

ADVISORY STATEMENT BY ZGC ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Zimbabwe Gender Commission is one of five independent Commission established in terms of Section 232 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, and specifically Section 245 and operationalised through the Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act [Chapter 10:31].

Section 233 of the Constitution outlines objectives of independent commissions as including to support and entrench human rights and democracy, to protect sovereignty and interests of the people, promoting constitutionalism and to ensure that injustices are remedied.

Section 246 of the Constitution, mandates the Zimbabwe Gender Commission to, among others: monitor issues concerning gender equality; investigate possible violations relating to gender; receive and consider complaints from the public; advise public and private institutions on steps to be taken to ensure gender equality; and recommend prosecution for criminal violations of rights relating to gender.

The Commission has received several petitions relating to alleged abduction and torture of Honourable Joana Mamombe, Netsai Marova and Cecilia Chimbiri. While we are carrying out investigations into the matter we condemn, the alleged violence perpetrated against the three women especially given that there were also men involved in the said demonstration. This is in violation of Section 80 (1) which states that: Every woman has full and equal dignity of person with men and this includes equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities. Gender based violence regardless of context, or its form does not have room in modern society. Again Section 52 of the Constitution talks about the right to personal security and guarantees the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right to freedom from all forms of violence from public and private sources.

We are concerned that the fact that the violence was allegedly directed at women leaders is likely to discourage women's participation in politics and decision making which the Commission has been actively promoting.

We therefore urge the following upon government, political parties, law enforcement agents, media, respectively to:

- Publicly declare commitment to upholding constitutional provisions in dealing with alleged criminal conduct;
- Conduct an investigation into circumstances surrounding the case in a transparent and accountable manner to curtail speculation; and
- Encourage responsible reporting in order to avoid causing secondary trauma some of which have the potential to jeopardise access to justice.

We reiterate our call upon all Zimbabweans to adhere to the guidance provided pertaining to the national lockdown and cooperate with security actors that have been deployed. We also advise all public and private institutions to be guided by the constitution on how to respond to those who fail to conform to COVID-19 and other guidelines.

For more information, contact ZGC Chairperson, Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe 0712214203/0772869214, and Chief Executive Officer Virginia Muwanigwa 0712899543