



W/O 3/93

Campaigners for Human Rights

# THE BROKEN CALABASH

## STATE OF PEACE REPORT

### ZIMBABABWE

2023 - 2024



September 2024

**Published by**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association  
90 SV. Muzenda Street, Harare, Zimbabwe  
Tel: +263 242 707277  
Email: [publications@zimrights.org.zw](mailto:publications@zimrights.org.zw)  
Website: [www.zimrights.org.zw](http://www.zimrights.org.zw)

Published in September 2024

The Broken Calabash: State of Peace Report 2023 - 2024  
Copyright © Zimbabwe Human Rights Association 2024  
Design & Layout: Luce Concepts

This publication may be reproduced in any form provided the information is presented without any distortion and due credit must be given to the publishers and sources utilised.

If you wish to receive ZimRights publications regularly, join our mailing list by emailing [publications@zimrights.org.zw](mailto:publications@zimrights.org.zw)



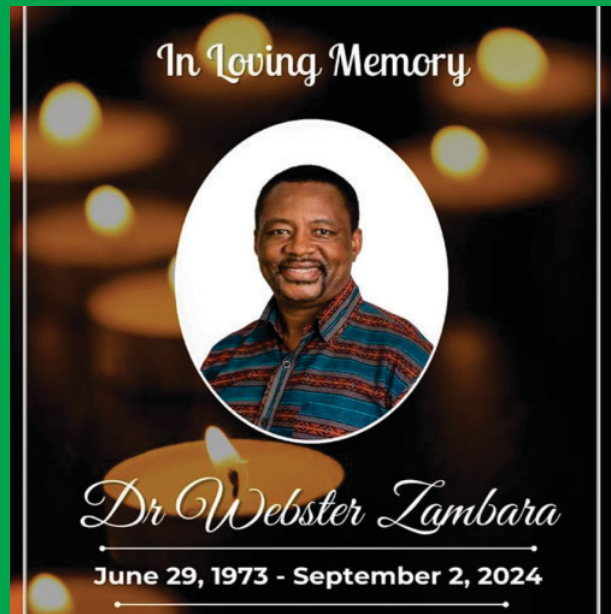
# Table of Contents

|    |                                                                     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | IN MEMORIAM                                                         |
| 3  | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS                                                    |
| 4  | FOREWORD: THE BROKEN CALABASH: STATE OF PEACE REPORT<br>2023 - 2024 |
| 7  | BACKGROUND                                                          |
| 10 | 01. INTRODUCTION: 'THE BROKEN CALABASH                              |
| 14 | 02. THE PEOPLE'S INDICATORS OF PEACE                                |
| 18 | 03. THE CITIZENS' PEACE BAROMETER FOR 2023                          |
| 22 | 04. CURRENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEACE AND SECURITY                       |
| 25 | 05. THE PEOPLE'S KEY PEACE DEMANDS                                  |

# IN MEMORIAM

ZimRights joins the global peacebuilding community in mourning the untimely passing of Dr Webster Zambara, a visionary leader and devoted advocate for peace. A proud Pan-Africanist, Dr Zambara's contributions to peacebuilding, transitional justice, and conflict transformation in Zimbabwe, South Africa, across Africa, and beyond have left an indelible mark on countless lives and communities.

Dr Zambara was a towering figure in the peacebuilding community. His leadership and expertise were instrumental in shaping key institutions and initiatives that have become beacons of hope for many. His thought leadership played a pivotal role in the campaign for transitional justice in Zimbabwe, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and across Africa. Through his work with civil society in Zimbabwe, he was a key contributor to the creation of the National Transitional Justice Working Group and the Peace Building Network of Zimbabwe, as well as the operationalisation of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission.



His impact extended to grassroots movements and young peacebuilders across the continent. Dr Zambara was a driving force behind the growth of the Zimbabwe Peace Project's Peace Ambassador Campaign, empowering individuals and communities to become advocates for peace. Untiring in his quest for peace, Dr Zambara served as an Expert Advisor to ZimRights' Right to Peace Campaign, which empowered communities to claim peace as a right, in alignment with the UN Declaration of the Right of Peoples to Peace.

Beyond Zimbabwe, Dr Zambara's influence reverberated across Africa and the world. As the Senior Project Leader for Peacebuilding Initiatives at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in Cape Town, he brought together peacebuilders from diverse backgrounds, fostering collaboration and sharing strategies for building and sustaining peace. His work resonated globally, and he featured on numerous peacebuilding platforms, initiatives, and in academic discourse, where he generously shared his vast knowledge and experience.

Dr Zambara's academic foundation was shaped by the mentorship of Prof. Dr Johan Galtung, the late founder of the discipline of Peace Studies, from whom he drew inspiration. His scholarship, combined with

his practical approach to conflict transformation, earned him respect in both academic and practitioner circles. At the time of his passing, Dr Zambara was serving as Senior Project Leader for Peacebuilding Initiatives at the IJR. His contributions to the IJR have left a lasting impact on communities across Africa, as noted in their heartfelt tribute.

Dr Zambara's death is a tremendous loss to humanity. The world is poorer without him, but richer for the legacy he has left behind. His compassion, wisdom, and relentless pursuit of peace will continue to inspire all who knew him. As we carry forward the work to which he dedicated his life, his vision of justice, reconciliation, and enduring peace will guide us.

**Rest in power, Dr Webster Zambara.  
Your life's work will continue to light  
our path toward peace.**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) extends its gratitude to its members and the citizens who participated in the surveys that have informed this report. Every effort has been made to accurately capture and present the views expressed by all who contributed. ZimRights is humbled by the unwavering support from the people of Zimbabwe in all its work, and remains steadfast in its commitment to championing the interests of citizens, supporting activism, and amplifying community voices.

