



NATIONAL
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE
WORKING GROUP
ZIMBABWE

October 2021- December 2021 Edition

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE WATCH: NTJWG NEWSLETTER

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October 2021- December 2021 Edition

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Continuing Dialogue on Transitional Justice in Zimbabwe

Introduction

The National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) is pleased to issue the 2021 fourth quarterly newsletter. In this edition, the NTJWG gives you a brief look at the developments and issues in the final quarter of 2021. Highlighted in this edition are issues ranging from contextual analysis to transitional justice cases in Zimbabwe that emerged from the last quarter as well as activities by the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) and the NTJWG.

Contextual Analysis

This section discusses several emerging issues that influenced the operating environment for the NTJWG and the general populace on the delivery of transitional justice in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's economic, political and social situations remain dire. High levels of unemployment, coupled with skyrocketing inflation have worsened the plight of the majority of Zimbabweans.

Constricted Democratic Space In Zimbabwe: The PVO Amendment Bill

The fourth quarter was double-faced. While some activities were positive, others were not only controversial but detrimental to transitional justice in the country. One of the most controversial issues arising from the fourth quarter is the government's gazette of the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Bill. On 5 November 2021, the government gazetted the PVO Amendment Bill, 2021.[1].

The Bill contains proposed changes to the Private Voluntary Organisations Act [Chapter 17:05] purportedly necessitated “by growing regional and global concerns about money laundering and the financing of terrorist activities”. Consequently, according to the gazette, the Bill seeks to develop policies to combat money laundering “by any individual or institution in Zimbabwe operating under the Private Voluntary Organisations banner”.

The Bill also seeks to streamline administrative procedures for private voluntary organisations to allow for efficient regulation and registration. The proposed law will ensure that private voluntary organisations do not undertake political lobbying. The PVO Amendment Bill has been viewed as an attempt by the government to control civil society organisations and to crush dissent in every possible way.

The civic space is gradually closing amid growing hostility from the state. The government has used various mechanisms which include restrictive legislation, both existing and proposed legislation, and attacks through the State media. Civic organisations and human rights defenders have been denigrate, with government officials using hostile language that included describing CSOs as “axis of evil.” [2]

The PVO Amendment Bill has the potential of further collapsing the already shrinking civic space. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, and the Legal Resources Foundation developed a factsheet on the PVO Amendment Bill. The factsheet details the implications of the Bill once it is passed into law as outlined below-:

“The proposed law will ensure that private voluntary organisations do not undertake political lobbying. The PVO Amendment Bill has been viewed as an attempt by the government to control civil society organisations and to crush dissent in every possible way.

“The civic space is gradually closing amid growing hostility from the state.”

”

- PVOs will not be able to freely carry out their work Human rights violations such as police brutality and political violence would increase without victims getting justice.
- Humanitarian work would cease, or be severely restricted. PVOs would not be able to continue with their work due to a lack of funding and support from local and international partners.
- Communities in distress will not get aid and services they currently receive through the work of PVOs.

If passed, the Bill would affect the work of all non-profit organisations working in Zimbabwe, including those providing life-saving assistance (think sanitary pad drives, community feeding centres and burial societies), religious charities, educational services, food aid, water and sanitation assistance, care for vulnerable children, transitional justice, and more.

New COVID-19 Variant and its implications

The operating environment for transitional justice remained restricted and the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant worsened the situation.

On 26 November 2021, the World Health Organisation (WHO) designated B.1.1.529, named Omicron, as a variant of concern on the advice of WHO's Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution (TAG-VE).

The decision was based on the evidence presented to the TAG-VE that Omicron has several mutations that may have an impact on how it behaves, for example, on how easily it spreads or the severity of illness it causes. [3]

It is not yet clear whether infection with Omicron causes more severe disease compared to infections with other variants, including Delta.

Travel bans on a handful of African countries following the discovery of the new variant have been met with anger and disgruntlement.

The travel bans are a potential threat to global solidarity and could have dire consequences for the sharing of information on new COVID-19 variants in the future.

The government of Zimbabwe responded by issuing the Public Health (COVID-19, Prevention, Containment and Treatment (National Lockdown) (No.2) Amendment Order, 2021 (No.37).[4]. With the continual emergence of different COVID-19 variants, it seems Zimbabwe will continue to be under lockdown.

