

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Ref.: AL ZWE 3/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

9 July 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 59/4, 61/22, 53/12 and 61/10.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **alleged reprisals, intimidation, assaults, arbitrary arrests, threats, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment targeting human rights defenders, lawyers, academics, students, youth activists and civil society actors, including Mr. Douglas Coltart, Mr. Tendai Biti, Professor Lovemore Madhuku, Mr. Takunda Mhuka, and Mr. Emmanuel Sitima, and the removal of Ms. Fungayi Jessie Majome, in connection with their opposition to the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill, 2026 ("the Bill")**.

Mr. Douglas Coltart is a prominent human rights defender and lawyer. He has previously been the subject of communications by Special Procedures mandate holders concerning allegations of assaults, harassment, arbitrary detention and judicial harassment linked to his legitimate professional activities and human rights work ([ZWE 2/2023](#) and [ZWE 3/2022](#)). We thank your Excellency's government for its reply to ZWE 2/2023. However, we regret not receiving a reply to ZWE 3/2022.

Mr. Tendai Biti is a lawyer, former Finance Minister, opposition politician and prominent constitutional advocate. He is convener of the Constitution Defenders Forum (CDF), a civic platform that has been vocal in the defence of constitutionalism in Zimbabwe. According to the information received, Mr. Biti publicly criticised the Bill and participated in advocacy and public engagement efforts opposing the proposed constitutional amendments. Mr. Biti's arrest forms part of a broader pattern of legal harassment against him linked to his political opposition activities.

Professor Lovemore Madhuku is a constitutional lawyer, academic, opposition leader of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and member of the Zimbabwe Constitutional Movement (ZICOMO). According to the information received, Professor Madhuku publicly criticised the Bill, including by questioning its constitutionality and compatibility with democratic principles and constitutional safeguards.

Mr. Takunda Mhuka is a youth activist and volunteer member of WeLead Trust, a civic organisation working on youth political participation in Zimbabwe.

Mr. Emmanuel Sitima is a youth activist engaged in civic and youth-led advocacy, including on issues related to democratic governance and participation and constitutionalism. He is also leader of the Defend the Constitution Platform (DCP), a civic initiative advocating against proposed amendments to the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Ms. Fungayi Jessie Majome is a legal practitioner and the former Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC).

According to the information received:

On 16 February 2026, the Government of Zimbabwe gazetted the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill, 2026. The Bill reportedly proposes significant constitutional changes, including provisions concerning presidential tenure, the presidential election system, and the restructuring of constitutional institutions. Serious concerns have reportedly been raised by lawyers, constitutional scholars, civil society organisations, opposition actors and human rights defenders regarding the compatibility of the Bill with constitutional guarantees relating to presidential term limits, democratic accountability, separation of powers, judicial and institutional independence, and public participation in governance processes.

The public hearings concerning the Bill were conducted between March and April 2026. Multiple reports indicate that these hearings were not inclusive and participatory and were characterised by intimidation, exclusion of dissenting voices, politically motivated violence, and restrictions on meaningful participation by individuals and groups opposing the Bill.

Mr. Douglas Coltart.

On 31 March 2026, Mr. Coltart allegedly attended a public hearing on the Bill in Harare. During the hearing, individuals opposing the Bill were reportedly denied the opportunity to speak, while supporters of the Bill were allegedly allowed to participate freely and without restriction. Individuals attempting to access the microphone to express dissenting views were allegedly physically obstructed and assaulted.

Mr. Coltart reportedly attempted to document the violence using his mobile phone. During the incident, his phone was allegedly stolen by individuals involved in the attacks. When attempting to retrieve the device, he was allegedly forced to the ground by several individuals and physically assaulted, which resulted in multiple injuries and damage to his glasses.

Following the incident, he reportedly received threats and intimidation and was the subject of an online smear campaign, including through videos circulated on social media platforms on 13 April 2026, in what appears to have been targeted intimidation because of his opposition to the Bill and his human rights work.

Mr. Coltart reported the physical attack to police. However, there was reportedly no follow-up.

Mr. Tendai Biti

Mr. Biti faced intimidation, threats and allegedly politically motivated attacks aimed at deterring him from engaging in constitutional advocacy and discouraging broader public criticism of the proposed amendments.