We would also like to express our deep appreciation to ZimRights' staff, board, and partners, whose contributions were instrumental in the successful compilation, publication, and dissemination of the *State of Peace Report 2023*. This report is a testament to the teamwork and solidarity that define and drive ZimRights as both an organization and a people's movement.

Special recognition is due to our field officers, who courageously navigated a challenging civic space to engage directly with citizens across communities, including marginalized areas. Their dedication has been rewarded by the extensive range of diverse citizen perspectives reflected in this report.

We are privileged to have benefited from the strategic guidance of the ZimRights Board, which continues to lead us toward impactful implementation of our *Shifting Power to the People Strategy (SP2P)*. The *State of Peace Report 2023 - 2024* marks another milestone in our Right to Peace Campaign and exemplifies ZimRights' commitment to a people-centred approach to human rights advocacy in Zimbabwe.

Special thanks go to our Lead Researcher for this report, Mr. Tafadzwa Christmas, who shares our passion for realizing sustainable peace in Zimbabwe within our lifetime. His efforts in gathering, refining, and presenting the citizens' responses in this report are greatly appreciated.

We also recognize the invaluable work of Gillian Chinzete and Phillip Fungurai in coordinating community engagement, data collection, and the overall compilation of the report.

Finally, ZimRights extends its sincere thanks to all its funding partners, whose financial support made this report possible. Your continued confidence in ZimRights' mission is deeply appreciated and motivates us to continue the fight for a just and peaceful Zimbabwe.

# **FOREWORD:**

## **THE BROKEN CALABASH: STATE OF PEACE REPORT 2023 - 2024**

Back in 1984, while Zimbabwe was locked in a bloody conflict that killed over 20 000 civilians in the Midlands and Matebeleland regions, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace which recognizes that peoples have a sacred right to peace. Through resolution 39/11, the General Assembly solemnly declared that the preservation of the right of peoples to peace and the promotion of its implementation constitute a fundamental obligation of each State.

This year, we mark 40 years since the declaration was passed. The world order has significantly shifted, and yet many communities still find themselves unable to enjoy the right to peace. There is a clear obligation on States to promote peace. This obligation includes most importantly the obligation for the State not to unleash violence on its people. And where such violence has been unleashed, there arises an obligation to pursue justice and accountability, to ensure that affected communities get an opportunity to process the trauma and work towards healing and reconciliation.

Zimbabwe has over the years been grappling with the question of peace. We have as a country and as communities suffered the scourge of violence dating back to the colonial era. To gain our independence, we have had to wage a war, sacrificing over 50 000 people in the process. And yet even our independence has failed to deliver peace. Post-independence, the majority government inherited the entire infrastructure of violence which it decided not only to hold on to but has over the years proceeded to deploy against its people. We have continued to witness unspeakable atrocities in independent Zimbabwe.

This is why in 2020, we launched the Right to Peace Campaign, to give communities an opportunity to build peace from inside, from the ground up. We realised, as was expressed by Marta Ruiz of the Colombia Truth Commission, that peace does not come to us. *“Peace is a change in the way we live and relate.”* She spoke. This is because we see the reluctance of the state to advance the peace agenda in Zimbabwe. Fear of justice and accountability stands in the way. But if the State with all its might is afraid, what more for the communities who have no armies or riot police, what must they do?

This year, we saw significant milestones that had great potential for peace. First was the launch of the Gukurahundi public hearings to be presided over by traditional leaders. We note with regret that this event, glorified by the state media as it was, remains another avoidance tactic in flagrant violation of the Constitution as it usurps the conflict transformation mandate that ought to have been carried out by the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) but was sadly prevented through political interference and resources starvation. The so called Gukurahundi hearings, presided over by traditional leaders perceived to be aligned to the ruling party are unlawful and illegitimate. The mandate to deal with a conflict of that magnitude can only be handled by an independent commission.

We saw this year the sad end to the tenure of the NPRC, leaving behind the unfinished business of dealing with the past. We look back at the 10 years of the NPRC and we wonder; where did we go wrong? The NPRC had a sacred mandate to help put in place an infrastructure for peace that would help our nation move forward. But for 10 years, they were sabotaged left right and centre. The question today is, what shall we do about the unfinished business of dealing with the past.



**This year, we saw significant milestones that had great potential for peace.**

Just a few days before the launch of this report, we saw President Emmerson Mnangagwa appoint members of the Independent Complaints Commission (ICC), a commission established by section 210 of the Constitution. We have taken note of this development with caution. Zimbabwe has a security system that has a legacy of serious violation of human rights dating back to the Gukurahundi era.

This ICC is meant to hear complaints from the public regarding violation of their rights by the security sector. Now, in a country

where we have a history of establishing commissions with no commitment to addressing the critical issues, what hope is there for the ICC?

These developments tell us of the sorry state of top to bottom approaches to peace building. We must give communities a chance. Throughout the year 2023 – 2024, ZimRights Peace Action committees have worked at different levels to find ways of building peace. Their work, and observations culminates in the 2024 State of Peace Report and the accompanying policy brief. These two products locate the true place where we must put our hope for peace; the people.

It was Dwight D. Eisenhower who said it.

“

**I think that people want peace so much that one of these days government had better get out of their way and let them have it.”**

It is true for Zimbabwe. The era of big expensive commissions for this and that has to come to an end and let the communities provide leadership. The people know how to build peace. The government knows how to destroy it. Who shall we trust with the sacred duty of realising the right of all peoples to peace?

We at ZimRights align ourselves with these findings, that it is time that government must get out of the way and let people build their peace in their own language and in their own way. Believe it or not, it will cost much less and deliver much more.