The transitional justice operating environment will continue to be restricted. The NTJWG, therefore, urges the transitional justice stakeholders and players to come up with innovative ways to implement effective transitional justice processes despite the limited operating environment.

Political Violence As Zimbabwe Approaches 2023 Elections

The political environment deteriorated during the fourth quarter as the country approaches elections in 2023.

The NTJWG noted an increase in both interparty and intraparty political violence fueled by the intolerance pervading the country.

On 11 October 2021, national police spokesperson, Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi reported the arrest of 20 Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) supporters in Manicaland province following intraparty violence that occurred on 10 October 2021.

The clashes started at the party's provincial co-ordinating committee meeting in Mutare after demonstrators, who were calling for the ouster of chairperson Mike Madiro, were teargassed by police.

On the same day, in Charumbira Village in Masvingo, ZANU PF members waving placards attacked MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa's entourage, damaging vehicles and injuring scores of people.

The injured were hospitalised. These incidents have pointed to violent 2023 elections.

Special rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures visits Zimbabwe.

The United Nations special rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Professor Alena Douhan, visited Zimbabwe from 17 to 28 October 2021.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the impact of unilateral sanctions on the enjoyment of human rights on Zimbabweans.

The special rapporteur met the President of Zimbabwe, Government officials, members of various political parties, independent civil society organisations as well as faith-based organisations, among others.

“ Prof Douhan called for the lifting of unilateral sanctions against Zimbabwe and urged meaningful structured dialogue on political reform, human rights, and the rule of law. ”

She said unilateral sanctions had exacerbated pre-existing social and economic challenges on the people of Zimbabwe, especially the most vulnerable such as the poor, women, children, elderly and people with disabilities. She also said the sanctions have further marginalized vulnerable groups.

However, some Zimbabweans think the sanctions were a welcome measure to curb the violation of human rights by politically powerful people with impunity. They think in the absence of justice, sanctions were necessary to hold perpetrators of human rights abuses to account.

Progress Update NTJWG Activities

Gender Thematic Committee Meeting

Transitional justice has often failed to adequately deal with the multi-dimensional issues of gender justice. Upon realising this sad reality, the need to pay special attention to the gender dimensions of the conflict, the NTJWG commissioned a policy paper on gender main-streaming in transitional justice processes in Zimbabwe.

On 5 October 2021, the NTJWG convened the gender thematic committee meeting to discuss the findings and recommendations made in the policy paper on the implementation of Section 9 of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) Act.

The meeting also sought to adopt the policy paper and policy brief for use by the working group as well as identify advocacy activities that will popularise the policy paper and use it to influence policy on gender-related issues in transitional justice in Zimbabwe.

The consultant on the gender policy paper, Ms Isheanesu Chirisa presented on the implementation of Section 9 of the NPRC Act.

She also presented a policy paper on gender mains-treaming in transitional justice processes in Zimbabwe. Gender consideration, she highlighted, should be integrated throughout all transitional justice initiatives and programs.

Gender justice means not only challenging impunity for sexual and gender-based violence, but also ensuring women's equal access to redress for human rights violations and abuses and involvement in post-conflict reform.

Main findings of the Policy Paper

- Access to justice has remained an elusive right for women, especially in cases of sexual violence during conflict periods.
- The prominence of Section 9 of the Act in transitional justice processes is not reflected in the work of the NPRC.
- There is no demonstrable appreciation or capability of how the NPRC will systematically and sustainably mainstream gender and give effect to Section 9.

- There is no clear roadmap to implement and evaluate the activities arising from section 9.
- There are no clear collaborative efforts and strategies to work with other established institutions that are critical in the national transitional justice processes. A strategy to tap into opportunities requires further review and possibly strengthening.
- Resource constraints remain a real threat to the effective function of the NPRC.
- Gender mainstreaming in transitional justice will not be achieved without a clear strategic plan or direction on gender mainstreaming.
- The policy paper also gives recommendations to the NPRC, the government, and the judiciary.
- The recommendations include the adoption of a comprehensive victim-centered and gender-inclusive engagement strategy development of a gender mainstreaming strategy and monitoring framework as well as the development of a systematic community participation framework.
- To the government of Zimbabwe, the paper recommended adequate and timely resourcing of the NPRC, implementation of Section 9 (2) of the Constitution, guaranteeing and observing independence of the NPRC, and prioritisation of constitutional realignment and implementation of the Constitution.

