



REPORT

**OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, HOME AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY SERVICES**

ON

VETERANS OF THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE BILL [H.B. 15, 2019.]

SECOND SESSION – NINTH PARLIAMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services had the opportunity to analyse the War Veterans Bill, [H.B 15, 2019] which was gazetted on the 1st of September, 2019. The Committee received mixed views on the Bill. Some sections of the public argued that the proposed law had significantly failed to address the real concerns of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle whilst others applauded the Bill for recognizing all persons who participated in the liberation struggle, irrespective of the different services or role they played. Indeed, most of the contributions made by individuals, especially war collaborators, were highly emotive as they felt hard done by Government. This is because they have not received any recognition or state benefits for the immense sacrifice that they made for Zimbabwe to gain its independence in 1980. Cognisant of the diverse views proffered, however, the Committee is indebted to all persons who contributed towards the crafting of this Bill.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The welfare of Veterans of the liberation Struggle has for long been a contentious issue in the post-independence era. War Veterans, War Collaborators, Non-combatant Cadres and Ex-Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restricttees have had divided opinion over how their contribution to the liberation of Zimbabwe had to be recognized and honored. Statutory measures were put in place to try and address the concerns of these liberation war heroes and heroines. The War Veterans Act (Chapter 11:15) and the Ex-Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restricttees Act (Chapter 17:10) are pieces of legislation instituted by the government to cater for the welfare of freedom fighters. However, these statutory measures seem to have fallen short in some ways to comprehensively address the concerns of war veterans in their various categories. This and many other reasons prompted the crafting of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Bill [H.B. 15, 2019]. This new Bill seeks to pacify and unify freedom fighters under a consolidated piece of legislation which proffers and promotes the rights and benefits of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle and their dependents. It is against this profound background that the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services conducted stakeholder consultative meetings on the Bill and compiled this report.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 In line with section 141 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), the Committee conducted public hearings in the ten provinces of the country, from the 27th to the 31st of January 2020. The public hearings were attended by various stakeholders that include: liberation war fighters, ex-political prisoners, detainees and restrictees, war collaborators, non-combatant cadres, widows, widowers and orphans of war veterans, children of living war veterans, persons living with disabilities, community leaders, government officials and other members of the public.

3.1.1 Also present during the public consultative meetings were associations such as: Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA); Zimbabwe Ex-Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restrictes Association (ZEPPDRA); Zimbabwe Liberation War Association of Collaborators (ZILIWACO) and Zimbabwe Children of Freedom Fighters Association (ZICOFFA).

3.1.2 Furthermore, the Committee had the opportunity to interact with the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs, Ambassador Marongwe and Mr. P. Muziri from the Southern Africa Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST) on the Bill.

3.1.3 For wide coverage, the Committee split into two groups, each covering five provinces as shown below:

(a) TEAM 1

Date	Province	Public Hearing Venue
27/01/20	Mashonaland Central	1. Musiiwa Business Centre (Musana) 2. Nzvimbo Growth Point (Mazowe)
28/01/20	Mashonaland East	1. Rural District Council Boardroom (Mutoko) 2. Rural District Council Hall (Macheke)
29/01/20	Manicaland	1. Sakubva Beit Hall (Mutare) 2. Information Centre (Birchenough)
30/01/20	Masvingo	1. Public Service Training Centre (Mucheke)

		2. Public Service Training Centre (Nyika Growth Point)
31/01/20	Harare	1. Stodart Hall (Mbare) 2. Unit L Hall (Chitungwiza)

(b) TEAM 2

Date	Province	Public Hearing Venue
27/01/20	Midlands	1.Senga Institute Training Centre (Gweru) 2. Chiyedza Hall (Zvishavane)
28/01/20	Matebeleland South	1. Jahunda Hall (Gwanda)
29/01/20	Bulawayo	1. Nketa Council Hall (Bulawayo) 2. Entumbane Hall (Bulawayo)
30/01/20	Matebeleland North	1. Tatazela Hall (Bubi) 2. Nyamandhlovu Hall (Umguza)
31/01/20	Mashonaland West	1. Rimuka Hall (Kadoma) 2. Gozhongera (Murombedzi)

