

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE WATCH

APRIL TO JULY
2022 **NEWSLETTER**



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**NATIONAL
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE
WORKING GROUP
ZIMBABWE**

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Introduction

Stakeholders, partners, and friends welcome to the second newsletter of the year 2022. The second quarter of 2022 was a difficult period for the nation, given the rise in political tensions, which regrettably resulted in the death of Moreblessing Ali, a political activist. The National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) joins the nation in expressing our sincere condolences to the Ali family and Moreblessing's friends and loved ones. The second quarter was also a difficult period for civil society in Zimbabwe which, is under siege, given the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ)'s efforts to amend the Private Voluntary Organisations Act [Chapter 17:05] and impose a more repressive regulation of civil society.

Despite the challenges that the current operating context presents, the NTJWG continues to carry out transitional justice work. During the second quarter, the NTJWG carried out several interventions which include hosting radio programs, community dialogues, and a seminar on the role of the media in transitional justice. It was also encouraging to note that the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) was active in the second quarter conducting interventions such as community engagement programs and engaging with its thematic committees as well as the media.

In this newsletter, the NTJWG gives you an overview of the state of transitional justice during the second quarter of 2022. In the contextual developments section, developments that have an impact on transitional justice in Zimbabwe are discussed. The next section gives an overview of the activities that the NPRC implemented from April to June 2022, highlighting the positives and making recommendations for improvements. Under the NTJWG Activities section, a snapshot of the activities carried out by the NTJWG is provided. The Transitional Justice Stakeholders in Action and Regional and Global Developments sections provide some insights on some activities carried out by other transitional justice actors in Zimbabwe and beyond during the period under review. It is important to highlight that this section does not exhaustively discuss these activities and the NTJWG appreciates that the scope of activities carried out by stakeholders from April to June 2022 goes beyond what is captured in this newsletter.



1. Contextual Developments

1.1. Continued Efforts to Stifle Dissent and Shrink Civic Space

On 5 November 2021, the GoZ gazetted the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill H.B. 10, 2021 (the PVO Bill), which seeks to amend the current Private Voluntary Organisations Act [Chapter 17:05]. According to the GoZ, the PVO Bill seeks: to comply with recommendations made by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF); streamline administrative procedures and allow for the efficient regulation and administration of PVOs and to prevent PVOs from undertaking political lobbying. However, an analysis of the Bill shows that it is too far-reaching to be viewed as a legitimate means to regulate civil society. The PVO Bill is not only poorly drafted but also unconstitutional as it places unreasonable limits on the right to freedom of expression and association. A close reading of the PVO Bill shows that it was crafted as a tool that can be used to stifle the expression of dissent by civil society organisations. The PVO Bill went through its first reading in the National Assembly despite various calls for the withdrawal of the PVO Bill. On 8 June 2022, the Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare published a list of proposed amendments to amend the PVO Bill. The amendments aim to further concentrate power in the office of the Registrar of private voluntary organisations, disempower civil society and interfere with the independent running of civil society.

During the 26 July 2022 parliamentary session the Honorable Ziyambi Ziyambi, the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs unexpectedly proposed to conduct the second reading of the PVO Bill and the House agreed to this. Interestingly, this proposal came when most parliamentarians from opposition political parties were not physically present in Parliament. During the second reading of the Bill, there was no rebuttal of the issues raised against the PVO Bill by parliamentarians from opposition political parties. According to the 28 July 2022 Bill Watch released by Veritas the Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare merely stated that the concerns raised had been responded to but did not explain how this had been done. The PVO Bill was subsequently referred to the Committee Stage where it was considered clause by clause. The clauses including the amendments were mostly approved in their entirety without any discussion or interrogation of the clauses. The only attempt at an interjection came from Honorable Edwin Mushoriwa who was attending virtually. He sought to inquire which bill was being debated and highlighted that he was having technical glitches. In response, Honorable Ziyambi Ziyambi told him to go to the House and attend the session in person. Despite his efforts, Honorable Mushoriwa was unable to contribute to the debate.

Parliament reconvened on 27 July 2022 and Honorable Mushoriwa attended the session in person. He raised a point of order concerned that during the debate on the Bill in the Committee Stage it was impossible for the parliamentarians that were attending the session virtually to contribute to the debate. Honorable Mushoriwa stated that the denial of parliamentarians to debate was a violation of their rights as Members of Parliament. In response to this, the Speaker of Parliament committed to checking with the Hansard and the Presiding Officer to verify the allegation after which he would make a ruling. Honorable Innocent Gonese also raised his concerns about the conduct of the debate on the PVO Bill. He noted that it was a generally accepted convention and rule of practice that two stages relating to a Bill as contentious as the PVO Bill should not be dealt with on the same day to avoid surprising the parliamentarians. It was, therefore Honorable Gonese's position that the Committee Stage should not have proceeded on the same day as the second reading. He indicated that since the PVO Bill had been referred to the Parliamentary Legal

Committee to consider after the Committee Stage it was advisable for the Parliamentary Legal Committee to withhold its report until after the Speaker of Parliament had ruled on the issues raised by himself and Honorable Mushoriwa.

As a matter of principle, it is important for Parliament to ensure that there are no irregularities in the exercise of its law-making role. This is because law-making is an important function with which the people of Zimbabwe have entrusted parliamentarians as their representatives. This function must be exercised in a transparent manner that complies with the set standards. The concerns raised by Honorable Mushoriwa and Gonese show that the process that unfolded in Parliament on the PVO Bill was flawed. Therefore it is incumbent on the Speaker of Parliament to make rulings that are in line with the set standards and ensure that the PVO Bill is subjected to transparent processes per the expectations of parliamentarians and the people of Zimbabwe.

1.2. Increase in Political Tensions

The NTJWG notes with great concern the political tensions that have engulfed the nation during the second quarter of the year. Notably, Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) activist Moreblessing Ali who went missing on 24 May 2022 and was found dead on 11 June 2022. The police reportedly said that her body was cut into two and stuffed in a sack which shows that she was murdered. Her death sparked political tensions as CCC supporters and leaders accused ZANU-PF supporters of killing her. In response ZANU-PF leaders in Nyatsime, Chitungwiza threatened to bar CCC supporters from attending her funeral wake which led to clashes that left several houses, cars, and shops damaged. Addressing this unfortunate incident President Mnangagwa said that what had happened in Nyatsime was deplorable and should never be repeated. He added that the nation is now familiar with these shenanigans and incidences of staged violence, which are designed to tarnish the image of Zimbabwe, especially ahead of major international meetings.