Gender justice means not only challenging impunity for sexual and gender-based violence, but also ensuring women's equal access to redress for human rights violations and abuses and involvement in post-conflict reform.

- The aim is to build accountability and address the culture of impunity.
- The paper recommended gender main-streaming in judicial processes and strengthening victim protection mechanisms.

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Interface Meeting With Zimbabwe Media Commission

The NTJWG convened an interface meeting with the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) on 6 October 2021. The meeting was held after the realisation that the use of the media is an essential tool to convey information about transitional justice, its goals, mechanisms, and results in ways accessible to a broad audience that may not otherwise have exposure to the process.

The media is often used by transitional justice advocates as a tool to raise public awareness and promote civic participation in transitional justice processes. The meeting aimed to identify areas in which the NTJWG and ZMC can work together on transitional justice matters.

The meeting was attended by NTJWG board members, ZMC chairperson, Professor Ruby Magosvongwe and her deputy, Commission Jasper Maposa.

Prof Magosvongwe highlighted that the media is central in all the activities of peaceful and sustainable development.

For people's wounds to heal, there should be a forum or platform where they can express their pain and the media plays this crucial role. She said the ZMC's mandate is to create a conducive environment for people to tell their experiences and by ensuring that the players in the media industry abide by their codes of conduct.

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Promotion of Truth Thematic Committee Meeting

The promotion of truth is a critical process in transitional justice.

Knowing the truth about the past human rights atrocities is a recognised human right to which all victims and survivors are entitled. Effective truth-seeking and promotion are well placed to reinforce other transitional justice measures, such as prosecutions, reparations, and institutional reform.

On 7 October 2021, the NTJWG convened the Promotion of Truth Thematic Committee meeting. The meeting sought to provide a platform for NTJWG stakeholders to contribute to the promotion of truth in transitional justice and national peace and reconciliation processes.

During the deliberations, the committee identified the challenges faced in the promotion of truth in transitional justice processes.

Among the challenges was the lack of political will on the part of the political elite and the government to promote truth-telling in transitional justice processes and the attempt to limit the long history of impunity as well as muting of post-Gukurahundi dimensions.

The committee highlighted the importance of raising awareness on transitional justice and working together with traditional chiefs to ensure that truth-telling is incorporated in resolving the emotive Gukurahundi issue.

Memorialisation Thematic Committee Meeting

Memorialisation is pivotal to ensuring that transitional justice processes are transformative. It looks at the healing of the memory of trauma and creating a new memory for society.

It informs and shapes both culture and conscience. On 12 October 2021, the National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) convened the Memorialisation Thematic Committee meeting.

The meeting sought to provide a platform for NTJWG stakeholders working on memorialisation initiatives in Zimbabwe to discuss how the NTJWG can contribute to building an inclusive national memory of the past.

The objectives of the meeting were to review the current national memorialisation activities and to formulate and develop strategies in response to the current operating context.

The committee established the connection between the healing process and memorialisation and recommended that there should be a broad perspective on tools that can be used in memorialisation such as musical galas and festivals, poetry, drama, garden and sports tournament as well as murals on buildings.

The committee also discussed the challenges faced by practitioners in the thematic area which include language barriers in the communities and access to some remote communities because of the bad road infrastructure.

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Silobela Community Dialogue

On 14 October 2021, the NTJWG and Ibhethu Likazulu, an NTJWG stakeholder visited Silobela, an agricultural village in Kwekwe District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe.

The visit was necessitated by the theft and destruction of a Gukurahundi memorial plaque on 1 September 2021.

The plaque had been unveiled on 30 August 2021 in commemoration of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances.

It was built in remembrance of the men known as the Silobela 12, who were abducted and disappeared on 31 January 1985.

The NTJWG and Ibhethu Likazulu undertook a site visit in solidarity with the Silobela community and convened a community dialogue with the representatives of the families of the Silobela 12. The site visit aimed to empower the Silobela community to interface with the NPRC.