4.0 Unpacking of the Bill by the Permanent Secretary of Defence and War Veterans Affairs

4.1 Ambassador Marongwe highlighted the importance of the Bill while acknowledging the efforts made in the past to address the plight of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. He, however, stressed the fact that the new Bill would repeal the War Veterans Act [Chapter 11:15] and the Ex Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restricttees Act[Chapter 17:10] in order to come up with one consolidated Act which would comprehensively cover all the categories of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle provided for in the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013). Thus, War Veterans, Ex-Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restricttees, War Collaborators and Non-Combatant Cadres among others, would be catered for under one umbrella Act known as the ‘Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Act’. He also summarized each clause of the bill, paying particular attention to key constitutional provisions from which the objectives were derived. Definitions of groups of Veterans of

the Liberation Struggle were also drawn from the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe, though in some cases additions were made in order to clarify the true nature of the groups.

5.0 PUBLIC HEARING SUBMISSIONS

The following key issues were raised by stakeholders regarding each clause of the Bill:

5.1 Clause 2: Interpretation

(a) Dependent

- (i)** The definition of “**dependent**” needs to be expanded to cater for the children of women who were impregnated by some Veterans of the Liberation Struggle during the course of the war. Their children have fallen victim to stigmatization and psychological torture on the grounds of the historical circumstances leading to their birth. This has disadvantaged the mothers and their children in accessing social benefits such as education, health and other services. Women in such a situation called for recognition of these dependents, so that they also benefit in whatever way prescribed by law.

(b) Ex-political Prisoner, Detainee or Restricttee

- (i)** Members of ZEPPDRA in all the provinces argued against a mandatory six-month specification for determining qualification as a beneficiary to this category of veterans. They contended that, in some cases, accused persons were detained, remanded or jailed for periods less than six months under intense stress, torture or other forms of abuses. They, therefore, recommended the removal of the six months condition and resort to considering the *‘contribution or act perpetrated as well as the act impact to the struggle in comparison to being in detention or prison for not less than six months*. The rationale for this was that one can be incarcerated for one month and suffer more physically, mentally and emotionally than someone imprisoned for six months.
- (ii)** In that respect, ZEPPDRA and ZNLWVA proposed **ninety days** as the cut-off point while other contributors called for the total removal of the specific deadline.

(c) Liberation War Fighter

- (i) While acknowledging the definition of ‘**War Veteran**’ to mean a liberation war fighter with a sound military and or security background, ZNLWVA queried the attempt by the new Bill to accommodate cadres with non-military expertise under the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle banner. They argued that recognising all the four categories under one umbrella name would dilute the true meaning of ‘War Veteran’ thereby depriving war veterans of the benefits associated with internationally recognised military veterans.
 - (ii) In that respect, War Veterans called for clarity in terms of seniority of the groups, objectively determined by the degree of sacrifice during the struggle, as listed in Section 23 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013). Thus, they emphasised the fact that the armed combatants’ degree of sacrifice cannot be equated with political prisoners, detainees and collaborators.
- (d) Non-Combatant Cadre**
- (i) It was proposed that the term, ‘**non-combatant cadre**’ should be removed and be replaced by ‘**liberation war veteran cadre**’. The sentiments from the public were that the description denigrates war collaborators in that it depicts an impression of non-connectivity to the struggle when in fact they were resolutely involved at all levels.
 - (ii) They therefore, opted for ‘**War Veteran Cadre**’ as this impliedly meant exposure to the enemy’s attacks by either chemical, biological or physical means.
 - (iii) Representatives also proposed the deletion of the term ‘**refugee camps**’ as they felt that it gives the impression that freedom fighters who operated in these camps (better known as **Transit Camps**) were cowards fleeing their homes to live as refugees. Additionally, members proposed that Transit Camps in Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and Angola should unconditionally be mentioned in the proposed clause and considered as such for the purposes of vetting.
 - (iv) On defining War Collaborator as a person who ‘**ASSISTED**’ the fighters ...’ it was proposed that the term ‘**ASSISTED**’ be replaced by ‘**PARTICIPATED**’ wherever the term appears in the bill.

- (v) **War Collaborator** should be ‘any person who had attained the age of **14 years** by the 31st of December, 1979.’
- (vi) On the interpretation of ‘**veteran of the liberation struggle**’ the term ‘**means**’ should be deleted and be replaced by the term ‘**include**’.