On 21 March 2026, he was reportedly arrested and charged in connection with alleged mobilisation against the Bill. At the time of his arrest, Mr. Biti was attending a private residential meeting related to the Bill. He was subsequently released on strict bail conditions.

Like Mr. Coltart, Mr. Biti was also reportedly denied the opportunity to speak during the public hearings.

Professor Lovemore Madhuku

On 1 March 2026, armed unidentified men forcibly entered the premises of the NCA while a meeting was underway and violently beat Mr. Madhuku and other participants with baton sticks, reportedly in the presence of uniformed police officers. Mr. Madhuku was reportedly hospitalised to receive medical treatment for his injuries.

During the public hearings on the Bill, Mr. Madhuku was also reportedly among the civic leaders denied the opportunity to express their views on the proposed amendments.

We are concerned that such actions may constitute retaliation against a constitutional expert and academic for exercising his right to participate in public debate and contribute expert legal analysis concerning constitutional reform.

Mr. Takunda Mhuka

On 3 April 2026, following his attempt to report an assault at his workplace, Mr. Mhuka was called to Waterfalls Police Station and, upon attending as a complainant, was instead arrested, and charged with malicious damage to property in contravention of section 140 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [chapter 9:23]. He and other individuals were alleged to have thrown a stone at a residence in Waterfalls and distributed fliers bearing the slogan “Save Zimbabwe Campaign, No to 2030,” associated with opposition to proposed extensions of presidential tenure under the Bill. This reportedly happened after he participated in public consultations on the Bill.

On 10 April 2026, the Magistrates Court reportedly denied Mr. Mhuka bail on the ground that he was a flight risk. A subsequent bail appeal filed before the

High Court has been repeatedly postponed, including following late filings by the State, and Mr. Mhuka remains in pre-trial detention.

Mr. Emmanuel Sitima

On 14 April 2026, Mr. Sitima was reportedly apprehended in Mabvuku, Harare, by men in plainclothes who did not initially identify themselves. He was subsequently taken to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) Law and Order Section at Harare Central Police Station and charged with malicious damage to property in contravention of section 140 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [chapter 9:23].

Reportedly, the charges against Mr. Sitima substantially relate to the same allegations levelled against Mr. Mhuka relating to his mobilisation activities against the Bill. Following two nights in detention, Mr. Sitima appeared before the Magistrates' Court in Mbare on 17 April 2026, where he was reportedly denied bail on the ground that he was a flight risk.

The circumstances surrounding Mr. Sitima's apprehension, including allegations that unidentified men in plain clothes were involved in his detention, are reportedly consistent with previously documented patterns of kidnapping and short-term enforced disappearance in Zimbabwe.

Ms. Jessie Majome

From 30 March to 4 April 2026, the ZHRC attended and monitored public hearings on the Bill.

On 7 April 2026, under Ms. Majome's leadership, the ZHRC released a statement raising concerns regarding deficiencies in the constitutional amendment process, including allegations of inadequate public participation and intimidation and violence against those opposing the Bill.

On 10 April 2026, Ms. Majome was reportedly removed from her position as Chairperson of the Commission, reassigning her to the Public Service Commission.

We are concerned that the removal of Ms. Majome appears to be in retaliation for the exercise by the ZHRC of its constitutional and human rights mandate. We are further concerned that such actions may undermine the independence of national human rights institutions and have a chilling effect on other public officials and institutions seeking to raise concerns regarding human rights violations or constitutional governance.

Patterns of intimidation and reprisals

According to the information received, the incidents described above form part of a broader pattern of intimidation and reprisals targeting human rights defenders, lawyers, students, academics, journalists, and civil society actors in

Zimbabwe who engage in constitutional advocacy, public interest litigation, democratic reform initiatives and criticism of government policy.

Without prejudging the accuracy of these allegations, we are deeply concerned that violence, intimidation, and reprisals may have been used to undermine meaningful public participation in a constitutional reform process of significant national importance. We are further concerned that the alleged acts may create a climate of fear and self-censorship incompatible with democratic participation and the exercise of fundamental freedoms protected under international human rights law.