The interface was aimed at providing a platform through which the NPRC would document the event based on reports from primary sources and gather physical evidence from the site.

The engagement also aimed at allowing the community to exchange transitional justice concerns with the NPRC.

The visit also sought to provide them with skills to monitor the interventions by the NPRC and other public institutions, particularly on memorialisation.

Regrettably, the NPRC did not attend the meeting despite an invitation being shared with its Bulawayo office which is in closer to Silobela.

The NPRC's unwillingness to attend this meeting was of particular concern in light of the gravity of the Gukurahundi issue.

Of concern was also the silence by the NPRC on the trend of thefts and destruction of Gukurahundi memorial plaques.

The building of memorials is a key part of healing, and the theft of the plaque is detrimental to the healing process as it re-traumatises families of victims of violence, reminding them of the events of 31 January 1985 when their loved ones were abducted.

The families of the Silobela 12 are struggling to find peace and to forgive the perpetrators, not only because no formal apology has been issued, but also because the national authorities have not taken any action to deal with the theft of the memorial plaque which is viewed as an endorsement of the theft.

The families also raised the issue of compensation.

The NTJWG urges the NPRC to investigate the theft and destruction of memorial plaques and to engage the families of the Silobela 12 and other survivors to ensure peace and healing.

The NTJWG also issued a statement in solidarity with the families of the Silobela 12.

To read the full statement, visit

<https://www.facebook.com/NTJWGZim/photos/a.902636386482643/452290720445525/>

International Advisory Board Meeting

After the realisation of the need to increase its international presence in light of the significant number of Zimbabweans living in the diaspora, the NTJWG resolved to prioritise the establishment of its International Advisory Board (IAB).

This platform ensures that the NTJWG's work is not limited to Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe alone, but also benefits those in the diaspora so that their views, needs, and expectations can also inform the NTJWG's interventions.

It also serves to further the strategic aim of creating a platform for critical actors to engage from abroad.

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On 18 October 2021, the NTJWG convened an (IAB) meeting. The meeting was held to discuss the IAB implementation plan, develop the NTJWG's international strategy and identify the IAB's areas of focus for 2021 to 2022 strategic period.

Some of the strategic objectives of the IAB include contributing to the building of a broad transitional justice movement among Zimbabweans in the country and the diaspora, conducting lobby and advocacy initiatives for the NTJWG at regional and international levels.

The NTJWG also aims to facilitate engagement with the Zimbabwean diaspora and ensure their inclusion in the transitional justice initiative in Zimbabwe. No one should be left behind in the transitional justice processes.

NTJWG Third Quarterly Meeting

The NTJWG convened its third quarterly meeting on 8 November 2021.

The purpose of the meeting was to deliberate on the activities implemented in the previous quarter and map the strategic way forward for the final quarter.

The meeting also shed light on the key transitional justice developments, which emanated from the third quarter.

One of the issues was the meeting between President Emmerson Mnangagwa and the National Council of Chiefs in Bulawayo to receive recommendations on how to resolve issues related to the Gukurahundi.

This was widely viewed as an attempt by the government to usurp the powers and constitutional mandate of the NPRC.

The NTJWG was concerned that the NPRC was absent from these consultations even though the Constitution gives the independent commission the mandate to deal with past human rights violations like Gukurahundi. The NTJWG board came up with an action plan for implementation by its secretariat in the final quarter.

NTJWG Stakeholders Training Workshop On AUTJP

On 29 November 2021, the NTJWG collaborated with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), to train NTJWG stakeholders on the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP).

In February 2019, the apex body of the African Union (AU), the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, adopted the AUTJP.

The AUTJP is not a pronouncement of new AU transitional justice norms. Instead, it is a consolidation of transitional justice standards established by the AU in several policies and legal instruments.

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It draws upon the AU's vast practical experience and extensive peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction work in Africa.

It also builds upon the African human rights normative framework embodied by the African Charter and attendant regional legal and human rights instruments.