4.3 Clause 3: Establishment of the Liberation Struggle Board

- (i) War Veterans proposed the inclusion of a clause that empowers them to appoint members, from the grassroots, to be Board Members. The clause should indicate that the nomination and appointment shall be done through the Associations of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. The Minister’s discretion to appoint Board Members should strictly be guided by relevant statutory instruments.
- (ii) Members called for a clause which states that the chairmanship of the Board shall rotate between the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZPRA) cadres, to ensure balance. They advised that the Board should be changed periodically, that is, after every **3 years**, to curb corruption.
- (iii) Representative associations noted that the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle comprises of ex-freedom fighters, demobilized and retired personnel, and non-militant cadres. For that reason, they disputed the inclusion of the Commander of the Defence Forces of Zimbabwe in the Board for the sole reason that it would confine them to military command. Hence the Commander should not be Chairman of the Board.
- (iv) Members of the public also held in doubt the powers given to the Chief Director by the Bill. They called for the trimming of the his or her powers, especially on management of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Fund and other monetary projects.
- (v) In addition to the functions of the Board, a proposal was made that the Board should be empowered to set out the criteria for declaring hero status to deceased veterans.

4.4 Clause 8: Powers of Vetting officers

- (i) The general public called for the establishment if a **Vetting Committee** which should be changed after every three years, to curb corruption. It was, therefore, proposed that the subtitle of Clause 8 should be expanded to read; “**Appointment, Powers and Duties of the Vetting Committee**” as opposed to ‘**Powers of vetting officers**. In addition, a vetting

officer should be a person who **participated** in the liberation struggle, either under **ZPRA** or **ZANLA**.

- (ii) ZILIWACO and ZNLWVA postulated that the clause should clearly state that War Collaborators are to be vetted by Camp Commanders or any such persons in authority who participated in the war and were directly linked to the persons being vetted.
- (iii) The vetting should be done in the zones and bases where the collaborators operated during the war of liberation. Chiefs, headmen and village heads should be consulted during the vetting of collaborators since they are presumed to have records of families and individuals who actively participated in the struggle in their villages of command

4.5 **Clause 12: Benefits and establishment of schemes.**

(a) ***Pension***

- (i) Associations representing the four categories of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle called for the removal of the term '**BASIC**' in **Clause 12(a)(i)** arguing that it allows the Minister or any such responsible authority, to offer a pension benefit that may not be sufficient to cater for the financial welfare of veterans. Instead, they opted for a clause which clearly states that Veterans of the Liberation Struggle are entitled to a pension benefit equivalent to a serving Brigadier General's salary.
- (ii) It was also proposed that, in the event of the death of a war veteran, the pension payable to the surviving spouse or dependents should not be reviewed downwards to the extent that it leaves the deceased's family in abject poverty. This is in light of the added responsibilities that would be endured by the surviving spouse.

b) ***Medical and Dental Care***

- (i) Cognisant of this provision, presenters on the subject highlighted that nearly all liberation war veterans were either physically, emotionally or mentally incapacitated as a result of the after-effects of the protracted war of liberation. In that respect, it was proposed that a **comprehensive medical aid scheme**, offered by a reputable medical aid company, be awarded. The scheme should allow beneficiaries to access healthcare at both government

and private institutions countrywide, as well as outside Zimbabwe, where and when the situation requires so.

- (ii) Several speakers on the subject also lamented the poor state of health institutions in the country and strongly proposed the incorporation of a clause on the construction of memorial hospitals and clinics for Veterans of the Liberation Struggle.

(c) ***Educational Assistance***

- (i) Veterans of the Liberation Struggle bemoaned the challenges faced by their children and dependents with regards to accessing educational funding. While the Bill restricts educational assistance to government institutions, both ZILIWACO and ZNLWVA associations argued that the benefit should be extended to cover private institutions in and outside the country.
- (ii) Still on the provision of educational assistance, ZNLWVA in Masvingo proposed the inclusion of a clause where a 20% quota of the Presidential and other national scholarship schemes is reserved for children and dependents of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. In addition, the benefit should be availed to all learners, young and old, as long as they are official beneficiaries, regardless of their age.

(d) ***Funeral Assistance***

- (i) In Clause 12 (2), associations called for the incorporation of a sub clause on the provision of funeral services by a ParLOUR of reputable standing such as Doves and Nyaradzo Funeral Service providers.
- (ii) In addition, they proposed to be given funeral assistance and benefits which are equivalent to those of the other Veterans in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.
- (iii) They suggested that hero status should not be distinctly categorized. Instead, they strongly expressed the view that all freedom fighters should be accorded national hero status for the purposes of uniform funeral assistance, honour and other post-funeral benefits.

