

COMMISSIONS WATCH

ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
[17th August 2019]

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE
ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ON
THE PLANNED DEMONSTRATIONS

The following press statement was issued by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission on 15th August 2019 ahead of the mass demonstrations planned for 16th August.



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The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) is one of the Independent Commissions supporting democracy in Zimbabwe. Independent Commissions are mandated, among other objectives, to support and entrench human rights and democracy, protect the sovereignty and interests of the people, and promote constitutionalism as provided at Section 233 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

The Commission has taken note of plans by the Movement for Democratic Change (Alliance) to organise demonstrations with effect from 16 August 2019. The freedom to demonstrate and petition is guaranteed under Section 59 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. In providing for such rights the Constitution goes further to state that these rights must be exercised peacefully. The Commission emphasizes that if such demonstrations do occur, these rights must be exercised responsibly. It is clear that the Constitution does not only protect the right of every person in Zimbabwe to demonstrate but also places a responsibility on the demonstrators, as indeed on any other stakeholder, to uphold peace. The ZHRC therefore takes this opportunity to call upon the organisers of the planned demonstrations to put in place measures that will ensure the maintenance of peace and respect of other people's rights. The maturity of a society's democracy is measured by the ability to tolerate differences in opinion, political persuasion, and expression of oneself

openly and freely. Mutual respect, upholding of fundamental human rights and observance of the rule of law are some of the founding values and principles of the Zimbabwean society.

The ZHRC also takes this opportunity to call upon the Zimbabwe Police Service to discharge its Constitutional mandate by enforcing the law without fear or favour as provided in Section 219 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. This means not only protecting the rights of those participating in demonstrations, but also protecting the lives and property of all people. The principles of good governance, which bind the State and all institutions and agencies of Government at every level include the respect for rights of all political parties as well as fostering of national unity, peace and stability. To this end, the Commission calls upon the Zimbabwe Police Service to investigate allegations of the abduction and assault of human rights defenders and opposition political leaders that seem to be linked to the planned demonstrations. Any cases of enforced disappearances and lawlessness should be condemned in the strongest of terms and the perpetrators should be made accountable through prosecution.

As usual the ZHRC will deploy its teams of monitors to assess the situation on the ground with a view to contributing to the development of human rights, democracy, rule of law, good governance, and peace and stability in Zimbabwe.

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