



NATIONAL  
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE  
WORKING GROUP  
ZIMBABWE

## CALL FOR AN INCLUSIVE, TRANSFORMATIVE AND PROBLEM-SOLVING NATIONAL DIALOGUE

### Statement on Mandela Day

18 July 2019

*“Since my release, I have become more convinced than ever that the real makers of history are the ordinary men and women of our country, their participation in every decision about the future is the only guarantee of true democracy and freedom.” (Mandela, 1990).*

The National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) joins the rest of the world in commemorating Mandela Day. Nelson Mandela based his entire life on the principle of dialogue and the art of listening and speaking to others, getting others to listen and talk to each other. In commemorating his legacy, it is worth acknowledging that Nelson Mandela was a unifier who purposely strived for the freedom of his people through a platform of discussion that allowed people from diverse backgrounds to talk and lay to rest the ghosts of the past.

Section 10 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe presses upon the Government the same values through the promotion of national unity, peace and stability. This objective can only be realised through purposeful steps to engage diversity that transcends political differences on a platform of inclusive dialogue. The NTJWG calls on the Government to emulate this example that epitomises good governance and leadership that is selfless.

Drawing on the contribution by Nelson Mandela, the NTJWG encourages Zimbabweans to enter into dialogue about difficulties facing the country to address the challenges Zimbabweans face today. This year's Mandela Day marks 101 years since the birth of Africa's most celebrated leader in justice, healing and reconciliation. At a crucial moment in Zimbabwe's transition from independence to a full-fledged democracy, the most important of all obligations for Zimbabwe's leadership at the moment is to ensure that as the nation moves forward, it must confront its dark past and ensure justice and healing for victims and survivors. In responding to this obligation, Mandela established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa to lead the dialogue on healing and reconciliation. In the same way, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission must take the lead in facilitating an inclusive, transformative and problem-solving dialogue in Zimbabwe. The successes or failures of the NPRC to date are subject to debate. However, what is true and undeniable is the reality in the Commission's efforts, there is will to entrench lasting peace in Zimbabwe for the nation to enjoy a full-fledged democracy in which human rights and good governance reign supreme.

In commemorating the Mandela legacy, the NTJWG calls upon all Zimbabweans to reflect on Zimbabwe's reconciliation journey and their role in it. Over the past three decades, Zimbabwe has been caught up in a vicious cycle of violence from the independence struggle to the recent 1 August 2018 shootings in Harare and the human rights violations during and after the #ZimShutdown protests. Organised violence, torture and economic deterioration have created an agitated citizenry only expected in a volatile

country. Since the establishment of the NTJWG in 2014, it has been the Working Group's unrelenting call that Zimbabwe must put in place transitional justice measures that facilitate justice, healing and reconciliation for the many victims and survivors of different epochs of atrocities around the country facilitated through a national dialogue.

The objective of the dialogue should be to develop and sustain a platform to create consensus on the solutions to arrest the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. The dialogue should utilise the history, experience, values, vision and leadership espoused by Mandela to provide a non-partisan platform for public discourse on pertinent social issues and in doing so, contribute to participatory governance and decision-making in Zimbabwe. In his own words, Mandela hinted that *“Since my release, I have become more convinced than ever that the real makers of history are the ordinary men and women of our country, their participation in every decision about the future is the only guarantee of true democracy and freedom.”* (Mandela, 1990).

Zimbabwe occupies a unique space in Africa and globally as an example of a country that emerged from a plethora of racial, cultural and political divisions - primarily because of a timely dialogue among all its stakeholders in the 1980s which brought Gukurahundi to a halt. Once upon a time, Zimbabwe was a progressive and stable nation envied by most. Currently the country faces a range of complex challenges which threaten to paralyse and plunge her into an abyss and further chaos. It is within Nelson Mandela's legacy that a spirit of inclusive and transformative dialogue should be invigorated to break the political and economic quagmire in Zimbabwe.

The national dialogue should bring about meaningful conversations among all relevant stakeholders in Zimbabwe. Drawing on the rich traditions of transformative, problem-solving and social renewal dialogues illuminated in Mandela's vision of a united, peaceful and equal Africa, this can also make possible Zimbabwe's long-awaited transition.

The NTJWG will continue calling for an inclusive, transformative and problem-solving national dialogue among all stakeholders in the country, raise awareness about the problems faced by people in Zimbabwe and the possible solutions available to them. At the same time, the NTJWG calls upon all stakeholders to put Zimbabwe first and put their differences aside by initiating an inclusive, transformative and problem-solving national dialogue.