Dzikamai Bere

**National Director**

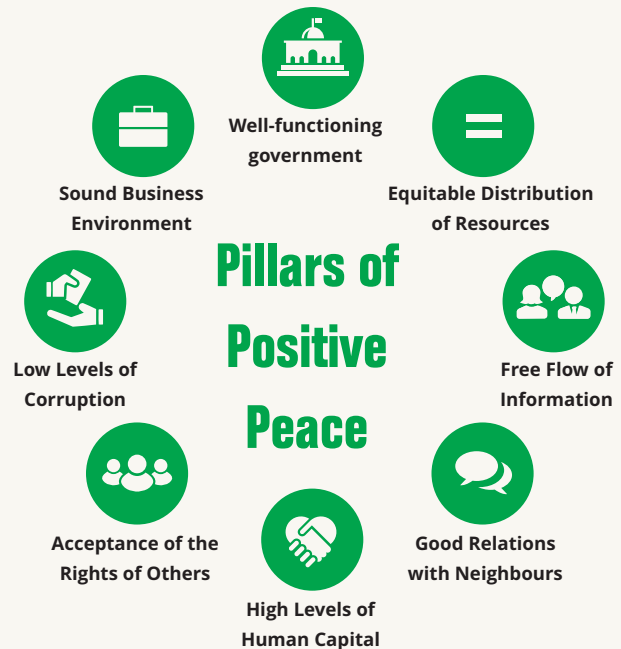
ZimRights

# BACKGROUND

The State of Peace Report 2023 - 2024 marks a significant milestone in Zimbabwe's ongoing pursuit of sustainable peace. Building on the foundation laid by the State of Peace Report 2021, which reinforced ZimRights' human rights-based approach to peace, the 2021 report amplified the call for the realisation of the right to peace in Zimbabwe. By integrating the struggle for peaceful existence into the broader human rights agenda, ZimRights helped close the gap between human rights advocacy and the widespread desire among Zimbabweans to live in peace.

The 2021 Report explored the right to peace beyond the mere absence of war and violence, advocating for positive peace that encompasses social conditions fostering long-term stability. It identified politics as the primary threat to peace and a key trigger of violence in Zimbabwe. Through the report, citizens' calls for the recognition and fulfilment of their right to peace were amplified, alongside demands for a comprehensive peace agenda.

These demands extend beyond the elimination of violence and are anchored in the following pillars of positive peace:



*The State of Peace Report 2021 - 2022* sent a clear and enduring message: Zimbabweans demand freedom from fear - a permanent end to all forms and threats of violence, with effective safeguards to prevent future violations. Equally, they demand freedom from want - the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, nutrition, clothing, housing, and other conditions essential for the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Building on this, *the State of Peace Report 2022 - 2023* highlighted the intrinsic link between peace and security, delving into various aspects of personal security critical for achieving sustainable peace.

The report established a citizen-driven framework for measuring peace, encompassing not only indices related to violence but also broader elements of personal security, including social, cultural, and economic determinants of well-being.

Central to the report were Zimbabwean citizens' responses to three key questions:

- Do citizens feel secure and protected from all forms of physical violence, including politically motivated violence?
- Can citizens participate freely and safely in both formal and informal economic activities?
- Do citizens feel secure on their land (farmland, mining areas, or residential plots), living without fear of eviction or home demolition?

The findings painted a stark picture, revealing that many Zimbabweans remain trapped in a state of perpetual insecurity. The report demonstrated how threats to personal security significantly hinder citizens' ability to exercise fundamental freedoms, including the right to vote. It underscored how this insecurity is deliberately manufactured and perpetuated by the ruling elite as a tool to coerce the populace and undermine free political choices.



Focusing on the period leading up to the 2023 Harmonised Elections, the State of Peace Report 2022 - 2023 detailed widespread insecurity among citizens. It highlighted a culture of politically motivated violence sustained by unresolved past abuses, impunity for violators, and the collapse and capture of key state institutions, such as the police and judiciary, which are supposed to safeguard citizens' security. The report exposed how compromised public institutions and partisan enforcement of laws have eroded civic trust, damaging both public confidence in the government and trust among citizens.

The report depicted an environment marked by repression, fear, and 'thoritarian peace'. In response, Zimbabweans called for urgent reforms to state institutions to ensure equal protection under the law for all.

They also demanded the opening of civic space to allow for the exercise of fundamental freedoms and the improvement of socioeconomic conditions, enabling Zimbabweans to enjoy dignified work and an adequate standard of living.

In defiance of relentless assaults on peace and security, *the State of Peace Report 2022* and the accompanying *Facing the Fear Policy Brief* urged citizens to harness their collective power as the true source of the authority to govern. It called on Zimbabweans not only to aspire to peace but to actively work towards its realisation by mounting a unified resistance to fear and intimidation.



**Through the report, citizens' calls for the recognition and fulfilment of their right to peace were amplified, alongside demands for a comprehensive peace agenda.**

*The State of Peace Report 2023 - 2024* builds on the substantial knowledge established in previous reports, further refining the peace framework developed in earlier editions by defining the *People's Indicators of Peace for 2023 - 2024*. This is achieved by giving citizens the opportunity to identify the elements that constitute peace in their lives. Using these citizen-defined metrics, *the State of Peace Report 2023 - 2024* establishes a *Citizens' Peace Barometer*, measuring the state of peace in Zimbabwe from the perspective of its citizens.



This abridged version of the report aims to distil the key findings from the comprehensive State of Peace Report 2023, providing a concise, accessible format for citizens and stakeholders. It is designed as a portable, quick-reference guide that serves as a primer to the full report, enabling readers to grasp the essential insights and conclusions in a summarised format.

# 01

## INTRODUCTION: 'THE BROKEN CALABASH'

“

**“If the calabash is broken, why do you pour milk into it? Its foolishness. If the calabash is broken and you keep pouring milk into it, you are wasting resources, you are wasting people. Because this calabash that we are talking about delivers dead bodies...”**

Dzikamai Bere, (In conversation with Trevor, 25 March 2024)<sup>1</sup>

2023 was an election year in Zimbabwe. As aptly described in the State of Peace Report 2022-2023, the elections took place in an atmosphere of insecurity. The plethora of issues identified in the 2022 - 2023 report, which required urgent attention to ensure sustainable peace in Zimbabwe, remained unaddressed before the polls.



