

Human Rights Council 34th session

Speaker: Bellinda Chinowawa - Check against delivery

ITEM 6 – UPR ADOPTIONS; ZIMBABWE

Thank you Mr President

The International Service for Human Rights and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights call on the Government of Zimbabwe to improve the situation of human rights defenders.

We remain concerned by the continued targeting of human rights defenders by State actors. Hundreds of defenders currently face prosecution following their arrest for exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and association between May and November 2016. These trials are ongoing. We call on the Government to ensure the finalisation of these trials without further delay.

We note that the Zimbabwean Government is in the process of drafting a Cyber Crimes Bill which, if passed, will further curtail the right to freedom of expression and privacy; and will further impede the work of defenders. Further, defenders' right to freedom of association remains under serious threat due to the imposition of additional legal requirements, such as a memorandum of associations in communities.

Whilst we are encouraged by commitments made by the Zimbabwean Government to date, building on the recommendations accepted by the Government during its review last November 2016, we urge the authorities to:

- Review all legislation to ensure full compliance with international obligations, particularly regarding the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including *but not limited to* the Cyber Crimes Bill, the Public Order and Security Act, and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- Respect and uphold the Constitutional compatibly with international human rights law, guarantee and safeguard the independence of the judiciary, and support other institutions that play a vital role in protecting human rights.
- Commit to ratifying the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as its optional Protocol.
- Immediately ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- Implement programs to promote and disseminate the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and adopt national legislation for its effective implementation.
- Issue standing invitations to the special procedures, particularly the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.