(e) ***Gratuity***

- (i) Veterans of the Liberation Struggle queried the powers of the Minister responsible for War Veterans Affairs and were quick to point out the ambiguity expressed in clause 12(3) on payment of gratuities. They called for a crystal-clear clause on the benefit entitled to war veterans in terms of the actual once off gratuity payable to beneficiaries.
- (ii) With respect to that, associations proposed the deletion of the word ‘**MAY**’ together with the phrase, ‘...**within the resources available...**’ to be replaced by ‘**SHALL**’ wherever they appear in the Bill. It was argued that the inclusion and use of ‘**MAY**’ leaves a lot to interpretation and is prejudicial to Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. They argued that the clause must compel the Minister to honour the provision, instead of giving him or her the discretion to act otherwise.
- (iii) To that end, it was proposed that Clause 12(3), when amended, should read, “*The Minister SHALL prescribe a gratuity payable once only....*”.
- (iv) Additionally, the Bill should state a figure in respect of the gratuity for each category of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle, as is the case with the War Veterans Act (1997) which gave effect to the payment of a \$50 000,00 to all vetted War Veterans.
- (v) In view of the above fact, War Collaborators and Non-Combatant Cadres proposed that their monetary benefits should also be paid retrospectively (backdated to 1997, when liberation war fighters received their gratuity and pension benefits).
- (vi) Furthermore, it was proposed that there must be a clause stating that all deceased Veterans of the Liberation Struggle should benefit posthumously, through their surviving spouses, dependents and or relatives.
- (vii) Another proposal made in honour of veterans benefitting posthumously was that 20% of their children, including those of living Veterans, should be offered jobs by the Public Service Commission. To this end, a call was made to incorporate a clause to read, ‘*Employment of children of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle in the public service, that is, the Zimbabwe National Army, Zimbabwe Republic Police, Prisons Services and other government institutions*’.

- (f) **Clear categorization of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle members**
- (i) Pursuant to the aforesaid benefits, associations, particularly the ZNLWVA, demanded clear classification of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle on the basis of their contribution and sacrifice to the Liberation Struggle. This should inevitably apply on the allocation of benefits. In other words, clause 12 should explicitly state the benefits and schemes for each distinct category.
- (ii) In view of the foregoing proposal, members of ZNLWVA and ZEPPDRA emphasised the importation of all clauses on benefits, from the current War Veterans Act [Chapter 11:15] and ZEPPDRA Act [Chapter 17:10] into the proposed Bill. This includes importing all supporting statutory instruments.

4.5.2 Additional benefits requested by Veterans of the Liberation Struggle.

(a) ***Tax and Duty Exemption***

- (i) It was proposed that the Bill should have a clause that exempts Veterans of the Liberation Struggle from paying **land tax, vehicle import duty and tollgate fees.**

(b) ***Quota System in Parliament and all government institutions and agencies***

- (i) The Veterans of the Liberation Struggle called for the Bill to have a clause which clearly states that there should be a 20% quota for War Veterans in Parliament and all government institutions, as is the case with women and youth. According to proponents of this idea, representation in Parliament and other state institutions by Veterans of the Liberation Struggle themselves will ensure that their welfare concerns are fully addressed while at the same time safeguarding revolutionary values and interests.

(c) ***Automatic Promotion of serving Veterans of the Liberation Struggle in state institutions***

- (i) A proposal was made to include a clause on automatic promotion of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle currently working in government institutions. They suggested that serving members due for retirement should be promoted one step up in order to boost their retirement packages and pension benefits as is the case with retiring military personnel.

(d) ***Diplomatic Passports***

(i) All associations across the ten provinces concurred on the need to grant diplomatic passports to the leadership of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. They proposed the insertion of a clause in the Bill.

(f) ***Bravery Medals and New Identity Cards***

(i) War Veterans called for the Bill to have a clause wherein the liberation fighters will be recognized and honoured through awarding of Bravery medals as is the case with Chiefs. They argued that the clause would complement Section 23 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013), which elaborately calls for the State, its institutions and agencies at all levels to accord due respect, honour and recognition to Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. In addition, new identity cards should be processed and given to each Veteran of the Liberation Struggle.

