



PRESS STATEMENT IN COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

12 AUGUST 2020

The National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) joins the rest of the world in commemorating International Youth Day which is celebrated on the 12th of August every year. The day signifies global recognition of the importance of youth voices and initiatives as well as the need for youth empowerment to enable youths to positively contribute to change in their communities. This year, International Youth Day is celebrated under the theme, **“Youth Engagement for Global Action.”** Under this theme, the focus is on enhancing youth engagement at community, national and global levels to ensure that processes at each of these levels are responsive to the needs of the youth and inclusive of their views.

This year, International Youth Day comes at a time where the world is grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic which has had severe economic and social impact on the world. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the disruptions the pandemic has caused. Some are currently facing disruptions to their education which may continue indefinitely, with varying alternative delivery initiatives being implemented globally. As a result, young people are currently at the risk of falling behind in terms of their education and economic opportunities. Given the impact that this pandemic is having and will continue to have on the lives of youths globally, governments across the world must ensure that young people are included in the formulation of COVID-19 response strategies. According to the United Nation’s estimates of the world’s population in 2019, youths, that is persons between ages 15 and 24 years, numbered 1.2 billion or around one in every six persons worldwide. This is a significant percentage of the global population. As such youth voices should be recognised and included at all decision-making levels.

Section 3(2)(i) of the Zimbabwean Constitution recognises respect for the rights of youths as a principle of good governance, which binds the State and all Government institutions and agencies. It is therefore critical for respect for youth rights which are also human rights. Youth engagement that is founded on the respect of human rights is crucial to building tolerance, breaking inter-generational cycles of human rights violations, and stopping the culture of impunity in Zimbabwe. It represents an investment in tackling injustice and building a society where non-recurrence of gross human violations is guaranteed.

Yet instead of being engaged, the youths in Zimbabwe are being tortured and abused. The NTJWG therefore calls upon the youths of Zimbabwe come together and peacefully engage the government of Zimbabwe to ensure respect and protection of the rights of youths at every level of government and by all government agencies and agents.

The NTJWG further calls on the government of Zimbabwe to prioritise respect for human rights and engagement of the youth in decision-making processes at all levels, now and beyond.

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