism and a sense of civic duty among the youth.

- Depoliticize youth empowerment initiatives to guarantee that all young people in Zimbabwe have equal access to opportunities, land, mines, and means of production.
- Refrain from recruiting the youth to lead violent campaigns with the aim of coercing communities into supporting political parties.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Political Dialogue and Inclusivity

Facilitate structured and inclusive political dialogues between all relevant stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organizations, and community leaders, to foster mutual understanding, cooperation, and joint problem-solving.

Policy Reforms

- Formulate a formal mandate for structured national dialogue, incorporating the input and support of Zimbabwean citizens and all stakeholders that clearly defines the scope and objectives of the dialogue.

Behavioural Changes

- Conduct structured broad-based political dialogue within the framework of the Constitution, not confined to partisan agendas or limited solely to post-election processes, but also encompassing broader socio-economic national issues.
- Foster policy dialogue at all levels by convening grassroots consultations, public meetings, and think tank forums, providing citizens with the opportunity to express their views and contribute to government policies.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Opening of Civic Space

Create an enabling environment for civil society organizations to operate freely and for individuals and groups to freely express their opinions,

associate, and peacefully assemble without fear of reprisals or restrictions.

Policy Reforms

- Repeal the Private Voluntary Organizations Act and revise any regulations and policies that restrict civic space or interfere with the operations of CSOs in Zimbabwe.

Behavioural Changes

- Stop the criminalization of dissent and allow CSOs and opposition political parties to function freely at all times, not only during the election campaign period when the country is under the scrutiny of external election observers.
- Stop clamping down on peaceful gatherings, demonstrations, and protests.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Civic Education and Community Engagement

Invest in civic education programs and conflict resolution training at all levels of society to promote non-violent means of addressing grievances and resolving disputes.

Policy Reforms

- The government of Zimbabwe must formulate clear policies that promote rights literacy and public awareness of the Constitution, as envisioned in section 7 of the constitution.
- The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission must design and spearhead the implementation of a nationwide conflict resolution training program, in collaboration with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders.

Behavioural Changes

- Stop disrupting CSO-led peacebuilding efforts and initiatives designed to provide civic education to citizens.
- All political parties and public figures must avoid using hate speech and

inflammatory language that encourages tribalism, political animosity, and divisions among the people.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Strengthen Independent and Credible Peacebuilding Institutions

Ensure that critical institutions such as the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, and other Chapter 12 independent commissions are impartial, free from political interference, locally owned, trusted by citizens, and well-equipped and adequately resourced to discharge their mandates.

Policy Reforms

- Ensure that all government policies align with the provisions of Chapter 12 of the Constitution, to protect the independence and integrity of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) and other independent commissions.

Behavioural Changes

- All Independent Commissions must act impartially and fulfil their constitutional mandates.
- All stakeholders must respect the independence of the commissions and refrain from interfering in their administration and operations.
- Commissioners and all officials within the commissions should avoid speech and actions that could be construed as reflecting partisan bias.
- The government must provide adequate resources to the NPRC and all other commissions to enable them to discharge their mandates effectively.

06

Conclusion: A Call to Action

“It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it”³

Underpinning all the recommendations outlined above, which aim to ensure sustainable peace in Zimbabwe, is political will. Although nearly every actor in Zimbabwe echoes the peace rhetoric, there is limited evidence of genuine commitment to positive peace.

Fear is still prevalent among citizens, and violence, in all its manifestations, continues to be the preferred tool used by those in power to maintain their position by silencing dissenting voices. It is essential that all stakeholders in Zimbabwe genuinely believe in positive peace and actively strive to achieve it.

This commitment should extend beyond just speeches that advocate for peace. It should be demonstrated through concrete measures that promote civic trust, safeguard fundamental rights and freedoms, and tackle the socio-economic issues leading Zimbabweans to live in vulnerability and fear.