4.6 Clause 13 -16: Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Fund

(a)(i) A call was made to include a clause on the decentralization of the administration of the Fund so that it becomes easily accessible to beneficiaries. While acknowledging the influence and role of the Board hereto, the public called for the trimming of the powers of the Chief Executive Director with respect to the administration of the Fund.

(ii) In respect of individual economic empowerment projects, War Veterans in particular, called for a clause on special concessions or grants in mining. This, according to them, will help the government to control and monitor its mineral resources by curbing pilferage and black marketeering.

(b) ***Compensation of War Victims and Veterans of the Liberation Struggle living with disabilities***

(i) Pursuant to and recognising the establishment of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Fund, the public in Macheke observed that the Bill was not explicit on compensation of war victims and Veterans who are disabled. It was, therefore, proposed that there be a clause on compensation of war victims and veterans living with disability through an established War Victims Fund, as provided for in the War Veterans Act (1997).

(c) ***Exhumation, reburial and maintenance of Shrines of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle***

- (i) Associations highlighted that the Bill should incorporate a clause to address issues of exhumation of those who perished during the liberation struggle. They claimed that the State should take maximum responsibility on identifying the deceased and spearheading the exhumation process, thereby rendering them decent reburial at the heroes' acre or their respective home shrines.
- (ii) The same clause should seek to address gaps on adherence and reverence to cultural practices such as traditional cleansing in order to appease and put to rest the spirits of fallen heroes and heroines whose remains lie neglected either in foreign land or from within our borders.
- (iii) There were concerns that the maintenance of National Shrines was being neglected especially at provincial and district level. They proposed that existing Acts on maintenance of National Shrines be transferred to the ministry responsible for the welfare of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle, that is, the Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs.

4.7 Clause 19: Accounting and Auditing of the Fund

Some members of the public advised that the said clause should also mention that Veterans of the Liberation Struggle, at grassroots level, shall be furnished with financial statements and Audit Reports regularly. Additionally, an external auditor should also be engaged to complement the efforts of the internal auditor.

4.8 Clause 21: Resettlement benefits for Veterans of the Liberation Struggle.

- (i) There were calls to incorporate a clause which commits the government to protect their land rights. Concern was raised where some Veterans of the Liberation Struggle, widows and orphans of deceased Veterans, were being evicted from their resettlement areas. Associations therefore suggested that there should be a clause which stipulates that War Veterans, whose pieces of land might be confiscated by the State for national developmental programmes, be relocated first before the government takes over their land.

- (ii) War Veterans asserted that the Bill should clearly state that every War Veteran is entitled to at least 50 hectares of farmland.
- (iii) Moreso, they argued that the 20% quota stipulated in the Bill should not be restricted to farmland allocation alone. Instead, it should apply on all government projects such as housing schemes in urban areas and growth points.

5.0 COMMITTEE OBSERVATIONS

- (a)(i) All the associations were not comfortable with the use of such terms as **refugee camps** and **non-combatant cadre** on the section dealing with interpretation of terms. Despite the term **non-combatant cadre** appearing on Section 23 of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe, the affected group argued that the term was foreign to them and did not give a true reflection of the cadres' involvement in the Struggle. The use of '**Refugee Camps**' was rejected as Veterans called them **Transit Camps**.
- (ii) War Veterans were not satisfied with the umbrella reference to all the categories of participants of the Liberation Struggle as Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. This is mainly because the implied definition of war veteran from this perspective is not in tandem with the internationally accepted meaning of 'war veteran'. Internationally, the term 'war veteran' refers to a person who underwent military training and engaged in combat operations in a particular war. Likewise, our War Veterans are recognised as such as a result of their attestation in the ZPRA and ZANLA armies. Therefore, this set up (by nature of its proposed composition) dissociates the War Veterans of Zimbabwe from the community of international war veterans who subscribe to the World Veterans Federation.
- (b)(i) The ZNLWVA and ZEPPDRA prefer upholding the current pieces of legislation, that is, The War Veterans Act [Chapter 11:15] and the ZEPPDRA Act [Chapter 17:10] while urging the government to consider crafting separate pieces of legislation for War Collaborators and Non-Combatant cadres. However, ZEPPDRA would welcome the new piece of legislation only if it were to honour promises made in the current Act which offered \$6 million as gratuity to each member.

