

STATE OF PEACE REPORT 2022

A Perpetual State of
Insecurity in Zimbabwe



W/O 3/93
CAMPAIGNERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
1992 - 2022

Published by
The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
90 SV. Muzenda Street, Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel: +263 242 707277
Email: publications@zimrights.org.zw
Website: www.zimrights.org.zw

Published in July 2023

State of Peace Report 2022
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ISBN: 9781-1-77933-127-4

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) extends its sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to the successful compilation of the State of Peace Report 2022. Our members, partners, Board and staff all played invaluable roles at every stage of the process, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

Special recognition is due to our members from Bulawayo, Matabeleland South, and Masvingo, who despite having other commitments, spared time to participate in rigorous discussions and meetings. These engagements yielded the citizens' views captured in this report. Without the invaluable insights of our members and local community voices, this report would have been soulless and empty.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to the ZimRights Board and staff. The Board's foresight and strategic direction, combined with the technical expertise of our staff, transforms our *"Shifting Power to the People Strategy (SP2P)"* into action day by day. The State of Peace Report 2022 is another milestone in the realization of ZimRights' efforts to build a formidable human rights grassroots movement.

It is the product of the collective efforts of all our stakeholders and the product people-centred approach to human rights, which has guided the conceptualization, planning, writing, and rigorous editing of this report.

Special thanks also go to our Lead Researcher for this report, Mr Tafadzwa Christmas. His dedication to assembling this report and his profound insights have enriched our understanding of the state of peace in Zimbabwe. Further appreciation goes to our Research Coordinators, Celia Mukwewa and Leo Chamahwinya, for their diligence in community engagement, data collation and ensuring the report's successful publication.

Lastly, ZimRights remains deeply grateful for the unwavering technical and financial support received from our esteemed development partners.

Dzikamai Bere

National Director

Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
(ZimRights)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Peace Report 2022, diligently compiled by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), extends the pioneering work initiated in its 2021 edition. This report stands as a beacon of in-depth investigation into the intricate dynamics of peace and security in Zimbabwe, utilizing a groundbreaking “*people-centred approach to peace and security*” approach as its compass.

At the heart of the report is ZimRights’ Shifting Power to the People Strategy (SP2P). The SP2P serves as a barometer of Zimbabwe’s peace and security climate, by exploring a fundamental question:

Do Zimbabweans, from different walks of life, experience a sense of peace and security robust enough to encourage active civic participation?

As a result, the report boldly confronts the challenging concept of ‘*authoritarian peace*’ and questions the genuineness and sustainability of a semblance of peace and security that is sustained by civic passivity, political indifference, or enforced compliance. The discussions canvassed in this report are of heightened significance against the backdrop of a rise in politically motivated violence as Zimbabwe navigates the choppy waters of the upcoming 2023 elections.

Driven by a commitment to engage with citizens, the report breaks down complex terminologies and theories, making the content accessible and understandable to its beneficiaries.

It is meticulously structured into three chapters:

Chapter 1

Provides a comprehensive introduction to a people-centred approach to peace and security.

Chapter 2

Is a critical examination of the state of personal security in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 3

Culminates in a thorough assessment of the state of peace in Zimbabwe by spotlighting the voices and perceptions of the citizens.

The main findings of the report paint a disquieting picture: *a vast majority of Zimbabweans are trapped in a perpetual state of insecurity*, which is poised to escalate in intensity as the 2023 elections draw closer.

The report notes direct forms of violence that occurred in 2022, such as instances of physical assault and malicious arrest and prosecution. It highlights the abduction and murder of Moreblessing Ali, the related arrest of Job Sikhala, who was legal counsel to Moreblessing's family, as well as numerous cases of judicial harassment against opposition political party members, activists, and members of civil society.

The report also discusses *the 'chilling effects' on citizens*, showing how these attacks on the personal security of a few individuals have far-reaching effects on citizens as a whole.

In addition, the report explores the structural forms of violence that persisted in 2022. It highlights the intentional disempowerment of citizens through informal settlements, leaving thousands of people without legal title to their land susceptible to control and coercion by the ruling party. Though not facing overt forms of violence, these individuals live in a state of insecurity that curtails their rights and freedoms.

The report also delves into the *politicization of livelihoods* through the control of vending spaces and sheds light on the vulnerable position of villagers living on communal lands vested in the President, making them susceptible to eviction, climate change effects, and intimidation. This lack of legal rights to land ownership echoes exclusionary colonial-era practices, further reinforcing the *heightened vulnerability of villagers*.

Poverty is also highlighted as both a form of structural violence and a key point of vulnerability often exploited by political elites to manipulate impoverished communities and maintain control over them. The report links high youth unemployment rates to politically motivated violence, as impoverished youths are more likely to be manipulated and abused.

The detailed analysis of personal security and insecurities provided in this report lays the groundwork for a comprehensive assessment of the state of peace in Zimbabwe. It presents a bottom-up perspective of peace as conceptualized and experienced by Zimbabweans. Drawing upon ZimRights' expansive engagement with citizens all over the country, the report provides sample data from *Beitbridge, Bikita, Gwanda, Luveve, Masvingo urban, Mwenezi,*

Nketa, Nkulumane and Zaka to illustrate citizens' perspectives concerning the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

ZimRights' engagement with members of these communities showed that the people have a nuanced comprehension of peace that incorporated both negative peace, characterized by the absence of violence, and critical aspects of *positive peace*, including justice, equality, and the exercise of fundamental freedoms.

They also identified election-related tensions as significant contributors to violent conflicts in Zimbabwe.

To transition from ongoing insecurity to a state of sustainable peace, ZimRights presents a ten-point plan. The ten recommendations provided in this report cover a wide spectrum of issues aimed at cultivating a society that upholds civic trust, respects the rule of law, adheres to human rights, and fosters inclusive development.

These recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1.
Personal security guarantees and robust human rights protection. | 2.
Upholding the rule of law and ensuring judicial independence. | 3.
Comprehensive security sector reforms. |
| 4.
Ensuring media freedom and access to unbiased information. | 5.
Promoting policies fostering economic development and inclusive growth. | 6.
Creating sustainable employment opportunities and empowering youth. |
| 7.
Facilitating structured and inclusive political dialogues. | 8.
Promoting an environment conducive to civic engagement. | 9.
Investing in civic education programs and conflict resolution training. |
| 10.
Fortifying critical peacebuilding institutions to be impartial and free from political interference. | | |

INTRODUCTION

The 'State of Peace Report 2022' is a product of the Right to Peace Campaign and comes as a sequel to ZimRights' groundbreaking 2021 report. The State of Peace Report 2021 introduced the right to peace approach to assessing the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

It underscored the need for a community-based definition and understanding of peace, transcending the mere absence of violence to include the following eight pillars of positive peace¹ identified in the Positive Peace Index (PPI) derived from the Global Peace Index (GPI):



The current edition of the State of Peace Report builds on the framework of positive peace and discusses the concept of peace in tandem with security. Guided by ZimRights' Shifting Power to the People Strategy (SP2P), adopted in 2022, this report examines peace and security as intrinsically interconnected and crucial prerequisites for citizens' active participation in civic life. ZimRights' SP2P Strategy aims to empower citizens to reclaim their agency to demand and defend fundamental rights, and this is applied in the report as a litmus test of the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

The main question this report seeks to answer is whether Zimbabweans of different walks of life are and feel secure and at peace enough to not only live their lives in private spheres but also to meaningfully participate in public spaces.

1. See <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/the-eight-pillars-of-positive-peace/>

In this regard, this report tackles the notion of ‘authoritarian peace’ by looking beyond the role the State plays in Zimbabwe as a guarantor of peace and security to also assess how it responds to political participation, the exercise of fundamental freedoms, and dissenting voices. The meta-question pursued in this discourse is whether citizens can truly be at peace and secure if such peace and security are dependent on civic disengagement, political apathy, or coerced subservience.

The conversation concerning the link between the twin concepts of peace and security and civic participation in Zimbabwe is particularly pertinent because in 2022, the reporting year, the election fervour was already discernible as the country anticipated harmonized elections, set to be held in 2023. Based on historical trends, a consistent pattern is apparent that the country records a spike in politically motivated violence during the period immediately preceding, during, and after elections. Accordingly, this report not only takes stock of the state of peace in 2022 but also serves to highlight conflict triggers that can potentially escalate existing tensions into violence, as well as underlying structural fault lines that can hamper citizens from freely exercising their political and fundamental rights.

Technical and complex concepts are discussed in this report in a simplified manner, to avoid elitist conversations that alienate the very citizens for whom this report has been compiled. In line with ZimRights’ ethos, the State of Peace Report 2022 is written from the perspective of citizens and places citizens’ perceptions and voices at the heart of the discourse concerning the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

The report is divided into three chapters. It begins by introducing ZimRights’ people-centred approach to peace and security. Building on the foundation that was established by the 2021 edition of the State of Peace Report, the current report expands on the crucial link between personal security and peace. The opening chapter clarifies the comprehensive definition of personal security adopted throughout this report and explores the impact this concept has on the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

The second chapter is devoted to analysing the state of personal security in Zimbabwe. This chapter unpacks factors that influence personal security, and how these factors equally affect the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

The third chapter focuses on measuring the state of peace in Zimbabwe, drawing upon the assessment of personal security carried out in previous chapters. Additionally, it integrates citizens' perceptions and views about what peace means to them and the elements that both promote and negate peace within their local communities.