We note with concern that similar patterns of intimidation, reprisals, excessive use of force, harassment of dissenting voices and restrictions on civic participation were previously documented by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association following an official visit to Zimbabwe in 2019. In the report to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur observed that the management of assemblies in Zimbabwe was characterised by an emphasis on maintaining public order rather than facilitating the exercise of fundamental freedoms and expressed concern regarding an environment of fear, reprisals and intimidation affecting human rights defenders, trade unionists, students, journalists, and civil society actors exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and association.

We are particularly concerned that human rights defenders, lawyers and constitutional experts appear to have been targeted for carrying out legitimate professional activities and for engaging in constitutional debate and public interest advocacy. The targeting of Mr. Biti appears linked to his peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, political participation, and public advocacy on matters of constitutional governance and democratic accountability.

We are also concerned by allegations suggesting that State authorities failed to prevent, investigate, or adequately respond to acts of violence and intimidation committed during public hearings.

We are further concerned that both Mr. Sitima and Mr. Mhuka have reportedly faced substantially similar charges, denial of bail by the same magistrate on identical grounds, and prolonged pre-trial detention. Taken together, these circumstances raise serious concerns regarding the possible use of the criminal justice system to target peaceful civic activism opposing the constitutional reform process.

We note with concern that Mr. Mhuka attended the police station as a complainant and was subsequently arrested and prosecuted. We are further concerned by allegations that proceedings against him have been subject to repeated delays while he remains in pre-trial detention, raising concerns that criminal proceedings may be being used to retaliate against his peaceful civic activism and association with individuals critical of the Bill.

More broadly, we are seriously concerned that young activists and students are being targeted for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association, and participation in public affairs. These and other cases indicate that youth activists and students participating in civic mobilisation concerning the Bill are being

threatened and targeted by security forces and politically affiliated actors in an apparent attempt to deter peaceful dissent and suppress youth participation in public affairs.

We wish to remind your Excellency's Government that human rights defenders, including lawyers, students, academics, and civil society actors, play a vital role in democratic societies and must be able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of violence, harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention, or reprisals.

We further note that constitutional reform processes differ fundamentally from ordinary legislative processes. Constitutional amendments may have significant implications for democratic governance, institutional independence, and the exercise of political rights and directly affect political participation, institutional independence, the separation of powers and the relationship between citizens and public authority.

In this regard, we recall that meaningful public participation constitutes an essential component of democratic governance and constitutional legitimacy. Public participation processes must be genuine, inclusive, informed, peaceful and free from intimidation, coercion, violence, or reprisals. Citizens, civil society actors, political actors and human rights defenders, including lawyers, academics, students and journalists, must be able to participate openly in constitutional debate and reform processes without fear of harassment, assault, arrest, or retaliation.

We are deeply concerned by allegations that individuals opposing the Bill were prevented from speaking, physically obstructed, intimidated or assaulted during public hearings concerning the proposed constitutional amendments. If confirmed, such allegations would raise serious concerns regarding compatibility with principles of democratic participation protected under international human rights law.

We note that section 328(4) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe requires Parliament to invite members of the public to express their views on proposed constitutional amendments through public meetings and written submissions. We further note concerns reportedly raised by civil society organisations, legal experts, and constitutional bodies that this obligation is integral to democratic sovereignty and constitutional legitimacy.

We also note concerns reportedly raised before Parliament that certain provisions of the Bill may require approval through a national referendum under Zimbabwean constitutional law. In this regard, we emphasise the importance of meaningful public participation where constitutional reforms concern foundational constitutional principles and governance arrangements, presidential and parliamentary tenure, or other core aspects of democratic governance.

We are therefore concerned that allegations of intimidation, violence and reprisals against individuals opposing the Bill may undermine the possibility of meaningful public participation and compromise public confidence in the constitutional reform process itself.

We would like to remind your Excellency's Government of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by Zimbabwe on 13 May 1991, including articles 7, 9, 19, 21, 22 and 25 concerning the

prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to liberty and security of person, the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and the right to participate in public affairs.

We also wish to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Declaration on Human Rights Defenders), in particular articles 1, 5, 6, 9 and 12, which recognise the rights of individuals and groups to promote and strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means and require States to protect human rights defenders against violence, threats, retaliation, discrimination and arbitrary action.

