



President Emmerson D Mnangagwa
President of the Republic of Zimbabwe
Office of the President
Munhumutapa Building
Samora Machel Avenue
Harare
Zimbabwe

4 February 2019

Your Excellency

RE: Request to urgently end gross human rights violations in Zimbabwe

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam International are writing to urge you to urgently take concrete and effective action to address the deteriorating human rights situation and increasing risk of a humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. While we appreciate the space you have created for some dialogue with you, including on the death penalty, and your government's support in the delivery of some impactful humanitarian work that has served many lives in Zimbabwe, we worry that the current trend threatens the potential gains from these engagements.

We are seriously concerned about the escalating crackdown by your government on human rights defenders, civil society activists, labour and opposition leaders and members and Zimbabweans protesting the recent fuel price increase.

We have observed with concern a pattern of suppression of dissenting voices in Zimbabwe. On 1 August 2018, 7 people were killed after the deployment of the military during post-election protests. To date, those responsible for the killings have not been brought to justice.

The announcement by your government of a 150 percent fuel increase on 12 January led the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions labor movement to call for a three-day national strike, which triggered widespread protests. Protesters burned a police station, barricaded roads with large rocks, and looted shops in Harare, Kadoma, and Bulawayo. Of course we condemn criminality, but Government security forces responded with live ammunition and teargas, which they fired at the protesters and into people's homes. The security forces beat many people using iron bars, baton sticks, sharp objects and booted feet. They launched a massive door-to-door search, and were joined by militant youth groups suspected of being aligned to the ZANU PF party in dragging people suspected of participating in the protests out of their homes and arbitrarily detaining them.

At least 12 people were killed, more than 78 people were treated for gunshot wounds, and over 302 were treated for serious injuries that include dog bites, assaults, severe beatings, blunt trauma, and use of sharp and penetrating objects.

We are also aware that several women and girls were reportedly raped by members of the security forces.

The nationwide internet shutdown by your government during the “stay-away” caused an information blackout across the country and affected many who rely on it for financial transactions to access basic goods and services like emergency health care.

Your government spokesperson, George Charamba, reportedly said that the crackdown on protesters, human rights defenders and activists, opposition supporters and others was “just a foretaste of things to come.” As we write, reports show that security forces continue to intensify repression of dissenting voices, including through the arbitrary detentions of high-profile opposition leaders, human rights defenders and activists, including children. Most of those arrested are routinely being denied bail and many summarily tried in trials that fail to adhere to international fair trial standards. In the face of continued attacks on activists and opposition leaders and other people, many civil society leaders have fled their homes, fearing for their lives, and are in hiding, unable to access food or medical facilities for fear of arrest.

We are, therefore, deeply concerned that without decisive action to address and end the ongoing human rights crisis, the situation will continue to deteriorate, and, consequently, exacerbate the humanitarian situation, not just nationally, but regionally across the Southern African Development Community.

The failure of the authorities to bring to justice government officials and members of the military and police responsible for serious abuses, regardless of rank, breeds a culture of impunity that can only lead to increased human rights violations throughout the country. It also denies victims the right to an effective remedy.

We therefore urge you to show commitment to respect human rights including by using your leadership position to ensure that the Zimbabwean authorities:

- a) Fully respect the human rights of everyone including the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association;
- b) Immediately end the escalating crackdown and attacks on peaceful protesters, human rights defenders, activists and opposition leaders and other people by the security forces and militant youth groups;
- c) Act swiftly to ensure security forces are held to account for the serious human rights violations, including torture, rape, and killings of protesters and other people;
- d) Undertake a prompt, thorough, impartial and independent investigation into allegations of human rights violations and abuses including rape and other sexual abuse of women by security forces. Anyone suspected of being responsible should be brought to justice in fair trials;
- e) Immediately ensure women can promptly report cases and guarantee full access

to medical services for all women who have been raped and sexually assaulted, as well as others injured by security forces during the crackdown.

- f) Ensure victims and their families have access to justice and right to an effective remedy including access to psycho-social and trauma counselling, adequate compensation, reparations and guarantee of non-repetition.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss ways to improve the human rights situation in Zimbabwe.

Thanking you for your urgent attention to this matter and looking forward to hearing from you soon on the steps you are taking to implement these recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Kumi Naidoo

Secretary General

Amnesty International



Kenneth Roth

Executive Director

Human Rights Watch



Winnie Byanyima

Executive Director

Oxfam International