1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwOEu0ia0QI&ab\\_channel=InConversationwithTrevor](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwOEu0ia0QI&ab_channel=InConversationwithTrevor)

No meaningful security sector reforms were implemented to end partisan policing and the selective application of the law, which saw the judicial harassment of political opposition members, activists, and citizens. The independence and impartiality of the judiciary remained questionable, casting doubt on the equal protection of the law for all citizens.

**This was exacerbated by the then-incumbent presidential candidate's decision to directly award**

 **USD 400,000**

**housing loans to judges just months before the elections.**

The chilling effect on citizens and dissenting voices, achieved through the incarceration without trial of opposition activists such as Job Sikhala and Jacob Ngarivhume, persisted through their continued pre-trial detention during the election period. The crippling fear that curtailed citizens' free exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, as described in the State of Peace Report 2022 - 2023, endured.

Calls made in 2022 for the government of Zimbabwe to open up civic space ahead of the 2023 elections went unheeded. The

Private Voluntary Organisations Bill loomed as a threat to the autonomous operations of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Zimbabwe. In fact, the crackdown on CSOs intensified during the elections, with the arrest of over 40 Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) and Election Resources Centre (ERC) staff and volunteers on the night of the polls.<sup>2</sup>

Political tolerance was preached merely as empty rhetoric, a facade papering over the pervasive culture of toxic politics. Hate speech, amplified through social media,<sup>3</sup> was rampant, and politically motivated violence claimed at least three lives during the 2023 election period, including those of Tapfumeyi Masaya and Tinashe Chitsunge, allegedly murdered by ruling ZANU-PF supporters and operatives.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, the socio-economic vulnerabilities and insecurities of citizens, highlighted in the State of Peace Report 2022 - 2023, were not addressed. Villagers and settlers in farms and informal urban settlements remained insecure, living without land titles. Endemic poverty persisted. Instead of addressing these issues, title deeds were used as a political tool in areas like Epworth to rally votes for ZANU-PF,<sup>5</sup> while free food was dangled before impoverished citizens to entice

2. <https://www.zimrights.org.zw/zimrights-calls-for-the-release-of-zesn-and-erc-staff-and-volunteers-in-zimbabwe/>

3. Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, 'Report on 2023 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe' (2024) 17.

4. See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/zimbabwe-authorities-must-promptly-investigate-the-death-of-opposition-party-activist/> and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/11/zimbabwe-killing-opposition-activist>

5. <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/title-deeds-bring-joy-to-epworth-residents>

them to attend political rallies. The promise of fast food, such as 'Chicken Slice and Pepsi,' was used to lure citizens grappling with the drought caused by El Niño<sup>6</sup>.

Furthermore, recommendations from the 2022 - 2023 report to create sustainable employment opportunities for youth, reducing their vulnerability to recruitment into election-related violence, were ignored. Millions of unemployed youths remained a pool of recruits for political elites during the electoral period. As a result, in nearly all cases of politically motivated violence recorded by ZimRights, youth were directly involved, either as perpetrators, accomplices, or victims.

**Ultimately, as highlighted in the 'Showing Up or Giving Up?' Baseline Survey Report on Citizen Participation in the 2023 Elections in Zimbabwe,**

**69% OF CITIZENS** 

**interviewed were dissatisfied with the way the 2023 elections were conducted.**

These issues exposed deep cracks in Zimbabwe's social, economic, and political fabric. Though these perennial challenges were concealed under the guise of an enforced semblance of peace during the elections, intended to justify the claim that the elections were peaceful, free, and fair, these cracks were never mended.



The State of Peace Report 2023 - 2024 examines the state of peace in Zimbabwe, looking beyond the superficial peace projected during the polling year. It does not ask whether the 2023 elections were peaceful but rather whether Zimbabwean citizens were at peace in 2023. While acknowledging the significance of the polls in shaping citizens' lives during the year, the report affirms that peace is determined not solely by political processes and their outcomes but also by the everyday experiences of people that transcend election days.

In surveying citizens' experiences throughout 2023, a set of fundamental inquiries was conducted. The first related to citizens' understanding of the concept of peace, including vernacular translations and the key elements that define peace for them.

This feedback informed the compilation of *The People's Indicators of Peace*. The second inquiry involved citizens' assessment of peace in 2023 compared to the previous year. *The Citizens' Peace Barometer for 2023*, based on citizen feedback, tracks the trajectory of peace from 2022 to 2023.

6. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/zimbabwe#:~:text=The%202023%20Global%20Hunger%20Index,the%202022%20Human%20Development%20Index>.

The report also examines what citizens perceive as the main threats to peace and the interventions needed to promote peace in their communities and across the nation. It concludes by capturing citizens' current perceptions of peace and security and exploring the extent to which unresolved past violations affect these perceptions.

Additionally, it outlines the main demands made by citizens concerning the changes they believe are necessary to ensure sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.



# 02

## THE PEOPLE'S INDICATORS OF PEACE

Vernacular translations of the word 'peace' provided by interviewed citizens clearly demonstrate that the concept of peace is not foreign. The words offered as synonyms for 'peace' in local languages and dialects, such as Shona and IsiNdebele, revealed a deeper understanding of peace that transcends the mere absence of violence. Terms like 'runyararo', 'rugare', 'ukuthula', and 'kudekara' express not only the absence of conflict but also a state of calmness, mental and emotional well-being, an adequate standard of living, and economic and social stability.