We further recall that States must ensure that constitutional reform and public participation processes are conducted in an environment free from intimidation, violence and reprisals, and that individuals are able to express dissenting opinions peacefully without fear of retaliation.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information concerning the alleged assaults, intimidation, threats, harassment, arbitrary arrests, and reprisals directed against human rights defenders, lawyers, students, youth activists, academics and civil society actors opposing the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill, 2026.
3. Please provide detailed information regarding the alleged assault against Mr. Douglas Coltart during the public hearing held in Harare on 31 March 2026, including:
 - a) Whether any investigations have been initiated into the alleged assault and theft of his mobile phone.
 - b) Whether any individuals have been identified or arrested in connection with the incident.
 - c) What measures have been taken to investigate threats allegedly directed against him following the incident, including threats circulated on social media platforms.

- d) What steps have been taken to ensure his protection and ability to continue carrying out his professional activities safely and without interference.
2. Please provide information concerning the ongoing prosecution and bail conditions against Mr. Tendai Biti in connection with his public opposition to the Bill and participation in constitutional advocacy activities, including the factual and legal basis for the prosecution and strict bail conditions.
3. Please provide information regarding the alleged assault against Professor Lovemore Madhuku and others including:
 - a) Whether any investigations have been initiated into the alleged assault(s).
 - b) Whether any individuals have been identified or arrested in connection with the incident.
 - c) Whether the police officers present have been identified and whether any disciplinary proceedings have been initiated.
 - d) What steps have been taken to ensure his protection and ability to continue carrying out his professional activities safely and without interference.
 - e) What measures have been taken to ensure that constitutional scholars, academics, and lawyers are able to participate freely in public debate concerning constitutional reform.
4. Please provide detailed information concerning the circumstances surrounding the removal of Ms. Jessie Majome from her position as Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, including:
 - a) The factual and legal basis for her removal.
 - b) Whether the concerns raised by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission regarding the constitutional amendment process played any role in this decision.
 - c) What measures are in place to guarantee the independence of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and protect its members from reprisals or political interference.
5. Please provide information regarding the ongoing prosecution and denial of bail for Mr. Emmanuel Sitima and Mr. Takunda Mhuka in connection with their peaceful activism and opposition to the Bill, including the factual and legal basis for their arrest, detention, criminal proceedings and denial of bail.

6. Please provide information concerning allegations that human rights defenders, including student activists, youth activists and other individuals participating in civic mobilisation or public hearings relating to the Bill have been threatened, assaulted, or prevented from expressing dissenting views during public participation processes.
7. Please provide information concerning allegations that individuals opposing the Bill, including human rights defenders have been denied equal access to participate in public hearings and were physically obstructed, intimidated or assaulted while attempting to express dissenting views.
8. Please explain what measures were taken by law enforcement and other State authorities to prevent violence and intimidation during public hearings concerning the Bill and to protect participants expressing dissenting or minority views.
9. Please indicate whether any investigations have been initiated into allegations that politically affiliated individuals or groups engaged in acts of violence, intimidation or threats against persons opposing the Bill, and if so, please provide details regarding the status and outcome of such investigations.
10. Please explain the measures taken to ensure that lawyers, constitutional experts, journalists, academics, students, and human rights defenders are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, defend, promote and protect human rights, and participation in public affairs without fear of reprisals, violence, harassment or arbitrary detention.
11. Please provide information on measures adopted to ensure accountability for alleged acts of violence and ill-treatment committed against individuals opposing the Bill.
12. Please explain what measures have been taken to ensure that constitutional reform processes and public participation hearings are conducted in a manner consistent with Zimbabwe's obligations under international human rights law, including guarantees relating to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, equal participation in public affairs and protection against reprisals.
13. Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that national human rights institutions, lawyers, and human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate mandates and activities independently and free from intimidation, retaliation or political interference.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The

communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Gina Romero
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Andrea Bolaños Vargas
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Margaret Satterthwaite
Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Alice Jill Edwards
Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to remind your Excellency's Government of the relevant international human rights norms and standards applicable to the issues brought forth by the situation described above.

We would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by Zimbabwe on 13 May 1991.

In particular, we draw attention to article 7 of the ICCPR, which prohibits cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. We recall that States have an obligation not only to refrain from such acts directly, but also to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish and provide remedies for acts of violence and ill-treatment committed by State and non-State actors.

We further draw attention to article 9 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right to liberty and security of person and protects against arbitrary arrest and detention. Any deprivation of liberty must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, and subject to judicial safeguards.