The NTJWG agrees that the situation that unfolded in Nyatsime is deplorable, particularly the gruesome killing of Moreblessing Ali. Furthermore, the NTJWG finds the arrest of CCC MPs Job Sikhala and Godfrey Sithole, and several activists – among them Precious Jeche, Adious Makoma, and Misheck Guzha for inciting public violence, to be a case of persecution amid political conflict. The NTJWG urges the GoZ to refrain from using the criminal justice system to persecute opponents. Although the violence may have ceased the NPRC must intervene and mediate in this situation to ensure that it does not recur. The NTJWG views Moreblessing Ali's murder as a warning that the nation simply cannot afford to ignore in light of the upcoming 2023 elections. To prevent any more bloodshed and loss, the NTJWG urges all political parties to refrain from resorting to violence when faced with political differences.

1.3. Remains of Genocide Fugitive Found in Zimbabwe

A 20-year-long manhunt for Protais Mpiranya, the former commander of the Rwandan presidential guard who was wanted for his role in the genocide in Rwanda officially ended in May 2022. His remains were found in a Harare cemetery under a false name. According to the United Nations body that is conducting the last international criminal cases arising from Rwanda and the wars in the former Yugoslavia. He reportedly died at the age of 50 in 2006 when he suffered a heart attack induced by tuberculosis. According to his indictment, Mpiranya was charged with genocide, complicity in genocide, and crimes against humanity including murder, rape, persecution, and other inhumane acts.

Despite the horrific acts for which he stood accused, Mpiranya was never held accountable as he lived as a fugitive until his death. The team that tracked his remains down believe that he arrived in Zimbabwean on a military plane and was in frequent contact with Zimbabwean officials during former President Robert Mugabe's regime and these officials were aware of his identity. The GoZ has denied claims that it harboured the fugitive. In a statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Frederick Shava, the government said that

Zimbabwean authorities cooperated with the investigation by the organisation that was responsible for tracking down fugitive criminals associated with the genocide. He added that Zimbabwe had even joined a task force to coordinate the inquiry. However, the NTJWG notes that as far back as December 2010, the investigators in Mpiranya's case reported to the UN Security Council that Mpiranya was suspected to be in Zimbabwe. Following the coming into power of President Mnangagwa it was hoped that the GoZ would be more cooperative. However, it is reported that in 2020, Serge Brammertz, Prosecutor of the IRMCT, told the Security Council that, despite credible evidence of the whereabouts of key fugitives, the lack of cooperation from governments remained a challenge, particularly in eastern and southern Africa.

The allegations that the GoZ was harbouring a fugitive from justice and possibly prevented him from being held accountable for his role in perpetrating genocide in Rwanda are very concerning. While the NTJWG acknowledges the GoZ's denial of these claims given that Mpiranya's remains were found in Zimbabwe, a bare denial is not adequate to refute these claims. This situation casts the GoZ in a bad light and raises questions about the GoZ's commitment to ensuring justice for victims of international crimes as well as crimes committed within its borders. As a member of the international community, Zimbabwe must never be suspected of condoning crimes such as those that Mpiranya was charged with. The GoZ must thus take every opportunity it gets to demonstrate its commitment to justice by turning fugitives such as Mpiranya to the authorities.



Figure 1 - Protais Mpiranya was buried at this grave in Harare in 2006.



2. NPRC Activities

2.1. Meeting with POLAD

From 6 to 7 April 2022, the NPRC met with the Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) in Bulawayo and discussed the establishment of a road map for the 2023 elections. This road map is aimed at is a first step to the NPRC's work with POLAD to ensure peaceful, free, and fair elections. According to an article by Star FM the NPRC's Chairperson on National Healing and Building, Ms Lucia Matibenga said NPRC saw it fit to capacitate POLAD members in its bid to create, promote and maintain peace in the country.

The NTJWG acknowledges the efforts being made by the NPRC. However, given that the main opposition party is not part of the POLAD, the NTJWG urges the NPRC to engage political actors even beyond POLAD. This is important because their refusal to participate in the POLAD processes does not negate their importance and influence. It is incumbent on the NPRC to engage all political actors in a non-partisan manner bearing its aim to create a peaceful environment for elections. Furthermore, the NTJWG encourages the NPRC to look beyond the engagement of political parties in its work around elections. Given that everyone who is above the age of 18 years has the right to vote in Zimbabwe, everyone in this age group is thus a political actor who may contribute to peace during election season. Thus, it is imperative for the NPRC to also engage civil society and the public, particularly young people who are often used to carry out violent acts.

2.2. National Consultative and Engagement Meeting on Youth, Peace Security in Zimbabwe

On 8 April 2022, the NPRC hosted a national consultative and engagement meeting on youth, peace, and security in Zimbabwe in collaboration with the African Union (AU) and United Nations Women. The meeting sought to facilitate the recognition of young people's roles as leaders, partners & beneficiaries in peace and security. It was anchored on the four pillars of prevention, participation, protection, partnership, and coordination.

During her opening remarks, Commissioner Gwere highlighted that Zimbabwe's population is increasingly becoming youthful with 68% of the population being the youth and harnessing the youth demographic dividend in all processes including peace building cannot be overemphasised. She also acknowledged the efforts of stakeholders in facilitating youth participation in the peace and security process but indicated that more still needs to be done to comprehensively harness the capacities and contributions of the youth population in peace building.

During the meeting, the AU political Affairs and Peace and Security department representative Dr Ako emphasised the need to create spaces for youth to participate fully at all levels in all spheres. The keynote speaker Dr Chitepo, the Permanent Secretary for Sport, Arts and Culture echoed Dr Ako's sentiments noting that youths are often stereotyped as malcontents despite their capacity to contribute to national peace & security.



Figure 2 – Consultative and Engagement Meeting Participants Group Photo.

2.3. NPRC at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair

The NPRC participated in the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) from 26 to 30 April 2022. The NPRC exhibited its work at the ZITF which allowed it to interact with the general public. The NTJWG commends the NPRC for this initiative which undoubtedly will be useful in increasing its visibility. The NTJWG encourages the NPRC to fully utilise opportunities presented by events such as the ZITF to engage with members of the public. To ensure that the public is aware of the NPRC's participation in these events, the NPRC must advertise its participation beforehand and encourage the public to attend such events and engage with the Commission.