The objectives of the training workshop were to promote and enhance NTJWG stakeholders' understanding of the AUTJP, to train and capacitate NTJWG stakeholders on the principles, objectives, and contents of the AUTJP, to reflect on the various opportunities that the AUTJP, foresees for civil society organisations, to promote knowledge sharing and research through the engagement with various transitional justice stakeholders in Zimbabwe and to shape the discourse on and practice of transitional justice,

These can be achieved by integrating the best standards set out in the AUTJP.

The workshop was attended by various NTJWG stakeholders which include Ukuthula Trust, Counselling Services Unit, Amnesty International, Mutasa Youth Forum, VERITAS, Tree of life Trust, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Zimrights, CCJP and GALZ.

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Issues arising from the Workshop

- The AUTJP highlighted the role of various actors like non-state actors like CSOs, media, faith-based as well as community-based organisations.
- These have a role to implement and initiate some of the TJ processes and to deal with some of the gaps left by the formal transitional justice processes.
- CSOs play the role of popularising the formal justice processes and ensuring that no one is left behind.
- CSOs have a role to raise awareness on transitional justice issues at all levels, like community level and national level, and policy level.
- CSOs may assist the NPRC to push for the domestication of the AUTJP by drafting policy papers and convening with Parliament to sensitise on the AUTJP.
- The Zimbabwean context of transitional justice is challenged by a lack of political will and the politicisation of the NPRC.

Commemoration of the International Day of Tolerance

In 1996, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, by resolution 51/95, invited the UN member States to observe the International Day for Tolerance on 16 November.

This action followed up on the United Nations' 1993 proclamation that 1995 would be the year for tolerance. Since then, this day has been commemorated to help spread tolerance and raise awareness of any intolerance that may still be prevalent in the world.

The primary theme for the International Day of Tolerance states that tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression, and ways of being human.

The NTJWG issued a statement that was published in the NewsDay to commemorate the International Day of Tolerance. In its statement, the NTJWG expressed its concern over the increase in inter-party and intra-party political violence fuelled by intolerance in the country.

The NTJWG condemned political violence, which is also influenced by intolerance of different political views and instigated by government officials who use hate speech against opposition political parties.

The NTJWG urged the NPRC to exercise its constitutional mandate to receive and consider complaints from the public, especially issues to do with the use of hate speech which promotes intolerance and may cause potential conflicts and disputes.

The NTJWG also called upon the government to rebuild public trust through human rights protection and promotion.

This can be done by ensuring strict enforcement of laws against hate crimes, hate speech, and discrimination and educating the nation on the importance of tolerance and the negative effects of intolerance, especially during elections times in Zimbabwe.

Factsheet On Section 9 Of The NPRC Act

The NTJWG joined the rest of the world to commemorate and raise awareness on the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

The NTJWG produced a factsheet on Section 9 of the NPRC Act. Section 9 of the NPRC Act offers an opportunity to consider and build momentum fundamental for gender justice which has often been excluded from transitional processes.

The factsheet shared provisions of Section 9 of the NPRC Act and how it is intended to increase the participation of women and incorporate a gender lens into all of the NPRC's peace and transition efforts

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The section is an important tool for actors both inside and outside of the NPRC to promote the inclusion of women and girls in peace and reconciliation processes.

To read and download the full factsheet, visit <https://ntjwg.org.zw/gender-transitional-justicefactsheet/?fbclid=IwAR3tmZVJfi4z37UtBvUtl4F4vSLIwsjOwVymzQDekz8FI2EsgcqNJU8EbP8>

NTJWG Annual Stakeholders Conference

The NTJWG convened the 2021 Annual Stakeholder Conference on 2 and 3 December 2021.

The conference sought to have a reflection with the NTJWG stakeholders on the work done by the working group in the implementation of its strategic plans.

It also sought to map the way forward for the NTJWG in the final year of implementation of its strategy by identifying priority areas of focus.

The conference was attended by NTJWG stakeholders, which are:

Amnesty International, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, Civic Education Network Trust, Community Tolerance Reconciliation and Development Trust, Counselling Services Unit, GALZ, Grace to Heal, GRRRA, Hands of Hope Trust, Heal Zimbabwe Trust, Masakhaneni Projects Trust, Mutasa Youth Forum, People's Legal Advice Foundation Trust, Research and Advocacy Unit, Tree of Life, Women In Communities Zimbabwe, Young Women Christian Association of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Zimbabwe Political Victims Foundation Trust and Ukuthula Trust.