The report concludes by asserting that most people in Zimbabwe are trapped in a continuous state of insecurity, which persists even in the absence of direct violence. It also warns of escalating levels of violence and intimidation as the country nears the 2023 elections.

Finally, based on the feedback received by ZimRights from its members across the country, a set of succinct recommendations are presented to promote sustainable peace in Zimbabwe and to put an end to the seemingly unending state of insecurity, which has prevailed unabated for several decades in Zimbabwe.



The current edition of the State of Peace Report builds on the framework of positive peace and discusses the concept of peace in tandem with security.



Chapter 1

TOWARD A PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH TO PEACE AND SECURITY

In many African States, including Zimbabwe, the concept of peace is often defined in contrast to the violence and abuses that characterized colonial rule.² This perspective of peace, which is largely shaped by colonial experiences, suggests that the mere absence of an overtly racist ruling regime or active armed conflict equates to peace.

2. Desire Hakorimana and Godard Busingye, 'The Concept of Peace: An African Perspective' in Dan Kuwali (ed), *The Palgrave Handbook of Sustainable Peace and Security in Africa* (Springer International Publishing AG 2022).

Accordingly, Zimbabwean political leaders have traditionally presented peace as the antithesis of the tribulations endured during the oppressive colonial rule and the extensive violence witnessed during the liberation struggle (1965-1980). According to this view, the cessation of such explicit hostilities and oppressive regimes is perceived as the achievement of peace.

National commemorative events, celebrating more than four decades of independence, have largely focused on reflecting upon the end of hardships associated with imperial rule and the liberation war. Discussions concerning the progress made by the postcolonial government in achieving the determinants of positive peace have often been politicized. Such discourse has been misclassified as denial or belittling of the struggles that ultimately led to the country's independence.

However, it is important to note that this understanding of peace, which is predominantly shaped by colonial experiences, is static. It fails to take into account the dynamism of the concept of peace. Additionally, it overlooks essential characteristics of a contemporary peaceful society, such as social justice, equitable resource distribution, and respect for human rights.

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There are some who wish us a violent election. We are, however, one of the most peaceful countries on the continent. We are a peaceful country. We are united and democratic,"

PRESIDENT EMMERSON MNANGAGWA,
28 JUNE 2023

ZimRights' engagement with citizens as part of its Right to Peace Campaign in 2022 demonstrated that most Zimbabweans have been conditioned, through State media, propaganda, and even formal education, to assimilate a narrow perception of peace as the opposite of colonial rule and war.

In response to this, ZimRights has advocated for a more nuanced, rights-based understanding of peace and championed a people-centred approach to peace and security. This approach stresses the importance of broader socio-economic and political elements in creating a truly peaceful society. It also shifts focus from formal peace-related processes and institutions, such as the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC)³ or

3. The NPRC was established to exist for 10 years starting from August 22, 2013. Its tenure expires in 2023.

it's successor, to centre the people rather than the State, as the core concern of peace and security. This shift involves not only questioning if Zimbabwe as a nation is peaceful, but more critically, interrogating whether you, as a citizen, truly feel at peace and secure.

Understanding the link between peace and security

An often-overlooked but critical aspect of peace is security. These concepts, peace and security, are mutually reinforcing, as one cannot exist without the other.

The 2021 edition of the State of Peace Report unpacked the concept of peace, tracing its evolution from a simple negation of war, as symbolized in the 1984 UN Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace, to a broader, more comprehensive understanding of sustainable peace.

This holistic perspective encompasses respect for human rights, justice, and equality, among other elements, affirming them as integral parts of what can be termed as positive peace. In his address to the High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace, convened by the General Assembly in 2014, then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon embraced this broad understanding of peace by stating:

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Peace means access to education, health and essential services – especially for girls and women; giving every young woman and man the chance to live as they choose; and developing sustainably and protecting the planet's biodiversity."⁴

SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON



4. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/09/476992>

Taking this discussion forward, the 2022 State of Peace Report incorporates security as a fundamental dimension of peace in Zimbabwe. Within the context of this report, security is primarily concerned with personal security rather than national security, which pertains to the government's capacity to shield its citizens from threats. This distinction is essential because, although the State's military defence and internal security mechanisms are significant contributors to personal security and peace, it is crucial to differentiate these State-centric processes from personal security, which directly pertains to citizens' well-being.

In light of this, assessing the state of personal security in Zimbabwe in 2022 involves examining two broadly understood elements:

- physical security and
- socioeconomic security.

Before delving into how these two facets of personal security connect with the state of peace in Zimbabwe, it is crucial to define and unpack these complex concepts.

Unpacking Personal Security

The Constitution of Zimbabwe guarantees the individual's right to personal security,

defined narrowly as the right to bodily and psychological integrity.⁵ This right safeguards citizens from all forms of physical harm, including violence and intrusive, non-consensual medical procedures. However, this report interprets personal security in a broader sense, encompassing social, cultural, and economic determinants of well-being.⁶

This comprehensive understanding of personal security incorporates economic security, construed to cover the protection of livelihoods, the right to work, and property rights, all of which the Constitution of Zimbabwe also protects.⁷

The benchmark applied to assess personal security during the reporting period in Zimbabwe takes a comprehensive approach. It delves into the degree to which citizens were protected from all forms of physical harm as well as threats to their livelihoods and properties throughout 2022. This includes evaluating:

- whether citizens could participate freely and safely in both formal and informal economic activities;
- whether they felt secure on their land, be it farmland, mining areas, or residential plots, without the constant fear of eviction or home demolition.

5. Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013 (Amendment (No 20) Act) s 52.

6. See Val Livingston, Breshell Jackson-Nevels and Velur Vedvikash Reddy, 'Social, Cultural, and Economic Determinants of Well-Being' (2022) 2 Encyclopedia of Social Sciences 1183.

7. See Constitution of Zimbabwe ss 64, 65, 71, 72, 74.

All of these factors are integral to a thorough understanding of not only personal security but also the state of peace in Zimbabwe in 2022 and beyond.

What does personal security have to do with peace?

A peaceful society ensures the personal security of all its citizens. It is established on the bedrock of civic trust, which refers to both public faith in government institutions (trust in the State) and confidence that fellow citizens abide by shared norms and standards (trust in others/mutual normative reciprocity).⁸ Therefore, the transparency, accountability, and fairness of public institutions serve as significant influences on civic trust. Similarly, equality before the law and non-discrimination are essential for fostering mutual trust among citizens. Together, these aspects of civic trust form the foundation of a society that assures personal security for all. Correspondingly, the lack of civic trust jeopardizes not only personal security but also peace within a society.

As underlined in the 2021 State of the Peace Report, citizens who lack security might not be exposed to overt forms of violence, like physical harm, but they are nevertheless susceptible to covert forms of violence. These indirect forms of violence

include structural violence, which stems from systemic societal structures, policies, or practices that foster social inequality and limit access to basic needs and opportunities, and cultural violence, where societal beliefs and norms are used to validate or normalize harm and inequality.

Consequently, the assessment of the state of peace in Zimbabwe during the year 2022 starts by examining foundational elements related to personal security and civic trust. ZimRights' people-centred approach to peace and security, which sets it apart from process-centric and top-down studies of peace in Zimbabwe, not only interrogates the framework for peace in Zimbabwe using civic trust as a benchmark but also investigates how policies and laws are applied and how they affect the personal security of citizens. It also considers citizens' perceptions of personal security. This comprehensive methodology poses three fundamental questions:

- Does Zimbabwe have a sufficient framework to assure the personal security of its citizens?
- To what extent is the personal security of all citizens guaranteed in Zimbabwe?
- Do citizens feel secure in Zimbabwe?

This discussion establishes the context for subsequent deeper conversations about the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

8. See Pablo De Greiff, 'Theorizing Transitional Justice' (2012) 51 Nomos 31, 44–48.



The Government of Zimbabwe should uphold the constitution for peace to prevail



Measuring peace in Zimbabwe



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Chapter 2

ASSESSING PERSONAL SECURITY IN ZIMBABWE

The Context of Insecurity

Zimbabwe has a significant history of repression, particularly against dissenting voices. Even when citizens are not directly targeted for reprisal for exercising fundamental rights or voicing dissent or criticism against the government, they still experience the '*chilling effect*' of such violence. Attacks on activists and dissenters, together with a culture of impunity for perpetrators of human rights

abuses, discourage citizens from exercising their fundamental rights and freely engaging in civic processes. Furthermore, a general state of social and economic vulnerability intensifies the insecurity of citizens. This insecurity stems from factors such as the selective application of the law and economic insecurity caused by an unpredictable hyperinflationary economic environment, the lack of land property titles, job insecurity, and weak protection of livelihoods especially for nearly 90 per cent of Zimbabweans involved in informal economic activities.