2.4. NPRC Staff Induction

From 4 May 2022, the NPRC conducted its three-day staff induction in Harare. NPRC Vice-Chairperson Commissioner Dr Moyo officially opened the induction workshop by emphasising the importance of decentralisation of the Commission which will see it establishing offices throughout the country. She further encouraged all NPRC staff to ensure that they have a full understanding of the work and mandate of the Commission because they all play a critical role in helping the NPRC fulfil it.

The NTJWG hopes that this induction adequately equipped the NPRC staff to contribute to the Commission's work and that its results will be visible in the Commission's work going forward. Furthermore, the NTJWG is encouraged to note that the NPRC is committed to decentralising its operations given that it currently only has offices in Bulawayo and Harare, the biggest cities in Zimbabwe. Decentralisation is important to increase the Commission's accessibility to survivors. Therefore, the NTJWG calls upon the GoZ to provide the funds required by the Commission to decentralise its operations.

2.5. First Anniversary of the Current NPRC Commissioners

On 10 May 2022, the NPRC Commissioners met to reflect on their first year in office. Specifically, they focused on the achievements of their first year in office and mapped the way forward to accelerate peace building in Zimbabwe. This was an important and necessary process undertaken by the NPRC. Given the critical role that the NPRC plays, the importance of its engagement with stakeholders cannot be overemphasised.

Therefore, the NTJWG encourages the NPRC to conduct a similar engagement in which stakeholders may participate. This will enable the NPRC to have external feedback on the work it has done in the past year. Such feedback will help the NPRC reflect on the perception stakeholders have of it and its work and find ways to improve where necessary.

The NTJWG notes that there is no publicly accessible record detailing the reflections that the NPRC had during this meeting. This curtails the public's access to information on what the NPRC has done, what has worked, what has not worked, and how it proposes to move forward. Given that the NPRC came about because of the people of Zimbabwe's motivation to deal with the past, the NPRC must prioritise being accountable to them. To that end, the NTJWG notes with concern that the NPRC's 2020 and 2021 reports have not been presented in Parliament nor have they been published. Section 323(1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013 provides that, "Every Commission must submit to Parliament, through the responsible Minister, an annual report describing fully its operations and activities, the report being submitted not later than the end of March in the year following the year to which the report relates." This provision places a constitutional reporting obligation on the NPRC. Consequently, the NPRC's 2020 Annual Report became due for submission on 31 March 2021 and the 2021 Annual Report became due on 31 March 2022. Given that these reports have not been presented to Parliament or Published yet, the NPRC is thus in breach of its constitutional obligations. The NTJWG implores the NPRC to remedy this breach expeditiously and to address the trend to breach its reporting obligations which has plagued the Commission since its inception.

2.6. NPRC Commissioners Induction

On 18 May 2022, the NPRC convened its commissioners' induction during which presentations were made on the role and functions of Parliament concerning NPRC; expectations of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission from NPRC with regards to their mandate; the dichotomy of budget against the role of NPRC; the roles of the NPRC which include submission of the NPRC Annual Report to Parliament; giving policy direction in administrative and financial procedures; and raising funds for the NPRC's work. Significantly, during the induction, Honorable Mudenda, the Speaker of Parliament called on the NPRC to work towards addressing Gukurahundi. He stated that the commissioners must contact Chief's Council President, Fortune Charumbira, who, in 2021, was assigned by President Emmerson Mnangagwa to lead the dialogue. This is an important statement from Honorable Mudenda because it demonstrates Parliament's understanding that the NPRC has an important role to play in resolving Gukurahundi. It also shows that Parliament appreciates that the efforts of the traditional leaders to resolve Gukurahundi must not exclude the NPRC.

"Parliament is desirous to see how the NPRC leverages its constitutional mandate vis-à-vis the salutary efforts by the Council of Chiefs, as guided by His Excellency, the President, Emmerson Mnangagwa, in bringing closure to the Gukurahundi unfortunate historical antecedent before 2023 harmonised elections" - Honorable Mudenda, Speaker of Parliament

Honorable Mudenda also highlighted the need for the NPRC to be accountable to the people through Parliament. He urged the NPRC to timeously submit its report for consideration by Parliament. He also implored the NPRC to promptly work on complaints received from the public, take appropriate action or secure appropriate redress without delay, and produce special reports on cases reported so it can report to Parliament on these without waiting for the deadline for the Annual Report. The NTJWG urges the NPRC to take heed of Honorable Mudenda's advice and ensure that it accounts for Parliament per the expectation of Parliament and other transitional justice stakeholders.



Figure 3 - NPRC Commissioner Pose for Group Photo with Honorable Mudenda (sitting in the middle of the first row).

2.7. Thematic Committee Meetings

Between 24 May and 1 June 2022, the NPRC convened committee meetings for its thematic committees on Conflict Prevention and Non-Recurrence; Research, Knowledge, Monitoring and Evaluation Thematic Committee; and Prevention and Non-Recurrence. These meetings served as a platform for the NPRC to engage with stakeholders which include civil society, faith organisations, persons from academia, and political parties. During the meetings, the NPRC and stakeholders reflected on what the NPRC has done in each thematic area and how it can improve its work in line with international best practices that are context specific.

2.8. Provincial Sensitisation and Awareness Sessions on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security

From 2 to 3 June 2022, the NPRC convened provincial sensitisation and awareness sessions on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. The sessions were held in Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland East, Midlands, and Matabeleland South. The sessions aimed to:

1. Raise awareness and sensitise Peace Committee Members and key community actors on the women, peace, and security agenda.
2. Obtain inputs from sub-national level stakeholders on the issues, interventions, and strategies for accelerating the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.
3. Forge partnerships with stakeholders for buy-in and collaborations in strengthening women's participation in peace.
4. Promote and bring awareness to the prevention of Conflict-related Gender-Based Violence and Promote Gender-inclusive peace building.

Speaking at the Manicaland Provincial session, Commissioner Chekenyere emphasised the importance of women in promoting and building peace in Zimbabwe. He also referred to section 9 of the NPRC Act, which speaks on the inclusion of women in the Commission's programs. The NTJWG commends the NPRC's efforts in this regard and encourages the Commission to ensure that these sessions are also done in Matabeleland North, Bulawayo, Harare, and Mashonaland West and Central.



