



## **CALL FOR UPHOLDING OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO PERSONAL SECURITY**

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) has been following media reports on the outcome of the demonstration on 16 August. We regret the use of excessive force that resulted in the violence that unfortunately typically had a woman's face.

The ZGC noted with much concern the media images which showed that women were mainly those physically assaulted. An initial gender analysis of media coverage through photographs of the demonstration shows that that women, although among other groups, seemed to have been the majority of those who were physically attacked. Our understanding also of gender issues, persuades us that while the majority of those captured under attack by the ZRP on the day, may have been demonstrators, it is also likely that they were people whose day to day livelihoods are earned on the street. It is also a fact that the majority of those working in the informal economy around our cities pavements, are women.

Such assaults, regardless of the context or the intended target, are an infringement on the rights to personal security as well as freedom from all forms of violence from public or private sources as espoused in section 52 of the constitution. The same section upholds the right to bodily and psychological integrity and ZGC therefore condemns the assaults. This is not withstanding the right of those who were part of the demonstration as exercising their right to freedom of assembly.

ZGC therefore calls upon law enforcement agents and organisers of demonstrations to facilitate protection and safety of women and other vulnerable groups. In view of the pictures, particularly of those with life threatening injuries, ZGC also hopes that injured people were able to access medical assistance.

As one of the Chapter 12 institutions mandated with the promotion of democracy, human rights and constitutionalism in Section 233, ZGC condemns unreservedly any violence in all its forms, regardless of the perpetrator or the target. We reiterate our call for collective responsibility in finding alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

For more information, contact the Chairperson to the Commission, Ms Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe, on 0242-250937