These words highlight how citizens perceive peace as encompassing much more than non-violence. It is also about achieving stability and well-being on multiple levels. In turn, citizens also provided insights into what they consider to be the most fundamental elements of peace, which are depicted in the frequency table below:

| Element                                    | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Rights and freedoms <sup>7</sup>           | 43        | 37.73          |
| Basic amenities and services <sup>8</sup>  | 35        | 31.5           |
| Employment                                 | 17        | 15.32          |
| Personal security                          | 16        | 14.4           |
| Democracy and good governance <sup>9</sup> | 15        | 13.9           |
| Peace of mind                              | 6         | 5.4            |

7. Particularly, freedom of expression, assembly and association.

8. Including food, health, water, shelter and education.

9. This including the holding of free and fair elections, equal treatment before the law for all citizens and absence of corruption.

As shown in the table above, most of the surveyed citizens highlighted the free exercise of rights and freedoms as a primary indicator of peace in Zimbabwe. They also emphasised that access to basic needs, amenities, and services, including food, clean drinking water, healthcare, education, and shelter, were key indicators of peace. Employment, particularly the ability to engage in dignified work and earn a decent living, ranked third among the elements that respondents identified as indicative of peace in Zimbabwe. In addition, as aptly reflected in the State of Peace Report 2022 - 2023, citizens noted that personal security, encompassing both protection from physical harm and economic security related to property ownership, was another important facet of peace. The respondents also included aspects such as the rule of law, democracy, and good governance as essential elements to be considered when assessing the state of peace in Zimbabwe. Lastly, they highlighted the importance of evaluating the mental well-being of citizens as an integral part of measuring peace in the country.

This feedback underscores the need to incorporate not only a human rights-based approach when assessing peace in Zimbabwe but also a psychosocial approach that closely examines citizens' psychological well-being in relation to their social environment.<sup>10</sup>

Citizens were also asked to rank different forms of peace in order of their importance as part of efforts to construct *The People's Indicators of Peace*. The results of this section of the survey are presented below:

### A. Peace of Mind Ranking

| Rank | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------|-----------|----------------|
| 1    | 98        | 53.56          |
| 2    | 23        | 12.50          |
| 3    | 14        | 7.61           |
| 4    | 23        | 12.50          |
| 5    | 6         | 3.26           |
| 6    | 20        | 10.87          |

10. See Brandon Hamber (ed), *Psychosocial Perspectives on Peacebuilding* (Springer 2015).

The ranking shown above indicates that the majority of respondents ranked 'Peace of mind' as the most important form of peace, with over 53% selecting it as their top priority. This finding reinforces the need for any assessment of the state of peace in Zimbabwe to go beyond incidents of violence and also consider the mental well-being of citizens.

## B. Peace in the Family Ranking

| Rank | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------|-----------|----------------|
| 1    | 17        | 9.19           |
| 2    | 90        | 48.65          |
| 3    | 36        | 19.46          |
| 4    | 16        | 8.65           |
| 5    | 23        | 12.43          |
| 6    | 3         | 1.62           |

Most respondents ranked 'Peace in my family' as their second-highest priority, with nearly 49% assigning it a rank of 2.

## C. Peace in My Community Ranking

| Rank | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------|-----------|----------------|
| 1    | 7         | 3.76           |
| 2    | 28        | 15.05          |
| 3    | 81        | 43.55          |
| 4    | 47        | 25.27          |
| 5    | 13        | 6.99           |
| 6    | 10        | 5.38           |

The table above shows that the majority of respondents ranked 'Peace in my community' as their third-highest priority, with over 43% assigning it a rank of 3.

## D. Peace in the Country Ranking

| Rank | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------|-----------|----------------|
| 1    | 48        | 25.81          |
| 2    | 11        | 5.91           |
| 3    | 22        | 11.83          |
| 4    | 66        | 35.48          |
| 5    | 29        | 15.59          |
| 6    | 10        | 5.38           |

Most of the surveyed citizens ranked 'Peace in the country' as their fourth-highest priority, with over 35% assigning it a rank of 4.

Cumulatively, the data presented above validates ZimRights' approach to assessing the state of peace in Zimbabwe.

This approach begins by examining the state of mind and emotional well-being of individuals before identifying the key factors that affect peace within communities and, ultimately, the nation.

It provides a comprehensive and in-depth perspective, placing citizens at the heart of how peace is understood and experienced in Zimbabwe, rather than relying solely on metrics that may be disconnected from people's lived realities.

“

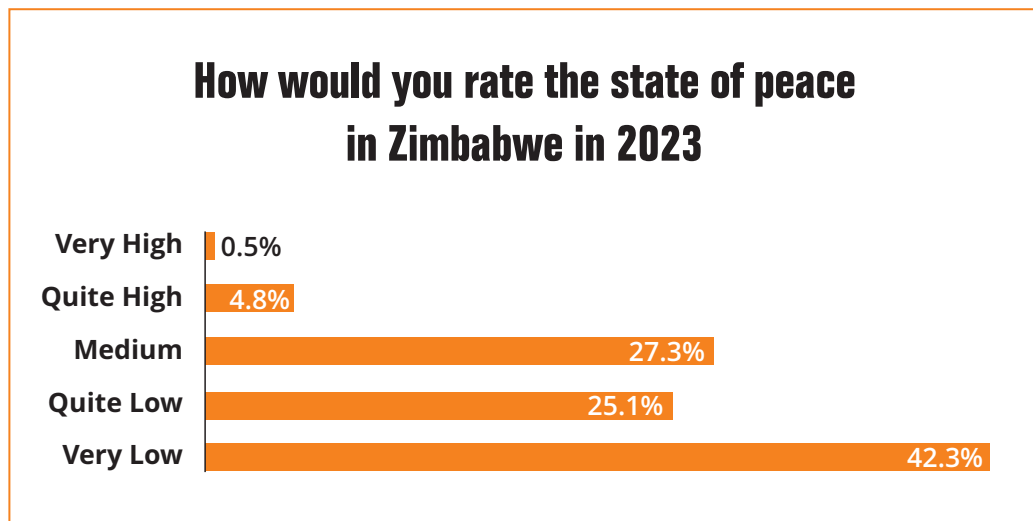
**As aptly reflected in the State of Peace Report 2022 - 2023, citizens noted that personal security, encompassing both protection from physical harm and economic security related to property ownership, was another important facet of peace.**