Figure 4 - Masvingo Provincial Committee Members Pose for Group Photo After Attending Sensitisation Session.

2.9. Healing Broken Families Program

On 16 June 2022, the NPRC working with the Assemblies of God Church met with the Epworth community to implement its 'Healing Broken Families' program which focuses on assisting families to heal from the effects of conflicts. Speaking at the engagement Commissioner Chigwedere, the Chairperson for the Healing, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation Thematic Committee emphasised the importance of involving diverse communities in Zimbabwe. During the engagement, the participants were given a chance to air out their views and articulate how they expect to be assisted by the Commission. This intervention is commendable and in line with the NPRC's mandate to develop and implement programs to promote national healing, unity, and cohesion in Zimbabwe. The NTJWG encourages the Commission to replicate this program in different communities in the country.

2.10. Interview with 3Ktv on Elections Roadmap

On 8 July 2022, independent television station 3Ktv's, featured NPRC spokesperson Commissioner Obert Gutu on its program Vantage. During the program Commissioner, Gutu said had crafted a roadmap aimed at eliminating violence in the country, as well as promoting free and fair elections in 2023. This was done in response to the rising political tension and violence in the country, with ZANU-PF and Citizens Coalition for Change youths who recently engaged in running battles in Nyatsime — on the outskirts of Chitungwiza — following the gruesome murder of Moreblessing Ali. Commissioner Gutu highlighted that the NPRC's program was aimed at being proactive and pre-empting election-related violence. He also said that the NPRC was working on the peace pledge for 2023 which all political parties had to subscribe to and commit to shunning violence at all costs. The NTJWG looks forward to the implementation of this program and encourages the NPRC not to wait until election season is in full swing before beginning implementation. Furthermore, the NTJWG recognises that the peace pledge may be a necessary first step to demonstrate the political party leaders' commitment to peace during the elections. However, given the 1 August violence witnessed in 2018 despite the signing of a peace pledge, the NPRC needs to explore other avenues to foster a commitment to peaceful elections in 2023. The NTJWG implores the NPRC to work not just with political parties in its efforts to encourage peaceful action but to also include civil society, other independent commissions, and the public in its programs.



3. NTJWG Activities

3.1. Radio Programs

3.1.1. *Stakeholder Perspectives on Proposed Gukurahundi Public Hearings*

Since 2019, President Emmerson Mnangagwa has been engaging with stakeholders on Gukurahundi specifically the traditional leaders from Matabeleland. This engagement culminated in an August 2021 announcement that the traditional leaders would be taking a lead in their areas of jurisdiction to resolve Gukurahundi. Further to this on 10 March 2022, the Chronicle reported that the President was set to meet up with the chiefs from Matabeleland to engage for the final time before the launch of the hearings of Gukurahundi. This was met with scepticism by transitional justice stakeholders worried that the President and the chiefs' actions in this regard effectively usurp the NPRC's constitutional mandate.

To contribute to the discourse on this issue, on 12 May 2022, the NTJWG hosted a radio program on Skyz Metro FM. The panellists for the radio program were Reverend Dr Raymond Motsi from Grace to Heal; Ms Sindiso Nxumalo and Mr Wellington Nkawu who are survivors. The following issues were raised by the panelists during the program:

- It is difficult to ascertain the sincerity of the decision to launch the public hearings given that this decision has not been informed by consultation with stakeholders, but the public hearings are a door that has been opened and may be useful in articulating the impact of the Gukurahundi and the suffering it caused;
- The decision to give the mandate of resolving the Gukurahundi to the chiefs and sidelining the NPRC was confusing to the victims who were told that the NPRC came into existence to deal with post-conflict healing, peace, and reconciliation;
- The NPRC's silence over the usurping of its mandate is concerning since the NPRC has not done much to resolve the Gukurahundi; and
- The public hearings must be inclusive, victim-centric, and guided by a legal framework articulating how they must be conducted and the timeframe within which they must be done among other things.

3.1.2. *Mental Health as a Social Justice Issue in Zimbabwe Report Launch*

On 30 May 2022, the NTJWG launched its report titled 'Mental Health of Victims and Survivors of Human Rights Violations as a Social Justice Issue in Zimbabwe.' Dr Kudakwashe Muchena the consultant who worked on the report highlighted the purpose of the report, its link to transitional justice, the current state of mental health in Zimbabwe, and lastly laid out recommendations going forward. These include an increase in the national mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) capacities, integration of MHPSS into social justice initiatives, development of expertise on MHPSS for social justice and lastly coming up with a creative partnership to support an integrated social justice approach. Dr Zirima, a psychologist discussed

how trauma can be passed from one generation to another. Additionally, he highlighted the symptoms of trauma and the importance of psychotherapy help in the healing process. Ms Kuvheya brought the perspective of a survivor as she narrated how her rights had been violated and the effects that they had on her mental well-being. She also highlighted that she has been able to get help from some of the members of NTJWG such as CSU.

3.2. Community Dialogues

3.2.1. Tsholotsho Community Dialogue

Since 2019, transitional justice stakeholders such as Ibhetshu Likazulu have been working with communities affected by the Gukurahundi to build memorial plaques to remember their loved ones who were killed, disappeared, and otherwise violated during the Gukurahundi. While the efforts to carry out memorialisation initiatives have been welcomed by the victims, survivors, and their families, some people have viewed these initiatives with the same disdain as evidenced by the continuous destruction and theft of the memorial plaques. Efforts to build memorial plaques by communities with the help of Ibhetshu Likazulu have been frustrated by unknown culprits who have destroyed all memorial plaques on different occasions with the recent incident taking place on 4 January 2022. Noting this disturbing trend, the NTJWG has been working with Ibhetshu Likazulu to support its efforts to assist communities affected by violence to memorialise the past and facilitate truth-telling and truth-seeking to foster healing.