- (iii)** ZILWACO and Non-Combatant Cadres expressed excitement over the development and appreciated the advent of the new Bill as they believed that all freedom fighters are equal in terms of their contribution to the liberation Struggle. The former is urging Government to pay members a once off gratuity in retrospect since their counterparts (War Veterans) had benefited back in the late 1990s.

- (c)(i)** Associations concurred on the rotational 3year tenure of the Board Membership comprised of members drawn from the four categories at grassroot level.
- (ii)** Representatives of the four groups felt that the Bill was emphasizing powers of the Board and the Chief Director instead of being elaborate on benefits of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle.

- (d)(i)** Associations of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle agreed on the establishment of a Vetting Committee made up of Ex-Commanders of the Liberation Struggle.

- (e)** All the associations representing Veterans of the Liberation Struggle concurred on the need to have a clause that establishes a War Veterans quota in Parliament and all government agencies.

- (f)** The issue of benefits was very topical in all the provinces. All the associations called for clarity on allocation of actual benefits for each category.

- (g)(i)** The majority of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle did not benefit from the land reform programme and some of those who were fortunate enough to have gotten land were being unfairly evicted. Widows and orphans of fallen veterans were the most vulnerable to these evictions.
- (ii)** The Committee also noted that the Bill is silent on the welfare of veterans who are mentally and physically disabled as well as widows and orphans of War Veterans who passed on prior to 1980 in Zambia and Mozambique before vetting was done.

- (h)** There was concurrence on the need for members to participate in national economic empowerment programmes if they were rightfully empowered through grants and mining concessions.
- (i)** There is need to consider reviewing the vetting age limit for War Collaborators from the proposed age 16 to 14 years as at 31st December 1979.
- (j)** There is need to consider revising the cut-off point for qualification as Ex-Political Prisoner, Detainee and Restricttee from six months to three months. This should include cadres who were executed and those who simply disappeared during the war yet their records are known.
- (k)** Veterans of the Liberation Struggle are vehemently calling for recognition and honour during important state gatherings such as Independence Day and Heroes Day Commemorations, among others. They also concur on being given new identity cards and bravery medals as is the case with Chiefs.
- (l)(i)** For the sake of preservation of history, liberation war fighters are proposing the establishment of Veterans of the liberation Struggle Museums as well as the introduction of a War Veteran Bond which will stand as a legal instrument guarding the values of the liberation struggle.
- (ii)** War Veterans are concerned that the National Anthem is not sung at the beginning of each Parliamentary sitting in both the National Assembly and Senate.
- (m)** Associations representing the groups of freedom fighters strongly reiterated the need for speedy exhumation of fallen heroes and decent burial for all deceased Veterans of the Liberation Struggle. In addition, they are proposing a speedy proclamation of hero status, which in any case should be national hero status for all deceased veterans.
- (n)** Veterans of the Liberation Struggle were concerned about the Ministry's failure to consult them during the drafting of the Bill.

- (o) The Committee observed that some members of the public lacked sound comprehension of the Bill. Most individuals took the public hearing gathering for a platform to narrate and share their personal experiences during the war instead of responding to the clauses of the Bill. Others, especially War Collaborators, demonstrated their readiness for vetting by going as far as submitting compiled lists of their members.
- (p) There was notable confusion among the members of the public on the interpretation of Sections 141 and 149 of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe. The majority of the people who attended the public hearing sessions were unable to draw lines between the Khundlane Petition and the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Bill. People expected the Bill to have captured all the recommendations made in the Khundlane Petition Report which was still under debate in Parliament.
- (q) Associations and individuals alike, were concerned that it had taken too long a time (40 years) for the Government to seriously consider the plight of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle.

6.0 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) Suggested definitions and descriptions should be incorporated in the section on interpretation of terms. The replacement of the term ‘**may**’ with ‘**shall**’ should be adhered to wherever it is used in the Bill.
- (b)(i) Repealing the Bill is not a reasonable action to take. Rather, importing all relevant clauses and statutory instruments in the previous pieces of legislation, [War Veterans Act 11:15 and ZEPPDRA Act 17:10] into the proposed Bill would go a long way in addressing the plight of Veterans.
- (ii) An unquestionable categorization of the distinct groups of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle, as well a clear criterion for awarding benefits to each group should be considered. Added to that, the government should work out separate packages (pensions and gratuity) for War Collaborators and Non-Combatant Cadres which are different from those awarded

to War Veterans and Ex -Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restricttees, in order to avoid unnecessary political conflicts and court actions.