# 03

## THE CITIZENS' PEACE BAROMETER FOR 2023

It is based on the indicative elements of peace defined above by the Zimbabweans interviewed in this survey that they assessed the state of peace in Zimbabwe during 2023. Citizens also used these same metrics to compare the state of peace in 2023 with the preceding year, aiming to determine whether there was any improvement or decline over the two years. The findings of this dual inquiry are presented below:

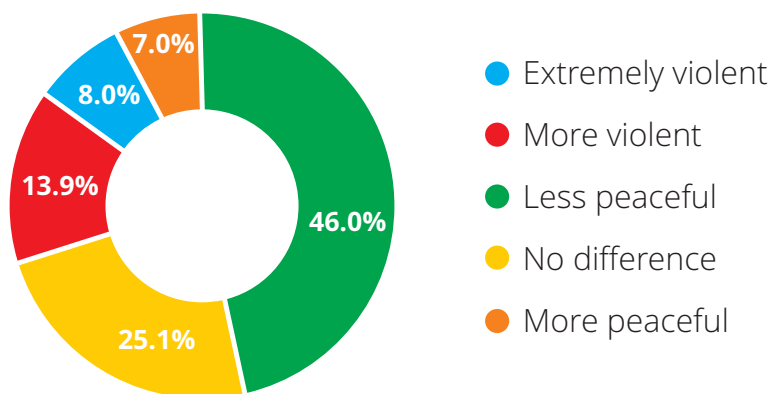
### A. The State of Peace in 2023



It is worrying to note that most of the citizens interviewed expressed negative perceptions regarding the state of peace in Zimbabwe during 2023. This predominant negative assessment aligns with the trend of politically motivated violence increasing during the election year. It is crucial to take these sentiments seriously, as Zimbabwe cannot be considered a peaceful country when so many of its citizens do not feel at peace.

## B. Assessing the trajectory of peace 2022-2023

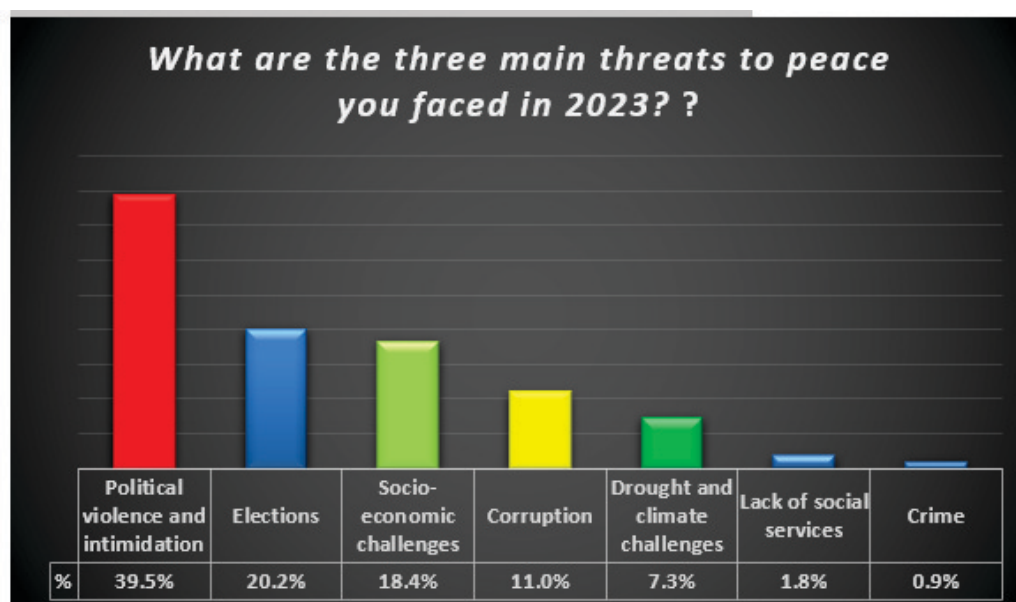
### From 2022 to 2023 has Zimbabwe become more peaceful or less peaceful?



The graphic presented above shows that most of the surveyed citizens perceived a decline in peace from 2022 to 2023. Notably, 21% of respondents believe that Zimbabwe became more violent, or even extremely violent, underscoring heightened concerns about peace and security in 2023. Roughly a quarter of respondents observed no significant change in the peace situation from 2022 to 2023, which is concerning, given that the State of Peace Report 2022 highlighted that citizens were already living in a perpetual state of insecurity.

## C. The Threats to Peace in 2023

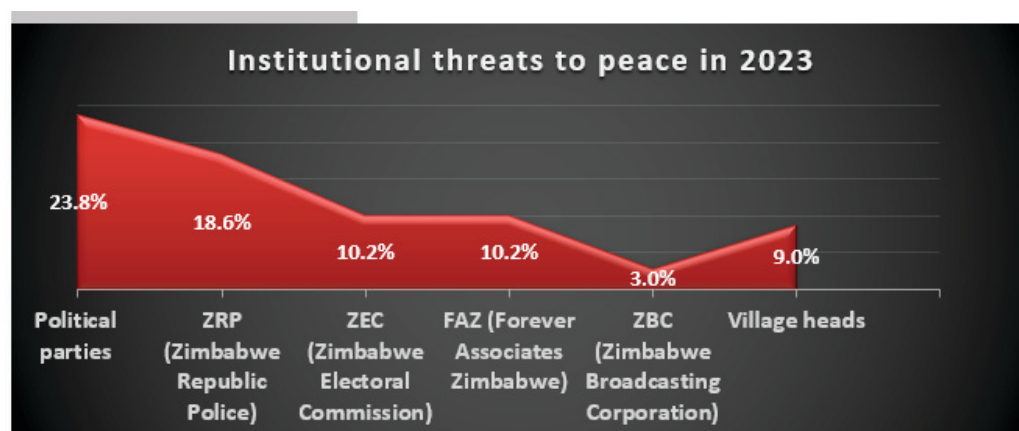
It is also noteworthy that there were striking similarities between the threats to peace identified in 2022 and those in 2023. As shown below, the surveyed citizens identified major threats to peace in Zimbabwe during 2023, including political violence and intimidation, corruption, and socio-economic challenges such as hunger, poverty, and unemployment. Electoral issues, particularly unfair elections and voting interference, were also prominent, especially in the context of the August 2023 elections. Additionally, drought and health-related challenges further exacerbated these issues, worsening living conditions for many citizens. The data presented below reflects this comprehensive, multi-dimensional view of the main threats to peace, which are largely linked to political instability, corruption, and socio-economic difficulties.



