



## **STATEMENT AGAINST HATE SPEECHES AND INCITEMENT OF VIOLENCE**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) is one of the five Chapter 12 Independent Commissions Supporting Democracy in Zimbabwe. It is established in terms of sections 232 (b) and 242 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and operationalized by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Act [Chapter 10:30]. The mandate of the Commission outlined in Sections 233 and 243 of the Constitution includes supporting and entrenchment of human rights and democracy.

The Commission has noted with great concern recent political statements in the form of political sloganeering and hate speech by some reckless and unscrupulous political actors that have the tendency of disturbing the peace and personal security of other people. In its previous public statements, the Commission expressed its aversion to continued churning out of intolerance to diversity through increased incidences of hate speech and incitement to violence as reported then in both social and mainstream media in Zimbabwe. This statement is being made to bring the attention of political actors and others to the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights which should be respected and upheld by all without distinction.

As enshrined in Section 3 of the Constitution, Zimbabwe is founded on values and principles of good governance, equality of all human beings, and the rule of law among others. In particular, the principles of good governance, which bind the State include:

- A multi – party democratic political system
- Respect for the rights of all political parties, and
- Due respect for vested rights

It is therefore a flagrant violation of human rights enshrined in the supreme law of the land for any person to make pronouncements that threaten, intimidate, and incite violence against persons of a different political affiliation or persuasion.

As stipulated in Section 67 of the Constitution, every Zimbabwean citizen has the right:

- To make political choices freely
- To form, to join and to participate in the activities of a political party or organization of their choice
- To campaign freely and peacefully for a political party or cause, and
- To participate in peaceful political activity

Threats of violence and/or murder of political opponents, or any person for that matter, are a clear and blatant violation of the right to life and right to personal security provided in Sections 48 and 52 of the Constitution respectively. Such threats, when taken in the political context, are inciteful and inflammatory in nature with the real danger of degenerating into widespread violence, injuries, loss of life and destruction of property. It is therefore irresponsible and dangerous for political actors to make such careless and hateful pronouncements.

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Human rights and freedoms are guaranteed in the Constitution of Zimbabwe which is the supreme law of the land. In line with section 44 of the same Constitution the ZHRC is calling upon every person, every institution, and every agency of government at every level to respect, protect, promote, and fulfill the rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration of Rights. The Commission particularly calls upon the Government of Zimbabwe, as the primary duty bearer to, not only guarantee the security of every Zimbabwean, but take measures to achieve that.

The ZHRC, in line with its mandate, is following up on these incidences and investigating to verify facts in order to determine the next course of action. National development goals and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms can only be possible in a peaceful, tolerant, and free society. Competition for political office/s should therefore be based on the desire to improve the standard of living for all Zimbabweans and not to undermine each other.

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