

# ZADHR



## Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights

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### THE TIME TO SPEAK AND TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IS NOW

We call on all medical, nursing and other health professionals, health human rights activists and others across the African Continent and around the world to join us in:

- condemning all human rights abuses in Zimbabwe,
- advocating for the protection and promotion of the health and human rights of all Zimbabwean citizens irrespective of their political affiliations, and
- recognising that the health care system and public health situation in Zimbabwe has spiralled to a CRISIS
- urging Zimbabwean state officials to refrain from denying its citizens access to acceptable medical treatment.

Recent violent events in Zimbabwe have grabbed the headlines of the world press. The political significance of the events has overshadowed the stark reality that human rights abuses are being blatantly carried out by government agents, including the right to healthcare (*to receive treatment regardless of political affiliation*).

In addition to prominent political opposition figures whose injuries have been publicised in the international media, there are hundreds others who have been injured, maimed and traumatised.

Despite their best efforts, health professionals in Zimbabwe are placed in an impossible position as they are prevented from treating “politically unacceptable” citizens. Efforts taken by health professionals to document and prevent human rights abuses meet with further intimidation by security forces. The treatment of the leader of the opposition, Mr Morgan Tsvangirai, on the night of his assault illustrates this situation. After his arrest and subsequent assault he collapsed while being held in police cells. He was taken to the Accident and Emergency Department of the government Central Hospital at 03:00hrs. The A&E department was cordoned off. A junior medical officer on duty was made to review him in the presence of armed police, which he did superficially without reference to senior colleagues. He did not implement effective management of Mr Tsvangirai’s injuries so that the latter was released back to the police despite having lost sufficient blood to lose consciousness again the next day. He was eventually treated at a private hospital where he required a blood transfusion.

Two senior members of the opposition, Sekai Holland and Grace Kwinjeh, who had been tortured were prevented from going to South Africa for medical care even though they had not been charged for any offence.

These human rights abuses compound the already fragile living conditions of people in Zimbabwe where the life expectancy for women is now 34, the lowest in the world, maternal mortality is rising, 21% of adults have HIV, unemployment stands at 80% and inflation runs at 1700%. People do not have the funds to buy medication and good nutrition is almost impossible to afford, especially for the poor who may not have family outside the country providing remittances.

Zimbabwe is a signatory to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. All of these contain the reference to the right to health. The Zimbabwean Government must therefore comply with their obligations in terms of these charters.

The crisis in Zimbabwe is not unique; health professionals across the whole continent are faced with similar situations and look to other health professionals to be the first to come to their support.

Bishop Desmond Tutu correctly said *'We Africans should hang our heads in shame...how can what is happening in Zimbabwe elicit hardly a word of concern let alone condemnation from us leaders of Africa?'*

It is time leaders of the health professions in Africa stand united and make it clear that they will not remain silent in the face of abuses of health and human rights in Zimbabwe and elsewhere.

If you are concerned about health and human rights violations and the situation in Zimbabwe, the time to speak is now. **SEND YOUR E-MAIL SUPPORTING THIS PETITION TO [zadhr@mweb.co.zw](mailto:zadhr@mweb.co.zw) and copy it to the Zimbabwe Medical Association (ZiMA) - [zima@zol.co.zw](mailto:zima@zol.co.zw).** The petition, bearing the names of all those who lend their support to it, will be delivered to the office of the President of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert Mugabe and to the Minister of Health and Child Welfare, Dr David Parirenyatwa.

This petition is raised and circulated by the **Zimbabwean Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR)**. ZADHR is a non-partisan and non-political professional association for doctors and other health professionals in Zimbabwe.