90%

**of Zimbabweans are
involved in informal
economic activities.**

In most aspects of life, the ruling political party has replaced the State as the guarantor of personal security. The State has been captured by economic cartels in Zimbabwe, resulting in corruption and illicit financial flow.⁹ A system of patron-client relationships disproportionately rewards

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If you constantly have to appear in court on unnecessary charges it can be draining. If you look behind you and see that a car has been following you for days, or the phone keeps ringing and someone is telling you they will kill you it is bad. The family also suffers. My wife is always on tenterhooks because of my work. If she just sees a car she doesn't know parked outside of our house she is scared”

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INTERVIEW WITH
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST (NAME WITHHELD),
OCTOBER 4, 2006

supporters of the ruling party while punishing those perceived to be in opposition. The net effect of this political patronage is that citizens are often forced to pledge support to ZANU-PF to access scarce opportunities and gain some measure of personal security.

9. See 'Report on Cartel Power Dynamics in Zimbabwe' (Daily Maverick - South Africa 2021).

The macroeconomic impact of this State capture and the resulting pervasive grand corruption is substantial, with an estimated 1.8 billion in national revenue lost annually.¹⁰ However, for the purposes of this report, it is also important to highlight particularly how the conflation of State and party has adversely affected the personal security of citizens and ultimately the state of peace in Zimbabwe. Compromised public institutions and partisan enforcement of the law have eroded civic trust, affecting both public confidence in the government and mutual trust among citizens. To fully comprehend this erosion, it is worthwhile to compare the normative framework that guarantees the personal security of citizens with the actual circumstances on the ground in 2022.

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I looked at my friends who came from a ZANU PF background and managed to secure scholarships. I looked at my peers within the opposition. I said to myself – what’s in there for me?”

Framework for the Protection of Personal Security in Zimbabwe

Ideally, every Zimbabwean should be at peace, secure from personal and socio-economic threats, under the protection of the law, the State, and its institutions. Founding values defining Zimbabwe as a republic, such as the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, equality, and good governance, are prerequisites for guaranteeing personal security and fostering peace.

Consequently, discussions regarding the state of peace in Zimbabwe cannot be separated from a reflection on the country’s performance concerning the foundational tenets that qualify Zimbabwe as a democracy and a republic.

Indeed, the slogan popularized by the late former Vice President John Landa Nkomo within the framework of the Organ for

10. <https://www.herald.co.zw/zimbabwe-losing-us18-billion-to-corruption-annually/> i Marjoke Oosterom and Simbarashe Gukurume, ‘The Risk of Authoritarian Renewal in Zimbabwe: Understanding ZANU-PF Youth’ (Chr Michelsen Institute 2023) CMI Brief no. 2023:1.

National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration rings true: *“Peace begins with me, peace begins with you, peace begins with all of us.”*¹¹ However, it is also important to acknowledge that peace does not exist in a vacuum. Sustainable peace thrives in a conducive environment that guarantees personal security for all citizens, upholds human rights, encourages equality, and advances inclusive development.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe defines the normative framework for safeguarding personal security and, consequently, promoting peace in the country. The Constitution establishes peace as a primary national objective and mandates the government, along with all its institutions and agencies at every level, to foster peace and safeguard fundamental rights and freedoms.¹² Essentially, the Constitution, which includes a comprehensive Bill of Rights, outlines the necessary elements for establishing an ideal environment where citizens can feel secure and live in peace.

This favourable environment is characterized by an empowered citizenry fully aware of their rights and dedicated to respecting the rights of others. It also involves a democratically elected government that upholds the rule of law and functions at all levels to respect protect, promote, and fulfil rights and freedoms.

Within such a state, citizens benefit from legal protection against threats to their physical well-being, economic and property rights, as well as their social and cultural well-being. The Constitution protects all these aspects of personal security and further guarantees citizens’ food security and ecological safety.¹³



11. <https://www.herald.co.zw/nation-remembers-the-peacemaker/>

12. See Constitution of Zimbabwe ss 2, 11, 44.

13. *ibid* 15, 73, 77.

While it is important to note that ensuring personal security across various aspects of citizens' lives does not automatically result in a state of peace, personal security does create an environment conducive to achieving peace. The relationship between the State and its citizens ultimately shapes and defines how individuals relate to one another and influences the way citizens lead their lives. The normative framework for protecting personal security contributes to the realization of peace at the national level, which subsequently extends to peace within communities (societal peace), fosters peaceful relationships between individuals (interpersonal peace), and supports inner peace within citizens (intrapersonal peace).

Therefore, when assessing the peace infrastructure in Zimbabwe, it would be inadequate to solely focus on the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) or its successor while overlooking the impact of state institutions and agencies that influence various aspects of personal security at all levels. The security services, comprising the police, army, and intelligence, directly affect the personal security of citizens and the overall state of peace in Zimbabwe. The same holds for other government bodies such as the judiciary, traditional leadership, local councils, and other public entities.

The functioning of all these state institutions determines the degree to which citizens in Zimbabwe can experience security and peace. It is this comprehensive understanding of the peace infrastructure in Zimbabwe that serves as the basis for the subsequent evaluation of personal security and peace in Zimbabwe during the reporting period.

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We are the people. We are the air force. We are the army. We are the police. We determine who can do mining in Zimbabwe. We determine who can construct a railway line; we determine who can build a road in Zimbabwe. No other party can do so.

PRESIDENT EMMERSON MNANGAGWA,
7 MAY 2019

The Erosion of the Rule of Law as a Threat to Peace and Security

The rule of law is vital in guaranteeing the personal security of citizens and cultivating sustainable peace. Simply put, the rule of law means everyone, including the government and its agencies, must act according to the law. The rule of law is essential in building civic trust by ensuring

that all citizens are treated equally and public institutions operate within the parameters defined by the law, thereby fostering trust among citizens and public confidence in State institutions. By ensuring that everyone is treated equally and protected under the law, the rule of law safeguards the personal security of all citizens.

Additionally, the rule of law is the cornerstone of a peaceful society. It provides a structure to resolve societal disputes, effectively balance power, and protect individual rights and freedoms. A functional legal system prevents citizens from harming others and resorting to personal revenge. Therefore, the rule of law offers non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms that enable peaceful dispute settlement among individuals and groups, reducing the need for violent confrontation. Without key rule of law institutions such as traditional leadership, police and courts grievances and disputes might escalate into violence that sets in motion a cycle of conflict and instability.

Numerous reports have been assembled regarding the status of the rule of law in Zimbabwe, highlighting how the deterioration of public institutions and independent oversight mechanisms has led to an erosion of the rule of law.

This report expands on these findings but pivots away from a top-down perspective centred on the institutions, shifting towards a bottom-up view of citizens' experiences interacting with compromised and weakened public institutions. The aim is to underscore how this erosion of the rule of law affects personal security and the quest for sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.

This people-centred approach spotlights the struggles that citizens face daily when they interact with weak or compromised institutions that are otherwise meant to safeguard their rights, personal security, and enforce peace. Carefully studying citizens' interactions with institutions like the police, courts, and traditional leadership provides a nuanced understanding of how the erosion of the rule of law has direct and significant impacts on individual safety and societal peace. This approach allows for an assessment of the human impact of institutional decay in Zimbabwe.



The Human Cost of Selective Application of the Law in Zimbabwe

Breaches of peace and personal security violations, such as physical harm or property rights infringement, are outlawed in Zimbabwe. The criminal code defines the rules, statutes, and regulations that govern conduct in Zimbabwe, defining acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and proposing measures to address these breaches.¹⁴ By deterring harmful actions, safeguarding individuals, and preserving order, criminal law significantly contributes to societal peace and stability. Similarly, police officers, entrusted to enforce these criminal laws, serve as ‘*peace officers*’,¹⁵ their task being to maintain and promote peace, safety, and order within communities.

However, for criminal law to function effectively as a peace-promoting instrument, it must not inherently infringe on human rights and should be administered fairly, without bias or favouritism.

Similarly, for police officers and other security service members, who are mandated to ensure that citizens live equally in “*liberty, peace, and harmony, free from fear, and in prosperity*”,¹⁶ to fulfil this role, they must behave professionally and impartially, without violating fundamental rights and freedoms.

14. See Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] (Act 23/2004).

15. *ibid* 175.

16. Constitution of Zimbabwe s 208(2).

In 2022, the weaponization of criminal law in Zimbabwe continued, as evident in the way it was deployed to suppress dissenting voices. Several individuals viewed as opposition to the government were arrested on dubious charges. These included 17 members of the opposition political party, the Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC), who were apprehended in the high-density suburb of Nyatsime in Chitungwiza. Job Sikhala, CCC's Vice National Chairman, was arrested on June 11, 2022, at the funeral of Moreblessing Ali, a CCC activist who went missing and whose body was later found mutilated and decomposing. As of the time of this report's publication, Sikhala remains in pre-trial detention.