3. Eleanor Roosevelt, 1951

To the Government of Zimbabwe

It is essential for all elected officials in the government to transition from partisan politics and function as public officials, working to serve the interests of all Zimbabweans. The government of Zimbabwe faces the challenge to *'walk the talk'*, by not only speaking of being a republic but adhering to the principles of democracy, equality before the law, and inclusive development, which characterize a republic.

There is a need to extend the affirmation of peace beyond periods closely associated with elections. The government should strive to foster sustainable peace at all times. Instead of issuing special directives during election times, requiring the police to arrest those responsible for politically motivated violence irrespective of their political affiliation, non-partisan policing and equal treatment of citizens should always be the norm.

Peace must be built on the foundation of accountability, not on a culture of impunity. Without the political will to achieve positive peace, state-led institutions and initiatives claiming to promote peace in Zimbabwe might merely mask the underlying issues, offering a temporary respite from violence. This semblance of peace is fragile, and the potential for a resurgence of violent conflict, especially along political lines, remains a constant threat in Zimbabwe.

The government
should strive to foster
sustainable peace
at all times.

To Civil Society Organizations

For CSOs in Zimbabwe, now is the time to close ranks. It has become apparent that working in silos yields limited results. Peace and human rights are inextricably tied to livelihoods and structural factors causing socio-economic insecurities among

citizens. This demands that CSOs reconsider their *'theories of change'* and their understanding of the *'problem'* in Zimbabwe. It is not merely a lack of policy reforms or a failure to adhere to the Constitution. It encompasses all of this and

more. It is imperative to consider the personal security of citizens, without which, Zimbabweans cannot freely exercise their rights and positive peace cannot be realized in Zimbabwe.

To CSOs, this understanding suggests that instead of simply attributing civic disengagement and apathy to rights illiteracy, it is crucial to devise strategies to counter the state of insecurity preventing citizens who are fully aware of their rights from enjoying and asserting them. This calls for CSOs to work more closely with local communities, identifying key areas of vulnerability in each community, and striving to build community resilience against these insecurities.

Realizing positive peace in Zimbabwe should be everyone's concern. CSOs should mobilize diverse expertise to counter direct and structural forms of violence aimed at shrinking the civic space and deterring civic participation in Zimbabwe.

As highlighted in the 2022 State of Peace Report, the fear and insecurity experienced by Zimbabweans arise from a deliberate and calculated campaign. Therefore, civil society efforts to counteract this fear should be equally if not more systematic and coordinated.

To Citizens

In line with ZimRights' Shifting Power to the People Strategy (SP2P), the people of Zimbabwe are not merely passive and vulnerable. They possess the power to govern and have the agency to enact positive peace in their communities. Citizens should strive to fully understand their rights and mobilize within their communities to assert and defend their fundamental rights and freedoms. The various shades of fear currently confronting Zimbabweans can only be countered by collective resistance.

The power to overcome this fear lies in the people's numbers. Once citizens overcome attempts to divide them along party, class, and ethnic lines, they can reclaim the power to govern, which currently resides in the hands of the few. The people of Zimbabwe need to rediscover their identity as compatriots who share a common cause to realize a peaceful and prosperous Zimbabwe.

These shared values and goals should inspire community alliances that transcend

partisan politics, built on the recognition that collectively, as Zimbabweans, we face similar challenges and share the same resources.

Citizens must create more neutral spaces at all levels, where they can engage in dialogue concerning their aspirations, needs, and concerns, both as individuals and as communities. They must reclaim Village Development Committees (VIDCOS) and other community planning meetings that

have been hijacked by political agendas, and use these spaces to have a voice in decision-making processes.

The fear is real and justified. Those who currently hold a monopoly on coercive power have a track record of unleashing violence in all its forms to quash resistance. However, the power of citizens acting as a united force is stronger and can effectively break the cycle of violence, intimidation, and fear in Zimbabwe.

Citizens should strive to fully understand their rights and mobilize within their communities to assert and defend their fundamental rights and freedoms.

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