It is in this vein that on 4 April 2022 the NTJWG convened a community dialogue in Tsholotsho. This community dialogue was convened in partnership with Ibhetshu Likazulu as part of the work on memorialisation. The dialogue was aimed at facilitating discussion with the community members affected by the destruction of the memorial plaques to identify the community's needs and their preferred memorialisation initiatives. The dialogue was attended by 51 people most of whom were direct victims of Gukurahundi, some were assaulted and raped while others witnessed the killings of their loved ones and other community members. Through the community dialogue, the NTJWG was able to educate and raise awareness about the functions of the NPRC and the importance of memorialisation. During the dialogue, the community members raised the following issues:

- There is a need for any sort of development that benefits the community as most things were destroyed during the Gukurahundi;
- The GoZ must demonstrate its will to ensure that the people in Matabeleland have sustainable livelihoods;
- The GoZ must take responsibility for the Gukurahundi, apologise and make reparations for it; and
- The community must be provided with counselling and rehabilitation programs for the community.

3.2.2. Gweru Community Dialogue

On 25 June, the NTJWG convened a community dialogue in Mkoba, Gweru in collaboration with its members the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) and Counselling Services Unit (CSU). Through the community dialogue, the NTJWG reached 54 people and sensitised them on the functions of the NPRC, its mandate, and how the people can air out their grievances to the NPRC. Mr Honour Sinampande from ZPP led the first session on conflict and human rights during which the community defined conflict as clashes and disharmony caused by different beliefs. The participants shared the main causes of conflict in their communities which included



Figure 5 - Participants Attending Gweru Community Dialogue.

different political, religious, and cultural beliefs, inadequate resources and scramble for resources, poor service delivery, and poverty. To resolve these conflicts, it was suggested that the acknowledgement by perpetrators of human rights violations of their wrongful acts and ensuring justice for the victims were key. The next session was facilitated by Ms Desire Dobie, from the NTJWG Secretariat who explained the NPRC's mandate of ensuring post-conflict justice, peace and healing, and reconciliation. Ms Dobie also encouraged the community to lodge complaints with the NPRC if they wished to have the NPRC's assistance in resolving conflicts in their community.

3.3. Seminar on the Role of Journalists in Transitional Justice

Journalists and the media in general play a pivotal role in the dissemination of information thereby shaping public discourse and perception of important issues in society. Recognising the important role played by the media in society, the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013 provides for the right to freedom of speech and freedom of the media in section 61. The rights protected by section 61 are essential for the existence of an independent media that stands for freedom of speech, the right to information, and the representation of different opinions in society. While media may provide a platform for debate and expression of different opinions it can also be misused. In the case of Zimbabwe, there have been instances where the media has played a key role in exposing corruption and human rights violations. Regrettably, media in Zimbabwe has also often been used to polarise and divide the country by reinforcing the root causes of conflict through the spreading of hate speech and intolerance. Such manipulation of media is detrimental to transitional justice initiatives, and it is important for there to be deliberate efforts to move away from divisive reporting of issues.

In its 2019 Annual Report, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) aptly noted that media platforms are being used to fan divisions among Zimbabweans. It is in this vein that on 9 June 2022 the NTJWG convened a seminar on the role of the media in transitional justice which was attended by twenty-two journalists in Harare.

The first session was facilitated by Ms Lynn Walker, NTJWG Thematic Leader on Promotion of Truth and it was titled 'Understanding Transitional Justice and the NTJWG.' This was an introductory session to form the foundation of the engagement. During this session, Ms Walker explained what transitional justice is and the background of the NTJWG. This was aimed at enabling the journalists to understand transitional justice

in general and the work the NTJWG has done in this area. Specifically, Ms Walker highlighted the NTJWG's key milestones which include the adoption of Guiding Principles on TJ Policy and Practice in Zimbabwe, the development of Minimum Standards for an Effective NPRC in Zimbabwe and conducting advocacy for the NPRC Act specifically the inclusion of section 9 on gender among other issues.

Ms Nompilo Simanje from the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) facilitated the second session titled 'Role of Media in Transitional Justice'. In her presentation, Ms Simanje focused on section 61 of the Constitution which provides for media freedom and freedom of expression as well as section 62 which addresses the right to access information. She highlighted that the media could foster democracy or stifle it and skewed reporting leads to polarity and threatens national peace. To that end she reminded the journalists of their duties to report fairly, completely, and accurately; be impartial; afford fair opportunity



Figure 6 - Journalists Listening to Ms Walker Facilitating Understanding Transitional Justice and the NTJWG Session.

for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions; rectify inaccuracies without delay and give the rectifications due prominence; not promote violence or hatred against any class of persons.

During the discussions that ensued, it was indicated that the language used by journalists is key. Pursuant to this journalists were encouraged to choose diction that promotes peace, unity, and inclusion. Specifically, it was emphasised that there is a need to avoid language that encourages racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice or hatred; or encourages or incites violence and is likely to lead to undue public contempt towards any class of person in Zimbabwe. Ultimately it was resolved that this engagement was only the start of the NTJWG's engagement with the media in its efforts to enhance the capacity of journalists to ensure conflict and peace reporting that is unifying and not polarising.

3.4. Documentary Screening and Presentation of 2021 State of Transitional Justice Report

It is not disputed that Zimbabwe's past is marred with violence and human rights violations, the narratives of the past differ and are often disputed. Regrettably, much of Zimbabwe's history is undocumented and what is documented does not include the perspectives of the victims, survivors, and their families.

With this in mind, the NTJWG produced a documentary titled ‘Untold Truths in Zimbabwe: Stories of Injustice Through the Eyes of the Survivors.’ The documentary features five people who survived different epochs of violence such as the Gukurahundi, Operation Murambatsvina, and election-related violence in Matabeleland, Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland, and Midlands.

On 24 June 2022, in commemoration of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the NTJWG screened this documentary at Ster Kinekor Movie Theatre in Bulawayo. The screening was attended by 69 people from civil society, the media, and the public.

“Time does not necessarily heal the wounds, but the wounds should be addressed for people to heal, the conversation of the past hurt to healing Zimbabwe should not be one way with survivors alone, but it should also be with people across the Government.” - Reverend Useni Sibanda, Zimbabwe Christian Alliance

After the screening, the NTJWG also presented its 2021 State of Transitional Justice Report which provides insight on transitional justice in Zimbabwe in 2021. Specifically, this report highlights the work of civil society, the independent commission the NPRC, and the government which had an impact on transitional justice. The report also makes several recommendations that must be implemented to facilitate transitional justice in Zimbabwe, and these include:

- Making concerted efforts to advocate the implementation of the AUTJP.
- Demonstration of Government sincerity on transitional justice by not undermining the NPRC by setting up parallel structures, processes, and initiatives.
- Increasing NPRC accessibility and visibility.