Other individuals affected by the selective application of the law and judicial harassment in 2022 include Robson Chere, Secretary General of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), who was arrested and charged with murder. Obert Masaraure, the ARTUZ president, was apprehended on accusations of defeating the course of justice, and 16 University of Zimbabwe students were arrested for participating in a protest. Two members of the Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP) were arrested while

trying to submit a petition protesting the transfer of their incarcerated colleagues from Khami to Chikurubi Maximum and Gwanda Prison. The list of activists and individuals who were unjustly arrested, denied bail, detained, and usually released before trial in 2022 is extensive.¹⁷

However, beyond the flagrant violation of rights and the suffering endured by the victims of such unjustified arrests, these incidents have broader detrimental effects on citizens' sense of personal security and peace. The message conveyed by the selective application of the law, partisan policing, and judicial harassment is that anyone, regardless of their innocence or adherence to the law, could become a target if their actions, beliefs, or associations are deemed a threat or simply undesirable by the authorities. This creates an environment of fear and insecurity where citizens might feel compelled to censor themselves, limit their activities, or dissociate from certain groups or movements for fear of being the next target. This climate not only stifles freedom of speech and assembly but also erodes trust in public institutions. Ultimately, the rule of law, which should serve as a cornerstone of a democratic society and a guarantor of personal security and peace, is

17. See 'The Full Story - A Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum Report on Human Rights in Zimbabwe (July-December 2022)' (2023). 'The 2022 Zimbabwe Country Report on Human Rights Practices' (US Embassy in Zimbabwe 2023). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/zimbabwe-conviction-and-sentencing-of-opposition-leader/>

undermined, leading to a more unstable and divided society.

In addition to this, the persistent impunity for politically motivated violence, excessive use of force, and acts of violence perpetrated on citizens by members of the security services continued in 2022. This further heightened citizens' vulnerability, eroded personal security, and instilled fear. This is particularly the case as another round of elections is looming, as the majority of Zimbabweans have either been subjected to, witnessed, or have been indirectly affected by the repeated cycles of violence that have come with each election in Zimbabwe since 1980.

This persistent culture of impunity in Zimbabwe traces back to Clemency Order (1) of April 18, 1988, which granted amnesty to state security forces and so-called dissidents implicated in gross human rights abuses between 1982 and the end of 1987 in Midlands and Matabeleland. 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 the ruling party, ZANU PF, or are members of security services working to further ZANU PF interests can attack them and escape unpunished for their offences. With the protection of the law essentially removed, even when there are no active acts of politically motivated violence being committed, citizens are condemned to perpetual fear.¹⁸

This is the backdrop against which we should understand the personal security of citizens and the state of peace in Zimbabwe: a pervasive culture of impunity for human rights violations, weakened or compromised public institutions, and a continuous erosion of the rule of law. An assessment of the state of peace in Zimbabwe that ignores these underlying factors, focusing solely on instances of overt violence, fails to discern the paralyzing effects of fear on the public psyche.

For individuals and communities affected by recurrent episodes of political violence in Zimbabwe, mere threats are sufficient to restrict their free exercise of fundamental rights, coercing them to trade their vote for some semblance of personal security.

18. See 'Perpetual Fear: Impunity and Cycles of Violence in Zimbabwe' (Human Rights Watch 2011).



Thousands of Zimbabweans have consistently cast their ballots but have never truly voted.

Consequently, as we approach the 2023 election, it is disheartening to acknowledge that thousands of Zimbabweans have consistently cast their ballots but have never truly voted.

Such individuals have always lived in an environment of fear and have never experienced the personal security necessary for them to freely express their political choices through their vote. Understanding that personal security is critical not only for the exercise of rights and freedoms but also as a cornerstone of sustainable peace, it is worth reflecting on the extent to which citizens felt secure in 2022.

How secure were citizens in 2022?

The inquiry regarding the security of citizens in 2022 appears overly broad. This is largely because experiences and perceptions of personal security are shaped and influenced by numerous variables. However, for this report, political affiliation is spotlighted as a pivotal determinant influencing the degree of

personal security enjoyed by diverse segments of Zimbabwe's population.

The emphasis on political affiliation as a key determinant of personal security should not be misconstrued to mean it is the sole factor affecting personal security. Instead, this is because historically, political polarization has repeatedly proven to be one of the chief drivers of conflict in Zimbabwe. In 2022, as elections loomed imminent, political tensions were escalating, and the impacts of political affiliation on personal security, and by extension, peace, were becoming increasingly conspicuous.

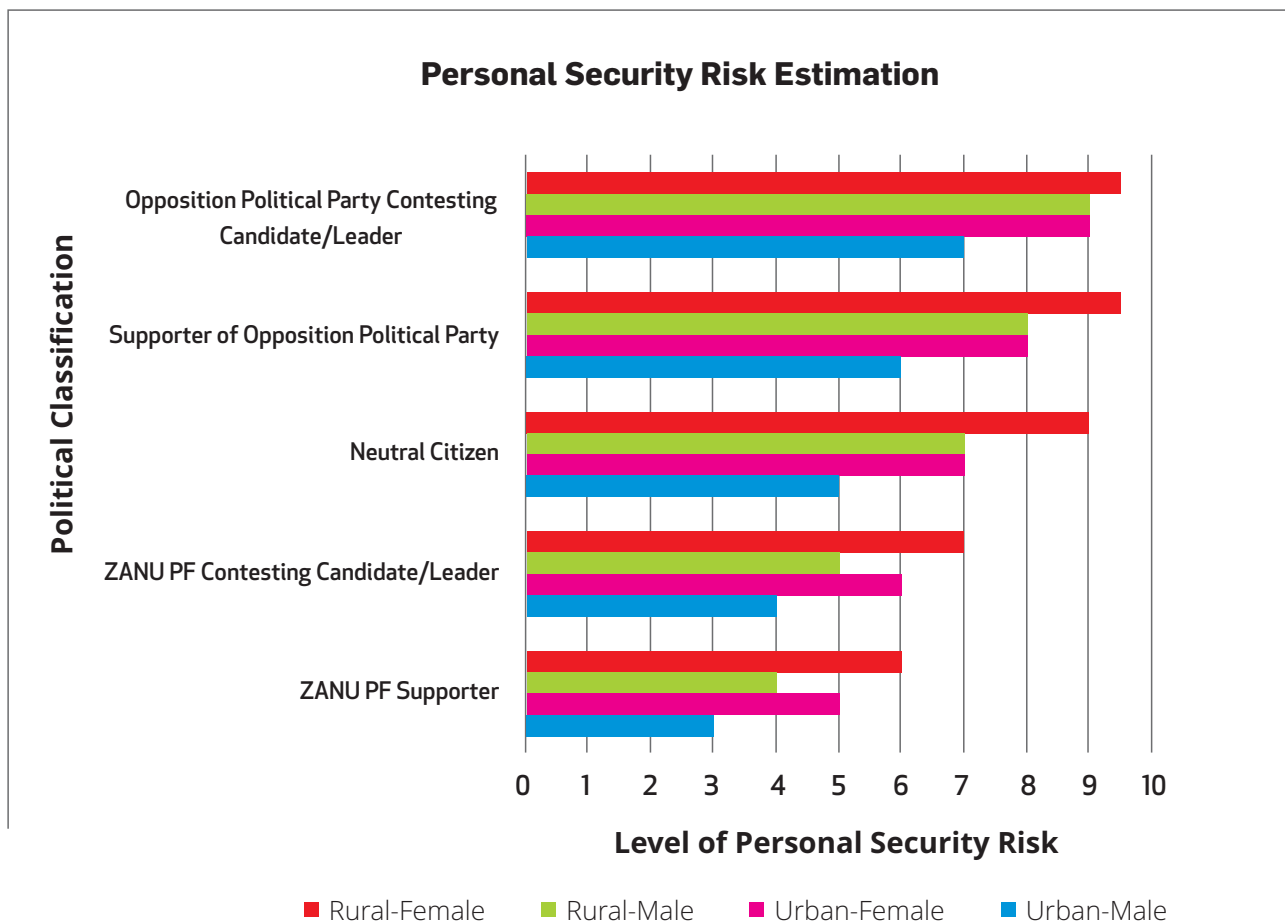
It is important to clarify from the outset that the term '*political affiliation*', within the context of this report, is used in a wide sense. It includes not only party membership and voting behaviour but also ideological alignment. In this framework, political affiliation is not solely dictated by how citizens identify themselves but also by how they are viewed by political actors in Zimbabwe. As a result, even if many individuals or civil society organizations (CSOs) identify themselves as apolitical, their positions on government policies may lead to political actors attributing political affiliation to them. This attributed political identity then determines the perceptions and experiences of individuals concerning personal security.

A simplified heuristic model is provided below to depict a generalized impression of how political affiliation and different levels of political participation correlate to levels of personal security risks faced by different individuals in Zimbabwe. The model provided below is not empirical but is a generalized depiction of the situation as noted by ZimRights through engagement

with communities on the ground. It does not capture all the nuances and complexities related to personal security in Zimbabwe. However, it provides an insightful guide into the interplay between political affiliation and personal security, which ultimately has a bearing on the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

Data Interpretation

The figure provided above reflects ZimRights findings and from this model, we can deduce the following general trends:



1. Elevated risk for politically active individuals

As individuals become more politically active, their personal security risk increases. This is true whether individuals are contesting candidates or leaders for a political party.