It is particularly worrying that over 20% of the citizens surveyed viewed elections as a threat to peace. Coupled with the fact that nearly 40% of respondents identified politically motivated violence and intimidation as a major threat, it becomes clear that the entrenched culture of toxic politics in Zimbabwe remains the primary obstacle to sustainable peace.

## D. Institutional threats to peace in 2023

In addition to the issue- or theme-based analysis of threats to peace in 2023, the interviewed citizens also provided feedback on institutional threats to peace. This inquiry focused on examining how formal systems, structures, or organisations, such as government institutions, law enforcement, political parties, and the judiciary contributed to the threats identified by citizens. The results of this analysis are presented below:



According to the surveyed citizens, political parties, ZRP, and ZEC were the most frequently cited institutions responsible for threatening peace, accounting for over 52.6% of the total mentions. Citizens from rural areas particularly highlighted village heads, loosely referring to various traditional leaders, as significant threats to peace in their communities in 2023. Additionally, FAZ was identified as a major threat, with 60% of interviewed citizens reporting its presence at polling stations as intimidating, according to ZimRights' study of the 2023 elections.

A clear correlation emerges between citizens' perception of elections as a threat to peace and the role played by these institutions. The misconduct and malpractices of the key institutions involved in the elections contributed to making the polls a source of insecurity for many citizens.

# 04

## CURRENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEACE AND SECURITY

Against the backdrop of the findings in the State of Peace Report 2022 - 2023 regarding the multiple insecurities faced by citizens, the 2023 survey also assessed perceptions of personal security. Respondents emphasized that unresolved past injustices significantly impact their current peace of mind and perceptions of personal security. Some of the sentiments expressed by citizens who were victims of past violations, but have yet to receive meaningful redress, are captured below:

“

*“My ability to enjoy peace has been severely hampered by past election related conflicts because now every election season I am filled with fear and trepidation wondering if I will be targeted again. This means I cannot fully exercise my civil and political rights especially my right to vote, openly associate with my preferred candidate, and express my support for them.”*

*“I wish elections would be banned; they are a cause for pain for people”*

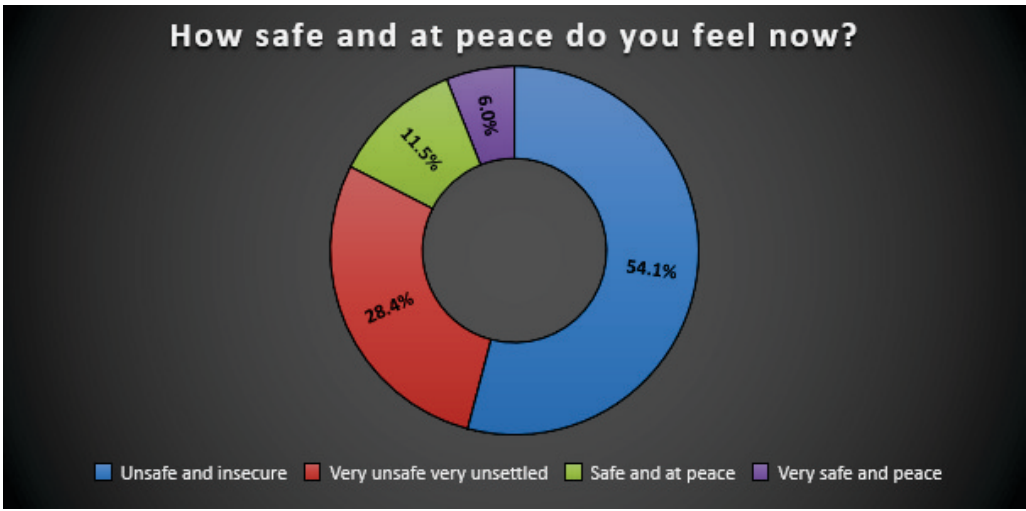
*“True peace will never exist in Zimbabwe because we are forced to act like everything is alright.”*

*“I think we need to address the past before we can enjoy meaningful peace. Currently, we have a lot of polarisation, and conflicts easily recur because the issues that caused them in the past have not been addressed.”*

