

Statement On The Effects Of Sanctions On The Enjoyment Of Human Rights In Zimbabwe

25 October 2020

1. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) is one of the five Chapter 12 Independent Commissions supporting democracy and mandated to promote, protect and enforce human rights and freedoms and entrenching the same at all levels of society as provided for in the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 (Act) 2013.
2. As part of its strategy in fulfilling its mandate through monitoring the protection, promotion and enforcement of human rights, the ZHRC has noted with deep concern the negative impact and far-reaching effects of the economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the European Union and its allies. Given that the sanctions are being justified as an enforcement measure to ensure the full observance of human rights and the rule of law, the ZHRC contends that no matter how grave the human rights situation in any country may be, the imposition of further suffering on innocent citizens through unilateral coercive measures only further worsens the economic situation and the plight of innocent citizens.
3. The sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe have had unintended consequences as they have contributed to the increase in human rights violations notwithstanding the fact that they were imposed with the aim of improving human rights. They have proved and remain to be a counter-productive policy tool, whose deleterious effects are being continuously felt by the general Zimbabwean populace.
4. The ZHRC further contends that the extraterritorial application of unilateral sanctions is a clear violation of international law. It violates the international law principles of jurisdiction, respect for and dignity of national and territorial sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other independent states and the legal equality of States. Further, the sanctions violate basic principles of the UN Charter and other important legal instruments as they deprive innocent civilians of the right to development and the right to self determination.
In addition, the sanctions are also incompatible with international law as they are used as coercive measures regarding choices that ought to remain free, such as choice of a political, economic, social and cultural system and the formulation of foreign policy.
5. The ZHRC's observation and assessment of the reality on the ground is that the tight grip of the declared and undeclared sanctions is being felt throughout the entire economy. In this regard, the 'targeted sanctions' have severely worsened Zimbabwe's already depressed economy. The effects of the economic meltdown on ordinary people are unprecedented, putting further to the test the myth that targeted sanctions are only focused on those targeted.
The negative effects are largely felt by the vulnerable and marginalized groups especially the youths, women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, among others.
6. Sanctions are seriously impinging on human rights. Children are born and raised in a sanctioned environment and economy. Access to quality social services such as education, health, food, clean and potable water and shelter is compromised, all because of the effects of sanctions.
7. The ZHRC therefore calls for the immediate and unconditional removal of all forms of sanctions on Zimbabwe to pave way for its socio-economic transformation and economic development. The removal of sanctions will not only benefit Zimbabwe but also the SADC Region and the African Continent at large.
8. Finally, the ZHRC recommends and appeals to the international community to



resort in the first instance, to solving differences through constructive engagements rather than imposition of punitive measures which have the effect of infringing on the rights of innocent people and worsening their wellbeing. It is on this score that the Commission fully supports the call by the people and Government of Zimbabwe, the SADC Community, the African Union and many other well-wishers in the Global Village for the immediate and unconditional removal of sanctions against Zimbabwe for better enjoyment of human rights by its people.

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