3.5. Commemorative Statements

3.5.1. “Standing against the Weaponisation of Sexual Violence in Conflict” - Press Statement in Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

On 19 June 2022, the NTJWG commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict which coincides with the anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1820, which covers the topic of sexual violence as a tactic of war. The NTJWG condemned the weaponisation of sexual violence in conflict recalling the devastation this weaponisation caused during the Gukurahundi and the January 2019 protests against fuel hikes. To ensure justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict, the NTJWG implored the NPRC to work with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission to investigate all instances in which sexual violence has been used as a weapon during conflicts in Zimbabwe and to hold the perpetrators accountable. The NTJWG also called for criminal justice authorities to effectively prosecute such offenders to bring justice to victims and accountability to perpetrators.

3.5.2. “A Call to End Torture as Zimbabwe Prepares for Elections” - Statement in Commemoration of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

In commemoration of International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on 26 June 2022, the NTJWG published a statement in which it remembered the victims of torture related to electoral violence in

Zimbabwe. Bearing in mind the fast-approaching 2023 elections, the NTJWG reflected on Zimbabwe's past elections which have consistently been marred with violence including torture since 2000. The NTJWG emphasised the need for ending torture reminding the GoZ that it was encouraged to end torture by several countries during the third cycle of Zimbabwe's review under the Universal Periodic Review in January 2022. Furthermore, the NTJWG recommended that the GoZ:

- 1** Ratifies and domesticates the UNCAT and its Optional Protocol, which was made by several countries
- 2** Strengthens efforts to combat torture by enforcing a zero-tolerance policy.
- 3** Imposes harsh penalties on all who are found guilty of employing torture tactics;
- 4** Investigates past reports of torture and prosecutes the perpetrators; and
- 5** Provides psychosocial support to victims of torture to demonstrate the State's commitment to ending torture and rehabilitating victims of torture.



4. Transitional Justice Stakeholders in Action

4.1. Gutu Court Challenge Struck off Court Roll

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum filed an application in the High Court on behalf of ZIMRIGHTS seeking a declarator from the Court on the failure of Obert Gutu, a commissioner in the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, to denounce membership of the ZANU-PF political party. This application was premised on the constitutional provisions that any person appointed to an independent commission should revoke his/her membership from any political party and should be apolitical. Obert Gutu had made widely publicised statements that he had joined ZANU PF and indicated his preference for that party over all others. In his opposition, Gutu denied that he had ever joined ZANU-PF and that although he wanted to, he never went through with it. An affidavit from a ZANU-PF official in the secretariat of that party also confirmed that he was not such a member. The hearing was scheduled for 31 May 2022 and was duly heard before the Honourable Mangota J, who expressed that the failure to seek to leave to sue the President was a fatal error to the application since he was also cited as the 2nd Respondent. He stated that although there had been conflicting decisions on whether or not to seek to leave in application proceedings where President is being sued in his official capacity, the position had now been settled by the recent case of Marx Mupungu in the Constitutional Court. The matter was therefore struck off the roll for the lack of technical compliance.

4.2. State of Peace Report Launch

On 23 June 2022, ZimRights a member of the NTJWG, launched the 2021 State of Peace Report which confirms that many people in the country lived in a state of fragile or negative peace during 2021. The State of Peace Report is an annual product of ZimRights' Right to Peace Campaign. The report captures the key peace concerns and issues in the communities where the campaign is being implemented. It brings together activists operating in the Right to Peace Action Zone into targeted conversations that help the community understand the state of peace in the areas they live. The campaign is being implemented in Masvingo, Bulawayo, Matebeleland North, and Matebeleland South Provinces.

The report finds that only 19% of people in Zimbabwe are participating actively in elections although everyone is affected by the elections. It further highlights that Zimbabwe has become locked up in a perpetual election mode that has become a threat to peace and development. This is because the GoZ's policies are short-sighted and unsustainable targeting only the next election cycle. The report also finds that despite having the primary mandate to foster peace the NPRC is largely invisible to communities, and they only hear about the NPRC from civil society organisations working in the communities. The NTJWG commends ZimRights for conducting the study that culminated in the production of this report and urges all transitional justice stakeholders to interact with this report and consider it in conceptualising interventions to foster peace.



5. Regional and Global Developments

5.1. Regional Symposium on Domestication of the African Union Transitional Justice Policy in the SADC Region

From 7 to 9 April, the NTJWG together with the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation hosted a two-day regional symposium to foster the Domestication of the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Among the participants were country representatives from Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. During the symposium the following issues were raised:

- That President Mnangagwa has usurped the NPRC's mandate in the efforts to resolve the Gukurahundi by tasking traditional leaders to lead the process. It was noted that the President has relied on the AUTJP to justify his actions noting that the AUTJP recognises the role of traditional leadership in peace building;
- The deafening silence from the NPRC in light of the usurping of its mandate in relation to the Gukurahundi is concerning;
- Some civic groups are sceptical about the President's sincerity to resolve the Gukurahundi given the approach he has adopted which has been to exclude the NPRC which is constitutionally mandated to deal with the Gukurahundi;
- There is a need for lobbying to ensure that every stakeholder takes an interest in transitional justice regardless of whether the operating context is ideal for transitional justice or not;
- Africa needs to tap into the energy of the youth who make up the majority of Africans and should take a leading role in healing their countries from past violations;
- Human rights violations are the primary elements that need to be addressed to end conflicts and lay the basis for transitional justice;
- There is a need for SADC to adopt a regional transitional justice framework aligned to the AUTJP;
- SADC member states should also be encouraged to strengthen and establish national structures for peace through the establishment of strong and independent human rights institutions;
- Civil society organisations and citizens should continue to advocate for peace and democracy; and
- SADC member states should be encouraged to institutionalise memorialisation of atrocities, which is key to truth-telling and social cohesion.

