



## **Press Statement in Commemoration of International Human Rights Day (IHRD) on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) is one of the five Independent Commissions supporting democracy in Zimbabwe, established in terms of Sections 232 (b) and 242 of the Constitution. Its mandate is to protect, promote and enforce human rights as provided for in Section 243 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act, 2013.

Today, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Zimbabwe joins the rest of the International community in commemorating International Human Rights Day (IHRD). The UN General Assembly proclaimed 10th December as International Human Rights Day in 1950 to bring the ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*** to the attention of all the peoples of the world as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. This day marks the first global recognition of a set of rights to which all human beings are entitled by virtue of being human.

The UDHR has thirty(30) articles and some of the rights it enshrines include the right to dignity and equality, the right not to be discriminated against, the right to life, liberty and security, freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, recognition as a person before the law, equality before the law, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of assembly and association, the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living which include adequate food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, the right to education and the right to culture.

This year's International Human Rights Day theme reads; ***Recover Better – Stand Up for Human Rights*** in recognition of the devastating impact brought about on enjoyment of human rights by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic led to a dramatic negative impact on the right to life, globally, but it has also resulted in unprecedented negative impacts on civil and political rights as well as socio- economic rights and Zimbabwe has not been spared. National resources have

been diverted from development projects and general service delivery to support COVID -19 preventive, containment and treatment measures and people's livelihoods, jobs and other sources of income have been disrupted due to prolonged lockdown and the curfew.

The Commission noted that enforcement of the COVID – 19 regulations especially during the Level 1 lockdown has been a major source of conflict between law enforcement agencies and the public at large. The Commission urges the public not to relax but to fully comply with lawful COVID -19 regulations so as to safeguard the rights to life and health. The Commission, however, wants to reiterate that rights are inalienable and therefore enforcement of lockdown restrictions and measures should adhere to particular principles as stipulated in Section 86 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and World Health Organisation (WHO) COVID-19 guidelines.

Some of these principles are that such measures should have a legal basis, should be strictly necessary and based on scientific evidence, neither arbitrary nor discriminatory in application, of limited duration, subject to review, respectful of people's human rights and proportionate to achieve intended objectives, among others. It is imperative to take note that according to Section 86 of our Constitution, certain rights provided for in the Declaration of Rights are absolute and cannot be limited even during the COVID-19 emergency and these include, the right to life (except for the death penalty), the right to human dignity, the right not to be tortured or subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right not to be placed in slavery or servitude and the right to a fair trial.

Finally, it is everyone's responsibility to **Stand Up For Human Rights**, to protect and promote human rights and respect human rights values of fairness, justice, equality, non-discrimination, respect for life, human dignity, tolerance, non - violence and respect for diversity so as to ultimately foster a universal culture of human rights. Let us all aim to Recover Better by Standing Up for Human Rights.

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