The board members of the NTJWG were also in attendance.

Dr Frances Lovemore, the NTJWG thematic leader on reparations presented the reflections on contextual developments.

She highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused mayhem, fear and uncertainty. It has also resulted in an increase in repression with the lockdown measures being used to abuse power.

The exclusion of the NPRC from the Gukurahundi consultations was noted as a source of concern. It was noted that while the NTJWG and other transitional justice stakeholders have publicly condemned the exclusion, the NPRC has been ominously silent on the matter.

The NTJWG stakeholders working in Bulawayo, Matabeleland, and the Midlands reported that the parallel process on Gukurahundi which was being led by chiefs was a problem because it was being done without a strategy, training, or even resources.

The stakeholders gave the NTJWG a roadmap to proceed in light of the challenges affecting transitional justice work in Zimbabwe.

The NTJWG joined the rest of the world in commemorating Human Rights Day through several activities in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, which includes the Constitutional Commissions Symposium and the launch of a three-part documentary on past human rights violations.

International Human Rights Day Commemorations

Every 10 December, the world celebrates Human Rights Day – the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The UDHR is a milestone document, which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to be treated as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, or another status.

This year, the day was celebrated under the theme, “Equality-Reducing Inequalities, Advancing Human Rights.” The theme relates to equality and Article 1 of the UDHR states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

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Constitutional Commissions Symposium

The NTJWG and the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum convened a constitutional commissions symposium on human rights and transitional justice with independent Chapter 12 commissions to establish a point of convergence in formulating cohesive efforts and strategies to reduce inequalities.

The symposium was held on 9 December 2021 in Mutare. The meeting was attended by:

the chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) Dr Elasto Mugwadi, deputy chairperson of the ZHRC, Dorothy Moyo, chairperson of the Zimbabwe Media Commission Professor Ruby Magosvongwe, deputy chairperson of the Zimbabwe Media Commission Jasper Maposa, chairperson of the NTJWG Alec Muchadehama, board member of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Wellington Mbofana, Law Society of Zimbabwe councillor Tafadzwa Nyakureba, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Transparency International Zimbabwe, NTJWG and Forum secretariats.

Members of civil society organisations (CSOs) and the independent commissions presented their challenges and successes in 2021 and the areas of collaboration as independent commissions.

Advocate Wilbert Mandinde, speaking on behalf of the Forum and CSOs highlighted that one of the major challenges CSOs are facing is the shrinking of the civic space, which has been worsened by the gazetting of the PVO Amendment Bill. CSOs continue to face backlash and hate speech from the government, which accuses them of terrorism.

The CSOs also noted the increase in human rights violations under the banner of lockdown restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19.

They expressed concern over the suspension of by-elections, the violation of freedom of association and assembly, and many other fundamental human rights.

The CSOs highlighted that civil society has a crucial role to play in complementing governmental efforts in all sectors and more significantly, in the promotion of a transparent, accountable, open, and democratic society - the latter being a mutually shared role with independent commissions supporting democracy as per their overall constitutional mandate outlined under Section 233 of the Constitution.

The chairperson of the ZMC, Prof Magosvongwe applauded the NTJWG and the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum for organising the symposium, saying it dispelled allegations of tension between independent commissions and CSOs.

She indicated that the challenges independent commissions face included lack of adequate funds to enable them to carry out their work efficiently and effectively.

She said that the independent commissions are willing to collaborate with CSOs because they are all concerned with the same goal of upholding and protecting human rights.

She highlighted that Chapter 12 commissions should be sensitive to the needs of the poor and marginalised communities to ensure that no one is left behind.

She also encouraged CSOs and independent commissions to take into consideration the different languages when raising awareness or implementing certain activities.

“The UDHR is a milestone document, which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to be treated as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, or another status.”

Launch Of The Survivors Documentary

The NTJWG in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum launched a three-part documentary to commemorate Human Rights Day.

In a bid to keep the stories of past human rights violations alive and to promote truth-telling about the human rights atrocities, the NTJWG produced a documentary that offers an intimate window into the stories of human rights violations that occurred during Gukurahundi, Operation Makavhotera papi, Operation Murambatsvina and 2008 post-election violence as told by the victims of the violence.