- (c)(i)** The Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Board should include members of the four categories drawn from the grassroots. The Board should be changed after every three years.
- (ii)** Though reporting to the Board, powers of the Chief Director should be trimmed so that he or she does not directly or indirectly become the sole administrator of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Fund and all associated empowerment projects.
- (d)** A Vetting Committee made up of Commanders of ex-combatants should be set up to handle all vetting issues. Traditional leaders such as chiefs, village heads and headmen who have records of families and individuals who actively participated in the liberation struggle should be consulted during the vetting process.
- (e)** Political parties must take the initiative to promote and implement the quota system in their respective political parties which is aimed at achieving the call for a quota reserved for War Veterans in Parliament.
- (f)(i)** The Bill should provide for a comprehensive medical aid scheme offered by a reputable Medical Aid Society. In addition, health care should be accessible in both private and public health institutions in and outside the country. In the long run, construction of memorial hospitals for Veterans of the Liberation Struggle is necessary.
- (ii)** The Bill should provide for full funeral cover equivalent to that of a national hero and offered by a Parlour of reputable standing. The Committee also recommends timely declaration of hero status as well as the immediate release of funeral assistance funds and other post-funeral benefits.
- (iii)** The Bill should offer standard educational funding for children and dependents of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle at all levels of learning including access to government scholarship schemes. This should apply on both private and public institutions.
- (iv)** Veterans of the liberation Struggle in the four categories should be exempted from paying land tax, tollgate fees and import duty on commercial or investment imports.

- (g)** All landless Veterans of the Liberation Struggle should be allocated at least fifty hectares of land. Once land has been legally allocated, beneficiaries must not be dispossessed except with a court judgement and on condition that a replacement of equal size is found within three months before eviction. Widows, orphans and dependents of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle must be legally protected from eviction.
- (h)** Individual empowerment projects should be prioritized over group funding. The government should consider offering mining concessions or grants backed by government guarantees similar to housing guarantees the government used to provide in the early 1980s.
- (i)** The vetting age limit for War Collaborators should be 14 years as at 31st December 1979.
- (j)** The cut-off period for qualification as Ex-Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restricttees should be 90 days.
- (k)** Veterans of the Liberation Struggle should be given due recognition and honour by leading processions during significant national commemoration gatherings such as Independence, Heroes and Unity Days. Likewise, new identity cards should be processed and bravery medals awarded to all veterans in their distinct categories.
- (l)** For the sake of preservation of history, the government is encouraged to establish Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Museums as well as introducing a War Veterans Bond which will stand as a legal instrument guarding the values of the liberation struggle.
- (m)** Stakeholders, in this case the four categories of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle, should be engaged or consulted during the drafting of Bills concerning their welfare.
- (n)** A Gazetted Bill should be accompanied by a simplified version (Bill Digest) preferably written in local language, to assist the general public in terms of grasping the contents of the Bill.

- (o) In addition to Statutory Instruments, the government should publish simplified versions of bills in the form of pamphlets and fliers detailing entitlements and benefits and where to access these benefits. These should be readily available to all Veterans of the Liberation Struggle and all the eligible beneficiaries.
- (p) Government should speed up the exhumation of fallen cadres and ensure that they are reburied decently. It must also ensure that all the shrines are properly maintained by responsible authorities.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Therefore, it is pertinent to boldly state that Veterans of the Liberation Struggle are an indispensable heritage, not only of our national history of liberation from colonial bondage, but also represent the national ethos and the collective spirit of Zimbabweanness birthed through resilience, bringing together our racial, ethnic and religious diversities. As such, the supreme law of the land acknowledges this pivotal and transcendental role and invokes the mandate of the state and all its institutions to accord “respect, honour and recognition to Veterans of the Liberation Struggle.” Unfortunately, it has taken 40 years for the State to come up with a law that seeks to address the concerns of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle as a combined force. In view of that, let it be known that most of the views given by stakeholders are noble and require attention. The case of subsidized transport, education, health care, housing, funeral grants and other relevant benefits for Veterans of the Liberation Struggle is not peculiar to Zimbabwe, rather, it is in line with international best practices. Thus, the Committee urges the responsible authority (Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs) to consider the people’s views and incorporate those issues that are critical in as far as the welfare of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle is concerned.