2. Gender-based risk discrepancy

Women face higher personal security risks across all categories compared to their male counterparts, indicating a persistent gender inequality issue.

3. Rural-urban disparity

Personal security risk is higher for individuals living in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas, suggesting that location significantly influences the level of perceived security.

4. Security implications of political affiliation

Affiliation with the ruling ZANU PF party is associated with lower personal security risks compared to supporters and candidates of the opposition party.

5. Neutrality offers some protection

Neutral citizens, who are not politically active, face lower personal security risks compared to opposition party supporters, but their risk level is still higher than that of ZANU PF supporters. This shows that political neutrality offers some degree of protection but is not as safe as supporting the ruling party.

6. Risk among party affiliates

As individuals become more politically active, their personal security risk increases. This is true whether individuals are contesting candidates or leaders for a political party.

7. Highest risks for opposition leaders

Contesting candidates and leaders from opposition political parties face the highest personal security risks, indicating a challenging environment for political opposition.

8. Higher risk for rural female opposition leaders

The highest personal security risk score (10) is assigned to female opposition party contesting candidates or leaders in rural areas, signifying a combination of political, gender, and location factors exacerbating their risk.

9. Role of misconstrued neutrality

The fact that neutral citizens still face considerable security risk suggests that neutrality might often be misunderstood as supporting the opposition, thereby increasing their exposure to threats.

10. Overall insecurity

Despite varying levels, personal security risk is a significant concern across all categories, pointing to a pervasive issue of insecurity in the country's socio-political landscape.

As stated above, these findings provide a general impression of the political dynamics that determine the personal risk faced by different individuals in Zimbabwe. Variables that might nuance these findings include the categorization of various forms of personal security risks and the levels at which they manifest. For instance, some opposition leaders may face less personal risks concerning physical assault due to their prominence but are nonetheless more susceptible to judicial harassment and other forms of attacks that may not be blatantly illegal but are perpetrated under the guise of the law.

It is also worth noting that, although opposition political party supporters, activists, and leaders generally face higher personal security risks than ZANU-PF affiliates, this situation might shift due to factionalism within the ruling party. Infighting within a political party can make individuals targets for attacks by fellow party members.

Many more nuances can be added to qualify the general finding presented above. However, it remains true that political polarization is one of the key conflict drivers in Zimbabwe, and political affiliation is a key determinant of the level of personal risk faced by citizens.

Mapping ‘insecurities’ in Zimbabwe

So far, the focus has been on threats to personal security and peace stemming from the misuse of the criminal justice system, particularly evident through instances of malicious arrest and prosecution. However, beyond these direct and conspicuous acts of violence against citizens, there exist more subtle, structural forms of violence.

These insidious forms of violence contribute to the perpetuation of the state of insecurity in which most Zimbabwean citizens find themselves. A selection of these socioeconomic ‘insecurities’ are briefly highlighted below, offering a glimpse into how the pervasive vulnerability and threats to sustainable peace that infiltrate all aspects of life.

As will be discussed further below, many of the insecurities ordinary Zimbabweans face originate from the intentional disempowerment of citizens by the ruling elites. For instance, the government has allowed traditional informal settlements (such as Churu Farm, Gunhill, Epworth, those along the Mukuvisi River, and the Pomona Dump Site in Harare) as well as newer settlements (like Caledonia, Saturday Retreat, Amsterdam, Retreat, Eyecourt,

Border Gezi, and Stoneridge in Harare, along with Gimboki South in Mutare) to emerge and proliferate.¹⁹ This situation has led to thousands of citizens living on land without legal title, effectively at the mercy of the ruling party. These individuals are susceptible to control and coercion by those who present themselves as their benefactors. They may be at *'peace'* in their communities, narrowly understood to mean they are not experiencing direct forms of violence, but they are nevertheless trapped in a state of insecurity that limits their rights and freedoms.

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The majority of Zimbabweans are experiencing *'tyrannical peace'*

Similar examples are highlighted below to show how the majority of Zimbabweans are experiencing *'tyrannical peace'*, a form of seemingly non-violent order that is maintained through fear, suppression of dissent, and exclusionary control over resources, rather than through respect for human rights, civic trust, justice, and genuine social harmony.²⁰

The Politicization of Vending spaces

According to the Labour Force Survey conducted in Zimbabwe in 2014, a staggering

94.5%

of employment within the country is characterized as informal. A substantial number of the estimated

5.9 million

people working informally in Zimbabwe are vendors. Additionally, as stated in the 2018 Assessment of the Contribution of Street Vending to the Zimbabwe Economy, about

86.6%

of street vendors rely solely on this form of trade as their primary source of income.²¹



19. See Kudzai Chatiza and Pardon Gatora, 'The Varying Shades of Settlement Informality in Zimbabwe's Urban Areas and How This Impacts Public Sector Regularisation Attitudes and Responses' (2021) 3 Journal of Urban Systems and Innovations for Resilience in Zimbabwe 38.

20. Christian Davenport, 'State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace' (2007) 44 Journal of Peace Research 485.

21. See <https://www.undp.org/zimbabwe/blog/navigating-informality-patterns-categorization-street-vending>

The insecurity faced by most street vendors and other informal traders stems not only from their lack of vending licenses but also from the politicization of stalls and spaces where they can sell their goods.²² Even following the relaxation of COVID-19 related regulations, which essentially outlawed vending, vendors continued to face harassment and had their stalls and trading sites destroyed by both the Harare municipal police and the Zimbabwe Republic Police. The continued closure of Mupedzanhamo, one of the largest markets for second-hand clothing in Harare, sparked turf wars between ‘*space barons*’ from the ruling ZANU PF and opposing CCC, who all demanded protection fees from vendors for them to secure spaces to conduct their trade.²³

The vulnerability of so-called ‘*illegal street vendors*’ was demonstrated in 2022, as evidenced by news reports that in October, vendors at Mbudzi roundabout in Harare were forced by alleged ZANU PF youths to pay a US\$1 condolence token following the death of the late national hero, Highten Nkomo.²⁴ It is also clear that vendors have been consistently barred from conducting their trade whenever ZANU PF events occur

within the vicinity of their market stalls. Reports also indicate that besides being forced to close shop, vendors have been coerced into attending ruling party functions under threat of being ejected from their stalls if they do not comply, a situation that persists to this day.²⁵

Living in Fear of the Bulldozer

The predicament of citizens in informal settlements has been highlighted earlier. However, it is important to note that the insecurity experienced by settlers occupying land without any legal title is also shared by thousands of other Zimbabweans who have bought land from ‘*land barons*’ affiliated with the ruling party.



22. For detailed discussion of the politicization of vending in Zimbabwe, see Enock Ndawana, ‘The Political Exploitation and Human (In) Security of Illegal Street Vendors in the Post-Colonial Urban Informal Sector of Harare in Zimbabwe’ (2022) 4 *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities* 875686.

23. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/news/article/103964/zanu-pf-group-terrorises-traders>

24. <https://www.newsday.co.zw/thestandard/local-news/article/200001480/vendors-forced-to-pay-us1-condolence-tokens>

25. <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/zanu-pf-frog-marches-vendors-to-vp-chiwenga-rally-stalls-forced-to-close/>

These land barons have invaded large tracts of land in Harare, Chitungwiza, and other areas, which they subsequently sell to citizens. Typically, the citizens only have agreements of sale but no title deeds for the land they inhabit. This precarious situation of residing on land without legal title also impacts citizens who have invaded lands or have settled as so-called ‘squatters’ on private and government-owned land. Even small-scale farmers who possess government-issued offer letters for the land they live and farm on are not exempt from the fear of eviction.

Even following the devastating effects of Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, the demolition of houses in urban and peri-urban areas remains a recurring phenomenon.²⁶ Residents in parts of Chitungwiza, Epworth, Glenview, and even seemingly affluent suburbs like Arlington Estate live in constant fear of bulldozers, as both government and local councils threaten to demolish their homes.²⁷ This insecurity has been leveraged by the ruling party to gain support from desperate residents in exchange for their continued stay in informal settlements or promises to ‘regularize’ their settlements and provide

them with title deeds. As a result, property rights, which are guaranteed by the Constitution of Zimbabwe and are entitlements of all Zimbabweans, have been hijacked and subverted into a political tool to garner support and votes.

The Vulnerability of Villagers

The heightened vulnerability of villagers living on communal lands in rural parts of Zimbabwe is worth highlighting. According to the law, all communal land in Zimbabwe is vested in the President.²⁸ As such, the government has ruled out the possibility of villagers receiving title deeds to the communal land they occupy. Essentially, this policy seems to continue the exclusionary system of ‘native reserves’ introduced by the colonial regime, which denied a large portion of the black population the legal right to land ownership.²⁹

The insecurity and vulnerability of villagers living on communal lands became even more apparent in 2022, with reports of villagers in Mutoko being threatened with eviction to make way for Chinese companies mining black granite in the area.³⁰

26. See Beacon Mbiba, ‘The Mystery of Recurrent Housing Demolitions in Urban Zimbabwe’ (2022) 27 International Planning Studies 320.