5.2. Families of Forcibly Disappeared Persons Demand Justice in Bosnia

During the war in Bosnia in 1992, 46 people were forcibly disappeared in the Hadzici area after being detained by Bosnian Serb forces. They were first detained by Bosnian Serb forces in a sports hall and garages, then transferred to the Slavisa Vajner Cica military barracks in Lukavica, where they were beaten up. Since then, there has not been any accountability for their disappearance, and they have not been returned to their loved ones. In 2009, the Association of Detainees of Bosnia and Herzegovina filed a criminal complaint against members of the Serb-led Crisis Committee of Hadzici Municipality, but no indictments had been issued by 23 June 2022, thirteen years later. As a result, the families of the 46 people have been unable to find healing. This led them to rally outside the Bosnian state prosecutor's office, calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

The NTJWG stands in solidarity with these families and recognises that enforced disappearances not only violate the rights of the disappeared but also the loved ones they are taken from. They are denied the right to a remedy and to the truth which prevents them from finding healing. The situation in Bosnia is strikingly similar to the situation of many Zimbabweans whose loved ones were forcibly disappeared during the Gukurahundi, periods of election-related violence, and other isolated incidents such as that of Itai Dzamara. By not investigating the disappearances of these people and subsequently prosecuting those involved in their disappearances the GoZ denies their families closure which results in them continuing to live in the past not knowing the fate that befell their loved ones. To aid the healing process for these families the NTJWG urges the GoZ to investigate enforced disappearance, hold the perpetrators accountable and tell their families the truth about what happened to the disappeared people.

“I had only one brother. I wish someone would just tell me where he is, so we can find his bones and bury him, and I want those responsible to be punished. My parents have not lived to see that. I am 64, so I may not live to see it either.” – Ms Zlata Krajina, sister of Camil Ismic one of the disappeared persons.



6. Featured Articles

6.1. Gukurahundi Public Hearings: Breakthrough or a Political Gimmick?

Author: Rumbidzai Muyendes, Transitional Justice Associate, NTJWG

Zimbabwe has experienced several violent epochs which have largely remained unresolved. Chief among Zimbabwe's unresolved violent episodes is the Gukurahundi massacres. According to the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe's nerve-racking report "Breaking the Silence," about 20 000 civilians were killed in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces between 1982 and 1987. The Gukurahundi massacre as it is now referred to was instigated by the late former President Robert Mugabe through the deployment of a North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade to "thwart an insurgency" purportedly from the disgruntled former Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) forces.

Thousands of people fled their homes while several children were left orphaned by the relentless killings. Mass graves scattered in the regions are an explicit testimony of the massacre. Zimbabwe had just earned independence from colonial rule in 1980, two years before the killings which Mugabe later opted to call a "moment of madness." President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who took over from Mugabe in 2017, opened up the debate on Gukurahundi, promising to bring closure to the sad chapter.



Figure 7 - Protesters Demanding Justice for the Disappeared in Bosnia.

Even though the Gukurahundi massacres ended decades ago, very little has been done to bring closure to the multitudes of victims and survivors of those atrocities. The effects of the massacre continue to be felt from generation to generation.

In 2008, the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was formed through the Government of National Unity to ensure healing and integration. The work of the organ, however, failed to provide any recourse for the many victims and survivors of violence. The promulgation of the 2013 Constitution brought with it some semblance of hope through the setting up of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) which provided yet another new window of opportunity to bring closure.

The NPRC is an independent commission that came into operation under section 251 of the Constitution. It has a lifespan of 10 years to deal with ensuring post-conflict justice, healing, and reconciliation. What is not clear is whether the 10 years are from the date the constitution came into effect which is 2013 or when the NPRC Act was enacted and it became operational in 2018. In March 2019, Masvingo High Court Judge, Justice Mafusire granted a declaratory order in support of the latter, meaning that NPRC will be operational until 2028. This decision was however set aside in a ruling made in a Supreme Court appeal. As a result, it is not clear when the NPRC's lifespan ends even though there are indications that the government might want to extend the lifespan.

Since coming into existence, the NPRC has not done much work to resolve the emotive Gukurahundi issue. To make matters worse, the NPRC spokesperson Obert Gutu made a flippant statement in June 2021 which seemed to trivialise the Gukurahundi atrocities. He stated, "It's a pity that normally people look at the commission as only dealing with one issue of Gukurahundi. I think Gukurahundi is just a small, tiny fraction of the various other disputes..." This raises serious questions on the sincerity of the NPRC to discharge their constitutional duties if they publicly downplay the Gukurahundi massacres.

During Mugabe's reign, the Chihambakwe Commission of Inquiry was appointed to investigate the past violence after the widespread international and domestic condemnation of the killings in Matabeleland and the Midlands. The Commission was composed of four male members and chaired by Zimbabwean Judge Simplisius Chihambakwe. To much dismay, the findings of the commission were never made public. The government argued that the publication of the report could spark violence over past wrongs. The basic tenets of transitional justice include truth-telling, a component the government seems unable to handle. President Mnangagwa has made some efforts to address the grievances of the Matabeleland community. In 2019, the President met with Civil Society Organisations under the banner of Matabeleland Collective to discuss issues relating to Gukurahundi and the way forward. In 2021, the President had various meetings with Chiefs to discuss the same matter.

Recently, President Mnangagwa announced that he was going to launch public hearings to tackle the Gukurahundi issue within the affected communities. The chiefs have been tasked with presiding over the hearings to the exclusion of the NPRC which has the constitutional mandate to ensure post-conflict justice, healing, and reconciliation.

Since the announcement of the public hearings was made, there is no indication of whether there is a set framework for how they will be done in Zimbabwe. Public hearings are normally used by truth commissions to uncover the truth from the victims and survivors and to come up with the necessary recommendations. It is however not clear what the information obtained from the public hearings will be used for in this instance.

In the absence of a clear framework, the hearings will unlikely bring the needed closure. The decision on why traditional leaders will lead the process and not the NPRC should be stated clearly by President Mnangagwa as well as the benefits of that decision in bringing complete closure to the sensitive issue. Chiefs have been very loyal to the ruling party. The suspicion that they will be used to cover up the truth about the massacres to benefit President Mnangagwa, who has been linked to the sad episode, at the expense of the victims cannot be overruled.

Public hearings are a common feature mostly in truth commissions. They provide the victims and survivors with a platform to share their suffering. Between April 1996 and June 1997, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hosted a series of public hearings and this marked a turning point in the international perception of open hearings. It proved that public hearings if conducted in the right manner, can become a very important tool for victims and survivors to be heard and acknowledged. The TRC held 83 hearings in public places such as town halls, schools, and churches. During the hearings, both victims and perpetrators were given a chance to speak. It is estimated that 2000 victims testified and their stories reached thousands through the special broadcasts that were done on the country's main television and radio channels. Similar experiences with public hearings were also noted in other countries such as Morocco and Peru. The hearings have been seen as a nation-building tool, communicating a shared societal intent to reach out to everyone and establish a united front.