We also refer to article 19 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. The Human Rights Committee clarified in general comment No. 34 that article 19 protects political discourse, commentary on public affairs, discussion of human rights, constitutional debate, advocacy for democratic reform and criticism of public institutions and officials.

We wish to emphasise that constitutional reform processes necessarily require open public debate and the free exchange of opinions, including dissenting views. Any restriction on expression must comply with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality under article 19(3) of the ICCPR.

We further refer to article 21 of the ICCPR protecting the right of peaceful assembly and article 22 protecting the right to freedom of association. In its general comment No. 37, the Human Rights Committee clarified that peaceful assemblies play a central role in democratic governance and that States have positive obligations to facilitate peaceful assemblies and protect participants against violence by third parties, including politically affiliated groups or demonstrators.

We further recall the findings of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association following his official visit to Zimbabwe in 2019 (A/HRC/44/50/Add.2), in which he expressed concern regarding the restrictive legal framework governing assemblies, the intimidation and harassment of dissenting voices, the excessive use of force against protesters, the targeting of human rights defenders, trade unionists and students, and the deterioration of civic space in Zimbabwe. The Special Rapporteur emphasised that assemblies should be facilitated rather than

suppressed and that States have positive obligations to protect participants against violence, including violence committed by non-State actors.

We additionally draw attention to article 25 of the ICCPR, which guarantees every citizen the right and opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives. In its general comment No. 25, the Human Rights Committee clarified that citizens participate in public affairs not only through elections but also through public debate, dialogue with representatives, civic engagement, and participation in constitutional and political reform processes. The Human Rights Committee further emphasised in general comment No. 25 that citizens participate in the conduct of public affairs by exerting influence through public debate and dialogue with their representatives or through their capacity to organise themselves.

We wish to stress that meaningful public participation requires an environment in which individuals can express opinions, engage in debate, organise peacefully, and criticise proposed constitutional reforms without fear of violence, intimidation, reprisals, or arbitrary detention.

We also refer your Excellency's Government to articles 5, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which respectively protect the rights to dignity, liberty and security of person, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly and participation in government.

We further draw attention to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), ratified by Zimbabwe on 6 April 2022, which emphasises constitutionalism, democratic participation, the rule of law, regular democratic elections, and the importance of transparent and participatory governance processes.

We further wish to refer to the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, we would like to draw attention to articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration, which state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels, and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, we would like to refer to:

- article 5 (a), providing for the right to meet and assemble peacefully;
- article 6 (b), providing for the right to freely publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- article 8, providing for the right to have effective access, on a non discriminatory basis, to participation in the government of his or her country and in the conduct of public affairs, including, inter alia, to submit to governmental bodies and agencies and organizations concerned with public affairs criticism and proposals for improving their functioning and to draw attention to any aspect of

their work that may hinder or impede the promotion, protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- article 9 (3), providing that everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, inter alia: a) To complain about the policies and actions of individual officials and governmental bodies with regard to violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, by petition or other appropriate means, to competent domestic judicial, administrative or legislative authorities or any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, which should render their decision on the complaint without undue delay. B) To attend public hearings, proceedings and trials so as to form an opinion on their compliance with national law and applicable international obligations and commitments. C) To offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other relevant advice and assistance in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- article 11, providing for the right to the lawful exercise of his or her occupation or profession, individually and in association with others;
- article 12, providing that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.

We also wish to draw attention to the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, particularly principles 16 and 17, which provide that Governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference, and shall not suffer or be threatened with prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for actions taken in accordance with recognised professional duties and standards.

We further recall the principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (Paris Principles), adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 48/134, which require national human rights institutions to operate independently and free from political interference. Any retaliation against members of national human rights institutions for raising concerns regarding human rights violations or constitutional governance may undermine compliance with the Paris Principles.

We finally recall that States have a positive obligation to ensure that constitutional reform and public participation processes are conducted in a manner that is inclusive, transparent, participatory, and free from intimidation or violence. The use of violence, threats or reprisals against individuals participating in constitutional debate is incompatible with democratic governance and Zimbabwe's obligations under international human rights law.

We further recall that States must refrain from actions that create a climate of fear or self-censorship preventing individuals from exercising their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and participation in public affairs.