27. <https://www.herald.co.zw/arlington-retreat-properties-face-demolition-warns-muguti/>

28. Communal Land Act [Chapter 20:04] s 4.

29. Mark Nyandoro, ‘Land and Agrarian Policy in Colonial Zimbabwe: Re-Ordering of African Society and Development in Sanyati, 1950-1966’ (2019) 64 Historia.

30. <https://www.voanews.com/a/zimbabwe-villagers-fear-being-evicted-to-make-way-for-chinese-quarry-mining-company/6423911.html>



Villagers living on communal lands face:

- (i) land tenure insecurity,
- (ii) ecological insecurity,
- (iii) food insecurity and other threats to their personal security.

It became clear that even villagers who had occupied the same land for decades, passing it down from generation to generation, remained insecure on the land they considered their own. This land tenure insecurity leaves villages acutely vulnerable to intimidation.

Villagers also bear the brunt of climate change. They have to contend with cyclones, droughts and floods. The devastating effects of Cyclone Idai in areas such as Chimanimani and Chipinge are testimony to the ecological insecurity of people living in these areas.³¹

Villagers in areas adjacent to national parks such as Mabale and Siyalwindi, which are

next to the Hwange national parks also have to contend with losing livestock and crops to wild animals.³² All these factors in most cases leave Zimbabweans in rural parts of Zimbabwe facing food insecurity. During the 2021-2022 farming season, it was estimated that more than 3.8 million people in rural areas faced food insecurity.³³

To worsen this situation, the traditional leadership entrusted by the law to administer communal lands and perform other functions that directly affect the lives of Zimbabweans living in the rural areas have mostly been co-opted by ZANU PF.³⁴

31. See Kudzai Chatiza, 'Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe: An Analysis of Policy Implications for Post-Disaster Institutional Development to Strengthen Disaster Risk Management' (Oxfam International 2019).

32. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/5/6/in-zimbabwe-conflict-escalates-between-elephants-and-humans> '

33. WFP Zimbabwe Country Brief' (World Food Programme 2023).

34. Tafadzwa Christmas, 'Rights and Traditions: Traditional Leadership, Politics and Human Rights in Zimbabwe' (Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) 2022).

Poverty as a Form of Violence

Ultimately, one of the primary sources of insecurity for most Zimbabweans is poverty. This extends beyond mere lack of money to encompass various forms of deprivation that the impoverished face, such as homelessness, poor health or malnutrition, a lack of clean water or electricity, poor quality of work, or limited access to education.³⁵ This wide range of disadvantages that disproportionately affect those living in poverty constitutes a form of structural violence. Autocratic governments often benefit from poverty, and in turn, repressive regimes reinforce conditions of poverty. Impoverished individuals and communities are easier for such states to control. They are more susceptible to coercion through necessities such as food and clothing, which they lack. This plays into the hands of repressive states, who can use such necessities to enforce compliance. This is the primary reason behind the politicization of food aid, a common occurrence in rural areas ravaged by droughts.

ZimRights community monitors have also noted that before the outbreak of politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe, youth are often '*bribed*' with meagre sums of money,



food, and alcohol to perpetrate the attacks at the behest of political elites. Therefore, the high unemployment rates among Zimbabwean youth pose a threat to peace and security, as impoverished youth are highly vulnerable to manipulation and abuse.

Poverty is also one of the main threats to family life in Zimbabwe. Child marriages in Zimbabwe are often driven by poverty. It is estimated that over 1 million girls in Zimbabwe were married as children, with more than 1 in 3 (34%) young women aged 20–24 years having been married before age 18, and 5% married before the age of 15. The primary drivers of child marriages in Zimbabwe are poverty and more specifically, food insecurity in low-income households.³⁶

35. This broad understanding of poverty is termed 'multidimensional poverty'. See https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wess/wess_dev_issues/dsp_policy_03.pdf

36. 'Understanding Child Marriage in Food-Insecure Communities in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe' (Plan International 2022).



Poverty is a form of violence.

It is not possible to capture exhaustively all the pervasive effects of multidimensional poverty in Zimbabwe, but from the brief discussion above, it should be apparent that poverty is a form of violence.³⁷ It is a sign of structural violence, which causes and worsens other forms of vulnerability and insecurity. Consequently, any talk of peace and security in Zimbabwe that ignores the issue of multidimensional poverty is severely limited and ineffective. Poverty reduction should be an integral aspect of peacebuilding in Zimbabwe because as long as many Zimbabweans remain trapped in multidimensional poverty, they are vulnerable, insecure, and unable to experience positive peace.

The preceding analysis of personal security in Zimbabwe and the mapping of insecurities affecting the majority of its citizens provide the foundation for the forthcoming assessment of the state of peace.

The ensuing chapter revisits the contextual framework within which peace is

conceptualized and experienced by Zimbabweans.

It commences by evaluating the benchmarks that have been employed to measure peace in Zimbabwe based on top-down evaluations, before delving into the bottom-up perspectives of peace as understood and assessed by individuals and communities within the country. Given the vastness of ZimRights membership, which totals over 250,000 members spanning the entire length and breadth of Zimbabwe, it is not feasible to encapsulate all their viewpoints within this report.

Nevertheless, some sample data from selected communities in Bulawayo, Matabeleland South, and Masvingo Provinces are provided to exemplify citizens' perspectives concerning the state of peace in Zimbabwe.



Poor service delivery is a major concern across the country

37. See Josephine AV Allen, 'Poverty as a Form of Violence: A Structural Perspective' (2001) 4 Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment 45.



03

Chapter 3

MEASURING PEACE IN ZIMBABWE

Findings on the state of peace in Zimbabwe fluctuate significantly, largely depending on how peace is defined, who is conducting the evaluation, the perspective from which this assessment is made, and the benchmarks utilized in this measurement. For instance, according to the 2022 Global Peace Index, Zimbabwe's rank improved from 127 in 2021 to 124 in 2022.

The metrics used to substantiate this claimed improvement in Zimbabwe's state of peace were primarily linked to enhanced "governance performance", particularly in the areas of government effectiveness and accountability.³⁸ However, the crucial question remains whether Zimbabwe's citizens actually experienced these supposed improvements in their nation's state of peace during 2022.

Before engaging with the perceptions of citizens concerning the state of peace in Zimbabwe, it is important to note that, in stark contrast to the alleged 'improvements' in peace according to the 2022 Global Peace Index, Zimbabwe did not fare as well on other indices.

Zimbabwe was ranked 134 out of 137 on the World Happiness Index, which attempts to measure a country's happiness based on the level of satisfaction citizens have with their lives.³⁹ Based solely on these findings, it appears that Zimbabweans are among the top four unhappiest people in the world, only slightly better off than citizens of Sierra Leone, Lebanon, and Afghanistan.

In terms of the rule of law, Zimbabwe retained its position in 2022 at 124 out of

140 states, indicating no significant change and continued weak adherence to the rule of law by the government.⁴⁰ Civic space in Zimbabwe remained repressed. According to the 2022 CIVICUS Monitor, the country scored a mere 34 points out of a possible 100.⁴¹ The restriction of civic space in Zimbabwe was further exacerbated by the government's introduction of the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Bill. Compounding this, as previously discussed, the human rights situation in Zimbabwe continued to deteriorate in 2022. This was evident in the escalating threats to personal security, the lack of political will to ensure justice for serious past abuses primarily committed by state security forces, and an increase in cases of attacks and judicial harassment of opposition politicians and activists.⁴²



What peace, what justice?
Whose peace, whose justice?
How can we be peaceful, where
there is no peace, or just where
there is no justice?

ALBERT NYATHI

38. 'Global Peace Index 2023: Measuring Peace in a Complex World' (Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) 2023) 9, 70, 71.

39. See <https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2023/WHR+23.pdf>

40. 'Rule of Law Index 2022' (World Justice Project 2022).

41. 'People Power Under Attack : A Report Based on Data from the CIVICUS Monitor 2022' (CIVICUS 2023).

42. See <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/zimbabwe>



Considering all these factors, we must ask if a country with unhappy citizens, weak adherence to the rule of law, severely restricted civic space, and escalating rights violations be characterized as peaceful. The search for an answer to this question naturally leads to another concerning how peace is defined and understood in Zimbabwe.

Redefining Peace in Zimbabwe

As mentioned earlier in this report, most Zimbabweans have been conditioned by the ruling elites to perceive peace as simply the absence of violence. The official narrative of peace, propagated by the State, places substantial emphasis on the violence that typified the liberation struggle, the civil wars experienced by neighbouring countries, and to a lesser extent, election-related and politically motivated violence during the 2008 elections.

As a result, individuals and communities affected by violence during the liberation struggle, Gukurahundi atrocities and episodes of political upheavals throughout the country's history are consistently bombarded with reminders of past violence by political elites in what is presented as a celebration of the hard-earned peace. This brand of 'peace', marked by a cessation of direct violence and calls for *'forgiving and forgetting'* in the name of reconciliation, is devoid of justice or reparations for victims.