It is imperative that consultations are done with the victims and survivors on how best to conduct the Gukurahundi public hearings. Victims and survivors should be able to recount their experiences in a safe and supportive environment and provisions should be made for counselling as the process can be re-traumatising. Additionally, some form of protection should be considered for people giving evidence at the public hearings. It is a possibility that they face physical risk from those implicated hence privacy and confidentiality measures should be put in place.

Perhaps the public hearings present a window of opportunity for victims and survivors to tell their own stories about Gukurahundi and be the starting point to ensuring justice, healing, and reconciliation. But without a clear framework to allow for genuine healing, this might be a political gimmick where the President wants to be seen to be doing something. Eventually, Zimbabwe should be able to ensure the right to justice, right to truth, right to reparations, and guarantee non-recurrence of violations.

6.2. Memorialisation and The Politics of the Gukurahundi Memory

Author: Desire Dobie, Transitional Justice Associate, NTJWG

For most victims of past human rights violations, confronting the painful memories of the past has been the greatest way of alleviating the pain. It lays the foundation for the building of a more peaceful future. Memorialisation initiatives have been important elements of this process.

Memorialisation generally refers to the process of preserving memories of people or events. It can be a form of address or petition or a ceremony of remembrance or commemoration. It can also be a memorial site of remembrance. In the context of transitional justice, memorialisation is used to honour the victims of human rights abuses. Memorialisation looks at the healing of the memory of trauma and creates a new memory for society.

Apart from informing and shaping both the culture and conscience, memorialisation ensures that the truth is not just recovered but also preserved as part of one comprehensive process. It is a universal need for both those being memorialised and those who are grieving. The United Nations Basic Principles on the

Right to a Remedy and Reparation recognise “commemorations and tributes to the victims” as a form of reparation. Memorials publicly recognise that victims are entitled to redress and respect. They are also a form of reparations or compensation efforts that seek to address past human rights violations. They aim to provide compensation for losses endured by victims of abuse and remedy prior wrongdoing.

Memorials help societies and communities reconcile tensions with victims by demonstrating respect, acknowledging the past, and ensuring non-recurrence. The healing begins with the acknowledgement that painful chapters are essential parts of history and that archives play a crucial role in providing evidence. They can also help establish a record of history and prevent the recurrence of abuse.

In Zimbabwe, memorialisation has provoked controversy and presented challenges for state violence and brutality victims. It is a highly politicised process that represents the will of those in power. The government has been silent about the memorialisation of victims of past human rights violations, especially the Gukurahundi massacres victims. In addition to the lack of political will, the trend of destruction and theft of Gukurahundi memorial plaques is another worrying phenomenon that has posed a major challenge to memorialisation initiatives.

On 31 August 2021, in commemoration of the International Day for Victims of Enforced Disappearances, local NGO Ibhetshu Likazulu unveiled a memorial plaque it had built with the Silobela community in remembrance of the men known as the Silobela 12 who were abducted and disappeared on 31 January 1985 during the Gukurahundi. The plaque was stolen that same night, becoming the second time the plaque was stolen in Silobela. The first memorial plaque was stolen on 5 June 2021, just a day before it was to be unveiled on 6 June 2021.

The people of Bhalagwe have not been spared. The work and effort they have put in building three memorial plaques have been frustrated by culprits who have destroyed all memorial plaques on different occasions. 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 painful events that befell their loved ones. In addition to these woes, the national authorities have not taken any action to deal with the theft of the memorial plaques.

During an interview with the Centre for Innovation and Technology, the Deputy Chief Secretary-Presidential Communications in the Office of the President and Cabinet, Mr George Charamba, characterised erecting memorial plaques as unlawful and not in tandem with the government policy. Mr Charamba inferred that the destruction of the memorial plaques is not a concern of the State because it was done without its consent. The indifference by the State towards the pain of the theft and destruction of memorial plaques is evidence of the attempts to silence and wipe out from history the gross human rights violations suffered by the victims at its hands.

The plaques are both a lament and remembrance that draws public attention and recourse. They are a reminder to the perpetrators of the pain and injustice they inflicted on the victims of human rights violations, and a cry for justice by the families of the victims whose loved ones were sacrificed to state-sanctioned brutality and socio-economic exigencies in the society.

For the families of the victims of Gukurahundi, the matter of justice for their loved ones remains elusive not only because traumatic experiences harbour wounds that will not go away but because of the impunity towards the culprits who continue to steal and destroy the memories left of their loved ones through the theft and destruction of memorial plaques. All that remains for the families of the victims is to preserve the

memory of their loved ones and live on to bear witness and call to account the perpetrators of the human rights violations.

It is tempting to presume that because some government officials took part in the genocide, they think that the memorial plaques were shaming them, which is why they see the need to steal and destroy them. It is irresistible to think that most of those in government who took part in the genocide are delaying justice for the victims, hoping that they will die before they are made answerable. The desperate attempt to erase history by destroying plaques will only delay the memorialisation process but will not kill it. The best way to treat Gukurahundi is to solve it, not wish it away.

Feedback on this Newsletter

If you would like to have your article featured in this newsletter or you would like to share your feedback on the content that we have just shared with you please email media@hrforum.co.zw, To view or download the publications produced by the NTJWG visit: <https://www.ntjwg.org.zw/publications/>

About the National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG)

The National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) is a platform established by forty-six Zimbabwean transitional justice stakeholders to provide the interface between transitional justice stakeholders and the official transitional justice processes in Zimbabwe.

NTJWG shares with all transitional justice stakeholders the vision for a peaceful, just, accountable and democratic society. Its purpose is to facilitate consensus among transitional justice actors on appropriate transitional justice principles and processes for Zimbabwe.

Its mission is to create an inclusive space for the coordination of transitional justice stakeholders, share experiences; build synergies for comprehensive, accountable, victim-centred, and participatory transitional justice processes in Zimbabwe.

In pursuit of this vision, the NTJWG will be guided by the following values:

Integrity:

Professionalism, Commitment, Truth, Transparency, Diligence, Honesty, Confidentiality

Inclusivity:

Involving everyone regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, belief, ideology, and geography

Impartiality:

Non-partisanship, Independence, objectivity



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