Documenting victims' ordeal, the documentary gave a voice to the survivors of the traumatic experiences and it pays special attention to the need for accountability and reparations in ensuring healing and reconciliation.

The Forum also launched two documentaries titled, “A pandemic Within A Pandemic” and “Silent Film”. These documentaries capture the human rights violations in Zimbabwe, which are often perpetrated by the State, the army, the police, supporters, and members of the ruling party.

NPRC Activities NPRC Induction and Retreat

On 4 October 2021, the NPRC held an induction and retreat in Vumba.

The retreat also served as an opportunity for UNDP and the NPRC commissioners to exchange useful notes, experiences, and information on their mutual work and collaboration.

In the welcome and introductory remarks made on behalf of the resident representative OIC, key issues were noted and these include the need for social cohesion as a key ingredient to peaceful societies.

The speech highlighted that as the world begins to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic, evidence is indicating that social cohesion and peace in communities is a key ingredient for responding to the pandemic recovery efforts and building back better.

Another issue that was raised was the importance of stakeholder collaboration.

The speech called upon all actors to unite and work together to attain and maintain peace during and post the pandemic and to act in responsive and diligent ways to ensure that the existing conflictual fault lines are not worsened or exacerbated.

“... as the world begins to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic, evidence is indicating that social cohesion and peace in communities is a key ingredient for responding to the pandemic recovery efforts and building back better.”

To read the full speech, visit:
<http://www.nprc.org.zw/welcome-and-introductory-remarks-made-on-behalf-of-the-resident-representative-oic/>
To watch the 'Survivors Documentary' visit
<https://fb.watch/9S7rSKGFsb/>
To watch “A pandemic within a pandemic” visit
<https://fb.watch/9S7iZPiLgD/>
To watch 'The Silent Film' visit
<https://fb.watch/9S7mi2jfTb/>

International Day of the Girl Child Commemorative Statement

The NPRC issued a statement to commemorate the International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October 2021.

The NPRC noted that in its constitutional mandate to resolve the burdens of past violent conflicts and build national and sub-national capacities to guarantee the future of peace and reconciliation, the commission is mandated by Section 9 of the NPRC Act to ensure the participation of all groups of people, including girls in all its work.

The NPRC highlighted that during times of crises and conflict, adolescent girls are more likely to be forced out of school, hence increasing their vulnerability to forced, early, and child marriages, among other violations.

In its statement, the NPRC thus called for all relevant stakeholders to put girls at the heart of the digital revolution by supporting initiatives that include digital access and the development of digital skills; investing in technology and innovation for social cohesion and the designing of new tools to prevent and eliminate online and tech-facilitated violence.

To read the whole statement, visit:

<file:///C:/Users/HR%20FORUM/Downloads/International-Day-of-the-Girl-Child-Commemorative-Statement.pdf>

Commemoration of the International Day of Rural Women

On 15 October 2021, the NPRC issued a statement to commemorate the International Day of Rural Women. The NPRC celebrated the critical role that rural women play in fostering peace through food production for their communities and the nation at large.

The NPRC noted that rural women play a variety of essential roles in cultivating food for all; from crop production, processing harvest, distributing products, to preparing food, ensuring that both their families and communities are nourished thus ensuring peace, harmony, and social cohesion.

To download the full statement, visit:

http://www.nprc.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/International_Day_of_Rural_Women-2021.pdf

....all relevant stakeholders to put girls at the heart of the digital revolution by supporting initiatives that include digital access and the development of digital skills; investing in technology and innovation for social cohesion and the designing of new tools to prevent and eliminate online and tech-facilitated violence.

committees to contribute towards the promotion of peace through dialogue, mediation, and conciliation of disputes among communities, individuals, and groups.

Provincial Peace Committee Meetings

The NPRC embarked on provincial peace committee preventative dialogue meetings, which kicked off in Manicaland Province on 25 October 2021.

The meetings were also held in Midlands, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, Bulawayo, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and rounded up with Harare Province on the 16 November 2021.

The meetings were an opportunity for the provincial peace committee members to share experiences and interface with the new commission, which was sworn in May this year following the expiry of the tenure of the first NPRC.