Chinokanganwa idemo,
chitsiga hachikanganwe/
kukhohlwa ihloka kodwa
isihlahla kasikhohlwa /
the axe can forget but
the tree never forgets"

It is crucial to acknowledge that when former aggressors advocate for peace, referencing the devastating consequences of past violence, which they instigated, such appeals for peace function as veiled threats. This communicates that the existing absence of direct violence owes to the aggressors' restraint and that survivors of previous violence enjoy this form of *'peace'* thanks to the benevolence of the aggressor. There is no assurance that the violence will not recur, as the institutions that sponsored and committed the violence remain in place, and past offenders retain power and control over the instruments of violence.

Accordingly, the initial step toward achieving lasting peace in Zimbabwe involves redefining what *'peace'* signifies for all citizens. In alignment with ZimRights' Shifting Power to the People Strategy (SP2P), it is the citizens who should articulate what constitutes credible, lasting, and meaningful peace. More specifically, victims of all forms of violence should take the lead in defining what peace means to them. Peace should not be seen as the

inverse of harm, paid for by blind compliance and maintained by civic disengagement. Instead, it should serve both as a precondition for, and a catalyst to, active citizenship, manifesting as Zimbabweans participating freely in civic processes at all levels. Peace must be intertwined with guarantees of personal security and the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms. It should not be separate from sustainable and inclusive development, aimed at providing citizens with an adequate standard of living and fostering equality and non-discrimination. It encompasses not just *'passive peace'*, which aims to end violence, but also *'active peace'*, which extends beyond this to foster a society grounded in civic trust, justice, and equality.

Using the benchmarks of peace defined above, ZimRights engaged communities all over Zimbabwe to detoxify them from the indoctrination of negative peace. This effort focused on educating citizens to unlearn the narrow interpretation of peace as simply the absence of war or politically motivated violence. As part of its comprehensive community engagement under the Right to Peace Campaign, ZimRights collected the following findings, which reflect citizens' views on the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

Community Voices: Citizens' perceptions of peace in Zimbabwe

ZimRights' Right to Peace Campaign is based on the robust foundation of the eight pillars of positive peace we previously discussed.



However, instead of assessing the state of peace in Zimbabwe from a top-down perspective of positive peace benchmarks, ZimRights involved local communities through a series of focus group discussions. This engagement with local communities enabled the construction of a people-centred perspective of the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

This methodology prioritizes the voices and narratives of the Zimbabwean citizens themselves, highlighting their lived experiences, aspirations, and challenges in

a way that more detached evaluations might overlook. Consequently, ZimRights can create a comprehensive, people-centred assessment of the state of peace in Zimbabwe. The insights gathered from these focus group discussions serve as a guide for tailoring initiatives and interventions to directly address the specific concerns of local communities.

As previously mentioned, ZimRights' engagement with local communities has been extensive. However, for this report, we have chosen to sample citizens' views collected from focus group discussions held in Beitbridge, Bikita, Gwanda, Luveve, Mwenezi, Masvingo urban, Nketa, Nkulumane and Zaka. These insights serve to illustrate the citizens' perceptions regarding the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

Grassroots Interpretations of Peace

ZimRights' engagement with local communities was set into motion by a critical interrogation of how these communities defined and understood the concept of 'peace'. This foundational discussion served as an essential first step in assessing the baseline knowledge of these communities regarding peace. It also aimed to test the hypothesis that the dominant narrative of peace, as inculcated by the State and ruling elites, was a narrow



The disintegration of peace in communities calls for more peace building initiatives and civic education

construct of negative peace, typically defined as simply the absence of direct violence.

Furthermore, this discussion endeavoured to establish that despite this narrative, local communities still maintained aspirations that extended beyond the mere absence of violence to truly feel at peace.

The table in the next page provides a summation of the people's perspectives on these issues:

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For this report, we have chosen to sample citizens' views collected from focus group discussions held in Beitbridge, Bikita, Gwanda, Luveve, Mwenezi, Masvingo urban, Nketa, Nkulumane and Zaka.

	Beitbridge	Bikita	Gwanda	Luveve	Mwenezi	Nketa	Nkulumane	Masvingo-Urban	Zaka
Vernacular word for peace	Ukuthula Runyararo Mulalo Tranquility	Runyararo Rugare Rusununguko Kusashungur-udzwa	Ukuthula	Ukuthula Runyararo	Rugare	Ukuthula Runyararo	Ukuthula Runyararo	Runyararo Rugare Kugadzikana	Runyararo Rugare
Meaning of peace⁴³	Living without any political, social, or economic disturbances, free from conflicts in the community, and without violence.	Living in freedom and harmoniously coexisting with others.	Living harmoniously within the community, fostering mutual understanding, sharing common resources, resolving disputes amicably, and having the freedom to act without fear or intimidation.	Living in a society where mutual respect, absence of war and corruption prevail, allowing individuals to conduct their business freely and fostering an environment devoid of conflicts.	Living in peace and accessing everything we need	Living cordially, without conflicts, marked by harmony among individuals or within a community, along with freedom of speech and association.	Living in a worry-free and happy state, without conflicts in the community, enjoying a violence-free existence, and having the freedom to exercise all our rights.	Living in a socially, politically and economically stable and violence-free environment.	Living in peace, safe from all forms of violence

43. The translations and summaries provided have been undertaken with the utmost precision and fidelity to preserve the original meaning of the participants' remarks.

From the vernacular words equivalent to 'peace' offered by the participants, it is clear that the concept of peace is not foreign to their communities. Instead, the notion of *'peace'* appears to be deeply embedded in the ethos of these local communities, indicating its intrinsic significance in their social and cultural frameworks.

It is also important to note that, even though nearly all the participants recognized that peace to them implied an absence of violence, their comprehension of peace exceeded this simplistic definition.

The definitions of peace provided by community members during the focus group discussions all demonstrated a nuanced understanding of peace as a multifaceted, all-encompassing state that extends from the personal to the societal levels. The definitions of peace provided by the participants incorporated both negative peace, characterized by the absence of violence and critical aspects of positive peace and overall well-being such as justice, equality and the exercise of fundamental freedoms.

The participants included in their understanding of peace the following five components:

1.

Socio-political and economic stability

Many participants highlighted the importance of a lack of disturbances on political, social, and economic fronts as integral to their perception of peace. This implies that for peace to be achieved, it is crucial to have stable, fair, and transparent systems in place at all societal levels.

2.

Harmony and freedom

A recurring theme across the responses is the notion of living harmoniously, free from fear or intimidation. Freedom is viewed both in terms of personal liberties and the freedom to coexist peacefully within a community, indicating the importance of civic trust, which as already discussed includes trust in the State and mutual trust among citizens.

3.

Access to basic amenities and services

Citizens stressed the significance of having access to basic needs to enable them to attain an adequate standard of living. This suggests an understanding of peace that is closely tied to livelihoods as previously discussed.

4.**Personal security and protection from violence**

While the absence of violence and conflict was a common thread, it is notable that it was often paired with other conditions, such as mutual respect and freedom. This indicates an understanding that peace is not just about ceasing conflict, but also about creating conditions that guarantee all citizens equal protection of the law and prevent the recurrence of violence.

5.**Psychological well-being**

The mention of living in a worry-free and happy state reflects the recognition that peace also encompasses mental and emotional well-being, signifying an understanding that peace also has a deeply personal, psychological component.

The People's Scorecard of Peace in Zimbabwe

Drawing from the comprehensive understanding of 'peace' among the citizens as shown above, the participants in the focus group discussions assessed the state of peace in their local communities in 2022 using a scale from 1 (Very low), 2 (Low), 3 (Medium), 4 (High) to 5 (Very High). The lowest score of 1 symbolizes a complete absence of peace, characterized by

ongoing violent conflict, while the highest score of 5 represents the attainment of positive peace and a state of perfect tranquillity. The following are the results of this exercise, illustrating the average scores, derived from frequency, in each of the seven areas where sample data was obtained from the focus group discussions:

	Beitbridge	Bikita	Gwanda	Luveve	Mwenezi	Nketa	Nkulumane	Masvingo-Urban	Zaka
Average Rating	2.6	2.8	3.1	2.8	2.6	3.2	2.9	3.2	2

Based on the findings depicted above, it is apparent that most of the participants in the focus group discussions rated the levels of peace in their communities in 2022 as ranging between low and medium (2-3) on the provided scale. This is consistent with previous discussions, which highlighted

that despite relatively low levels of direct violence recorded in Zimbabwe in 2022, threats to personal security persisted. These threats perpetuated the insecurity of citizens, leading to a general feeling of lack of peace among individuals and in local communities.

The People's Conflict Analysis

In addition to assessing the peace levels in their communities, the participants in the focus group discussions were empowered to perform their own conflict analysis.

This in-depth investigation aimed at identifying four main issues within their respective communities:

(i) the main conflict drivers in 2022,

- (ii) measures/factors that contributed to promoting peace in 2022,
- (iii) the anticipated major threats to peace in 2023, and
- (iv) the primary measures to promote peace in 2023.