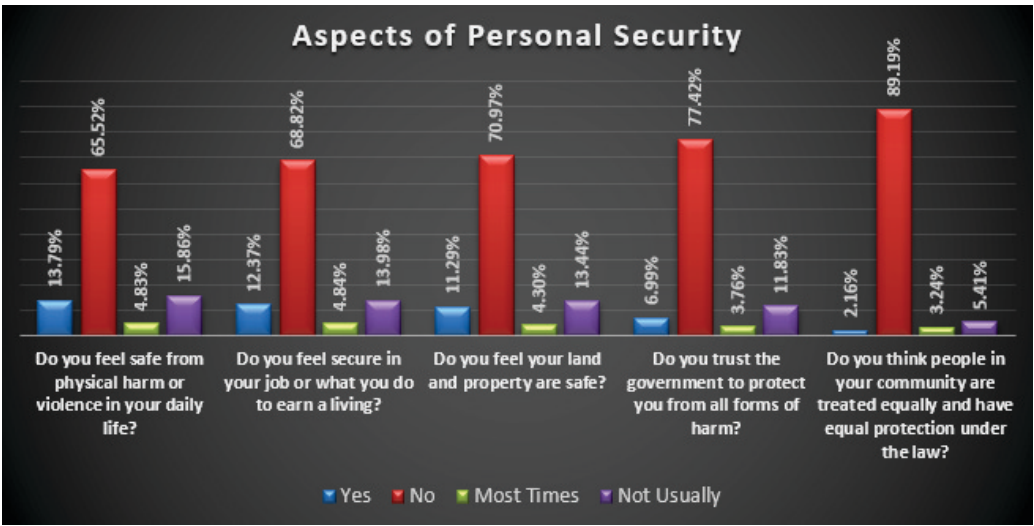
*“Things like Gukurahundi are like a passport for the government to continue terrorizing people, because perpetrators were not brought to book.”*

”

The surveyed citizens were asked to rate how safe and at peace they felt, and as shown below, the majority (over 80%) reported feeling either 'Unsafe and insecure' or 'Very unsafe and unsettled'. This troubling finding highlights a significant sense of insecurity among citizens. Only about 17% of respondents stated that they felt 'Safe and at peace' or 'Very safe'.



A closer scrutiny into the various aspects of personal security also revealed more details concerning the peace and security of citizens as shown in the graphic below:



The main findings of the survey relating to aspects of personal security above can be summarised as follows:

- Most of the respondents (65.52%) do not feel safe from physical harm or violence in their daily lives, while only 13.79% feel safe.
- Only 12.37% of the citizens feel secure in their jobs or livelihood, while the majority of respondents (68.82%) do not feel economically secure.
- 70.97% of the respondents reported that they do not think their land and property are safe, while only 11.29% feel their property is secure.
- Most respondents (77.42%) do not trust the government to protect them from all forms of harm, while only a small portion (6.99%) expressed trust.
- The overwhelming majority (89.19%) of respondents believe that people in their community are not treated equally and do not have equal protection under the law, while only 2.16% expressed confidence in equal treatment and protection.

# 05

## THE PEOPLE'S KEY PEACE DEMANDS

In line with ZimRights' Shifting Power to the People Strategy (SP2P), which places citizens at the forefront of formulating and implementing solutions to the challenges they face, the survey also asked citizens to define the agenda for reforms needed to guarantee their personal security and foster sustainable peace in Zimbabwe. Drawing from the key demands articulated in the People's Human Rights Manifesto, citizens outlined five urgent measures to address and reduce threats to peace in Zimbabwe. These five key demands, based on the People's Human Rights Manifesto, are as follows:



**01.**

**Strengthening law enforcement and justice systems:**

Citizens highlighted the need to develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions, as envisaged under UN SDG 16.6, as a key demand to foster sustainable peace in Zimbabwe. Reforming critical state institutions, such as the police and judiciary, was seen as essential to ensuring personal security for citizens.

**02.**

**Improving socio-economic conditions (e.g., job creation, economic support):**

Citizens identified a strong connection between peace and their socio-economic well-being. They called on the government to implement concrete measures to alleviate poverty, promote inclusive and sustainable development, and guarantee property rights as well as the right to dignified work for all citizens.

**03.**

**Reforming political institutions and processes:**

Respondents emphasized that elections have become a significant threat to peace due to the culture of toxic politics marked by intolerance, hate speech, and violence. They demanded reforms not only to electoral laws but also to key institutions like ZEC, to ensure a level political playing field. More importantly, they called for an end to divisive politics driven by hate and violence. Their message was clear: elections should not be an empty ritual or a source of violence but an opportunity for citizens to freely exercise their political rights.

**04.**

**Enhancing transparency and combating corruption:**

Citizens reaffirmed their demand to end all forms of corruption, as articulated in the People's Human Rights Manifesto. They called for public officials to act professionally and impartially, urging local authorities to improve service delivery and the government to ensure access to basic amenities for all. They also stressed that traditional leaders should remain apolitical, as part of the broader effort to ensure all Zimbabweans enjoy an adequate standard of living.

## 05.

### **Promoting community dialogue and reconciliation:**

Citizens rejected top-down national healing and reconciliation processes that alienate victims of past violations. They are tired of commissions that have no commitment to peace. They expressed frustration over the continued mental anguish and suffering caused by unaddressed injustices. Citizens also condemned the pervasive culture of impunity in Zimbabwe, which allows perpetrators of abuses to evade accountability. They emphasized that there can be no peace in Zimbabwe without justice. They want a community-driven approach to building peace in Zimbabwe.

“

**The people of Zimbabwe demand an end to merely papering over the deep cracks embedded in the nation and call for decisive action to mend the broken calabash.**

### 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.

#### HEAD OFFICE

ZimRights House,  
90 SV Muzenda Street, Harare  
Tel: +263 242 707278  
+263 242 705898  
Email: [info@zimrights.org.zw](mailto:info@zimrights.org.zw)

#### BULAWAYO OFFICE

4 ESAT House, Fort Street,  
12th & 13th Ave, Bulawayo  
Tel: +263 2922 61826  
+263 2922 63721  
Email: [bulawayo@zimrights.org.zw](mailto:bulawayo@zimrights.org.zw)

#### MASVINGO OFFICE

ZIMRE Centre, Cnr Hughes/  
S. Mazorodze, 2nd Floor, Masvingo  
Tel: +263 392 266224  
Mob: +263 772 318 047  
Email: [masvingo@zimrights.org.zw](mailto:masvingo@zimrights.org.zw)

Hotline: +263 734 053 955. Membership Issues: [membership@zimrights.org.zw](mailto:membership@zimrights.org.zw)



[www.zimrights.org.zw](http://www.zimrights.org.zw)