The meetings focused on COVID-19 related conflicts and conflict prevention strategies and models in electoral periods. Then NPRC acting chairperson, Commissioner Lilian Chigwedere addressed all the meetings.

In the opening speech, Commissioner Chigwedere reflected on the setting up of peace committees to contribute towards the promotion of peace through dialogue, mediation, and conciliation of disputes among communities, individuals, and groups.

She said the implementation of programmes deemed necessary for the prevention of conflicts all fall squarely within the constitutional mandate of the NPRC. The NPRC strategy outlines three specific focus areas to promote social cohesion in peace and healing processes:

·Inclusive dialogues to promote healing, reconciliation, and tolerance among citizens, The promotion of peacebuilding initiatives among communities, and; Strengthening citizens' engagement through the establishment of local peace structures such as these Peace Committees.

Commissioner Chigwedere noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the underprivileged and marginalised groups the hardest.

People caught in conflict are especially vulnerable in terms of lack of access to healthcare, socio-political rights as well as livelihoods support, and the role the peace committees have to observe and intervene whenever and wherever possible.

To read the full statement visit:

<http://www.nprc.org.zw/provincial-peace-committee-meetings-chairpersons-statement/>

Commemoration of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

On 25 November 2021, the NPRC joined the nation and the rest of the world in commemorating the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) campaign for 2021.

The NPRC used its social media platforms to bring awareness to the NPRC's mandate to address GBV, amplify the negative impact of violence on individuals and the society at large as well as influence behaviour change among citizens.

The NPRC held a breakfast meeting on 9 December 2021 to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The guest of honour at the event was Senator Chief Ndlovu, chairperson of the Parliamentary Thematic Committee on Gender and Development.

Other guests included Ireland Ambassador to South Africa and Zimbabwe, Fionnuala Gilson, Members of Parliament, commissioners of the NPRC and commissioners from other independent commissions, government officials, development partners, civil society organisations, the media among others.

The NPRC took the opportunity to launch the NPRC Gender and Inclusion Policy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Handling and Supporting Victims of Conflict-Related GBV.

The United Nations (UN) Women country representative, Delphine Serumaga addressed the gathering and pledged to continue to support the NPRC in its efforts in tackling GBV related conflicts.

Ambassador Gilson applauded the NPRC for launching the two important documents and urged the commission to implement them.

She said that the policy shows a strong commitment to inclusion and tackling GBV related conflict. She urged all the independent commissions to work together to end GBV.

To get more details on the commemorative event, visit: <http://www.nprc.org.zw/nprcs-16-days-of-activism-commemorative-event-and-launch-of-the-nprc-gender-and-inclusion-policy-and-sops-for-handling-and-supporting-victims-of-conflict-related-gbv/>



The NTJWG remains hopeful that justice, peace, accountability, and healing will be achieved in Zimbabwe despite these challenges.



Conclusion

The final quarter of 2021 was a difficult time for Zimbabwe as the country was placed under a new lockdown due to the emergence of the new COVID-19 variant.

The economy remains unstable with recurrent waves of price hikes as well as deteriorating human rights situation. Civil society organisations have not been spared as the government looks determined to silence any dissenting voice.

The NTJWG remains hopeful that justice, peace, accountability, and healing will be achieved in Zimbabwe despite these challenges.

The NTJWG looks forward to working closely with transitional justice actors in Zimbabwe in civil society, government, and independent commissions to further the transitional justice agenda in 2022.

References

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The NPRC used its social media platforms to bring awareness to the NPRC's mandate to address GBV, amplify the negative impact of violence on individuals and the society at large as well as influence behaviour change among citizens.



About

The National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG)

The NTJWG is a platform established by 46 Zimbabwean organisations representing various transitional justice stakeholders to provide a platform for interface between transitional justice stakeholders and the official transitional justice processes in Zimbabwe.

Vision

A peaceful, just, accountable and democratic society.

Mission

To create inclusive space for the coordination of transitional justice stakeholders, share experiences; build synergies for comprehensive, accountable, victim-centered, and participatory transitional justice processes in Zimbabwe.

Values

Integrity, Inclusivity and Impartiality

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