The discussions produced the following results:

	Main measures/factors that contributed to promoting peace in 2022	Main conflict drivers in 2022	Main anticipated threats to peace in 2023	Main measures to promote peace in 2023
Beitbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of Beitbridge border post. • Easing of COVID-19 related restrictions. • Opening of a passport office in Beitbridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in criminal activities such as robberies. • Campaigning during by-elections in March 2022. • Corruption • COVID 19 • Rise of unemployment levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election campaigns • Economic hardships will cause conflicts in homes. • Rise in unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders' meetings. • Rights-awareness campaigns. • Inclusive dialogue among political parties and Cs0s. • Neighbourhood watch. • Deployment of police officers to maintain peace in local communities.

Bikita	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ZimRights Trainings on peacebuilding. • The 'peace garden' initiative introduced by ZimRights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Intimidation • Coercion of citizens by the ruling party. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The harmonized elections in 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More peacebuilding training provided by ZimRights. • Votes should be counted at the polling stations.
Gwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly village meetings to resolve disputes amicably. • Peace workshops and peace education provided by ZimRights and Masakhaneni Trust. • Fair and nonpartisan distribution of food aid and maize seedlings. • ZimRights help in selecting PAC members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation and harassment during political campaigns. • Hunger and rotting of our sorghum. • People not being registered in Social Welfare schemes. • Economic problems. • Partisan food aid distribution. • Violent machete gangs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The harmonized elections in 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peacebuilding workshops. • Tolerance among political parties. • Human rights education. • Livelihood projects. • Partnership between the police and communities to preserve peace.
Luveve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor funding and aid • Community action. • Formation of the neighbourhood watch committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment and hunger. • Long water rationing. • Sewerage bursting. • Poverty • Politics • Crime • Loss of income dating back to 2020 when COVID-19 disrupted livelihoods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political conflicts. • Rising unemployment. • High crime rate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop corruption. • Educating the community about peace. • Creation of employment.
Mwenezi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food aid from NGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Intimidation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics and elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on political rights. • Awareness campaigns to promote political tolerance and peace.

Nketa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue between community members. • Peace committees. • Isolation because of COVID-19. • ZimRights providing peace education to community members. • Neighbourhood Watch Committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment • Corruption • Poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politically motivated violence. • Tribalism • Poverty • Attacks on CSOs • Unemployment • Hunger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage churches to preach and pray for peace. • Stop corruption. • More peace campaigns. • Voter education and political tolerance campaigns. • Police should be apolitical. • Ending GBV in homes. • Youth engagement and education.
Nkulumane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of more boreholes. • Easing of COVID-19 related restrictions. • Community gardens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of jobs due to COVID-19. • Rise in crime. • Operation Dudula in South Africa and threatened mass deportations. • Campaigning during by-elections held in March 2022. • Unemployment. • COVID-19 outbreak. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting unity and tolerance in the community. • Nonpartisan policing. • Political rights education.
Masvingo-Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives of ZimRights and other CSOs to promote peace in local communities such as rights-awareness campaigns, sports-for-peace tournaments and advocacy meetings. • Creation of WhatsApp community groups. • NPREC's engagement with local religious leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse of devolution funds by the local council. • Harassment of vendors by the city council and ZRP. • By-elections, which triggered political tensions and led to intimidation and political intolerance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights-awareness and peace-promotion campaigns. • Dialogue between political parties. • Collaboration among local churches to promote peace in the communities. • Peaceful campaigns and democratic elections.

Zaka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voter Education from ZEC. • Human rights awareness from ZimRights. • The launch of the Rights and Traditions report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politically captured traditional leaders who acted in a partisan manner and intimidated people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved visibility and effectiveness of independent commissions. • Professional and non-partisan law enforcement by the police. • Rights-awareness and peace promotion campaigns.
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The comprehensive conflict analysis presented above underscores the intricate interplay between societal, economic, and political factors in either promoting or undermining peace. Rising unemployment, food insecurity, and pervasive economic hardships, as highlighted by the participants, fuelled conflicts and posed significant threats to peace. Election-related tensions were also spotlighted as major conflict drivers in their communities. These factors, along with high crime rates, reinforce each other and are deeply interrelated.

From the feedback provided by the participants, it is apparent that fostering peace at the community level also necessitates interventions at the national level. These interventions should aim at ensuring functional infrastructure, fair distribution of resources, nonpartisan law enforcement, and economic revitalization. All these measures have a trickle-down effect, which directly influences the lives of

individuals and the level of peace within local communities.

The participants also emphasized the pivotal role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in promoting and sustaining peace within communities, specifically highlighting the positive impacts of ZimRights-led initiatives such as rights-awareness campaigns, peace education, and inclusive dialogues.

Overall, the conflict analysis conducted by citizens shows the need for a multi-pronged approach to peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. This approach calls for increased collaboration between communities, CSOs, and the State to foster civic trust. Sustainable peace is only attainable through the implementation of measures to ensure the free exercise of fundamental rights, equal protection of the law, and inclusive development that leaves no one behind.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2022 was a significant year for Zimbabwe. The escalated levels of politically motivated violence, judicial harassment, and general constriction of civic space during this period underscore that Zimbabwe was once again trapped in a long-standing cycle of heightened tensions and violence. This cycle has marred almost all elections and political events since 1980. As elections loomed, political actors feared losing control, while citizens braced for another round of disruptive political campaigns.

During such a tense period, the plethora of insecurities facing most Zimbabweans became more magnified. With the elections approaching, it was disheartening to note that the majority of citizens lacked personal security and legal protection, impeding their freedom to exercise their political rights. Their votes were in danger of being reduced from an expression of democratic choice to a ticket for securing rights to conduct business, retain land, access food aid, and scarce opportunities and resources.

Unresolved cases of gross human rights abuses, coupled with a culture of impunity for past abuses, fuelled fear among individuals and communities directly

affected by past bouts of politically motivated violence. A large number of Zimbabweans faced countless social and economic vulnerabilities, trapping them in a seemingly perpetual state of insecurity.

Narrow interpretations of the concept of peace, peddled by the ruling party as merely the absence of direct violence, failed to provide measures to secure truth regarding past violations, justice and reparation for victims, survivors and their families, or measures to prevent the recurrence of abuses. This passive notion of peace instead promoted civic disengagement or blind obedience as prerequisites for citizens to avoid personal security attacks.

However, ZimRights' engagements with local communities showed that people understand peace to mean more than simply the absence of war or violent conflict. Most Zimbabweans view peace as closely tied to their well-being, encompassing their standard of living, the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, and guarantees of all aspects of personal security. This is why, despite the relatively low levels of cases involving direct violence recorded, many expressed that

they did not feel secure or at peace. It seems that the cessation of overt violence alone will not suffice to realize positive peace in Zimbabwe. People understand that peace will only be real and sustainable if it is based on a society that fosters civic trust, upholds the rule of law, respects human rights, and promotes inclusive development.

In light of these findings and insights from ZimRights' engagements with thousands of Zimbabweans across the country, the following recommendations are made to ensure an end to the state of insecurity and the realization of positive, sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.

Ten steps towards realizing sustainable peace in Zimbabwe

Sustainable peace in Zimbabwe can only be realized if all stakeholders, including the government, political actors, citizens, and civil society, share a common commitment to addressing the underlying causes of conflict and building a society founded on civic trust, justice, and respect for human rights. This also requires multifaceted strategies to address the legal, political, and socio-economic factors that affect personal security in Zimbabwe. Interventions aimed at promoting sustainable peace in Zimbabwe should address the following top ten issues:

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.

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.

3.

Reform of Security Sector Institutions

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

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.

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.

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.





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.

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.

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.

10.

Strengthen Independent and Credible Peacebuilding Institutions

Ensure that critical institutions such as the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, 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.

About the 2022 State of Peace Report

Every year, ZimRights produces a comprehensive State of Peace Report as a flagship of its Right to Peace Campaign. The 2022 State of Peace Report: A Perpetual State of Insecurity in Zimbabwe diligently compiled by ZimRights extends the pioneering work initiated in the 2021 edition. The report stands as a beacon of in-depth investigation into the intricate dynamics of peace and security in Zimbabwe, utilising the people-centred approach to peace and security as its compass. This year's edition is looking at the perpetual state of insecurity that affects many citizens, influencing how they choose to show up in the civic space and participate in democratic processes. The report is an action plan to engage stakeholders to improve peace in the country. 10 key areas of intervention are suggested in the report. It is our hope that all stakeholders will collaborate to address the needs of the citizens. We hope this report will be useful reference as stakeholders strive to build peace in the communities.

About ZimRights

ZimRights is Zimbabwe's first post-independence indigenous human rights advocacy group, established in 1992 as a mass movement to fight for human rights. In 1993, ZimRights was registered as a PVO under the laws of Zimbabwe. Over the years, ZimRights has grown into a strong grassroots movement with over 250 000 members across Zimbabwe's 10 provinces. For more information and resources on the work of ZimRights, visit us on the details below.

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