



SADCLA URGES GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE TO ASSUME PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HALTING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE, KILLINGS AND INITIATE INCLUSIVE NATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS.

ABOUT SADC LA

The Southern African Development Community Lawyers' Association (SADC Lawyers Association/SADCLA) is the representative body of law societies, bar associations and individual lawyers from the 15-member SADC region. SADCLA is dedicated to the advancement and promotion of human rights, the rule of law, democracy and good governance in the SADC Region and beyond.

DETAILED STATEMENT

In the wake of the recent but most unexpected and wholly unfathomable repeat of the August 1 2018 events in Zimbabwe, SADC-LA is saddened at the state of affairs both in Zimbabwe and the in the Region.

SADC-LA condemns in the strongest terms all forms of violence, whether this be from the citizens or the response from government. It is the citizens' right to assemble and protest against what they consider to be a legitimate grievance. It is Government responsibility with all the material in its possession and otherwise to facilitate peaceful demonstrations and to lead thereafter in the process of engaging in an open and meaningful conflict resolution process without resorting to any form of violence. We are saddened to note that once again the Government seems to have failed in this regard, especially when we consider the previous skirmishes that took place on the 1st of August 2018 and the lessons that are supposed to have been learnt therefrom.

The use of excessive force, lethal weapons and the deployment of the army in these circumstances clearly demonstrate this failure. Further, the attempt by Government

to close off the demonstrations internally in Zimbabwe and externally to the other countries by unduly closing down internet deserves outright condemnation from all the human rights organisations, progressive organisations and peace-loving people at home and abroad. This offends the right both to freedom of expression and information, which are basic rights.

The challenges in Zimbabwe are deep-seated and require an intense courageous and fearless National Dialogue by Zimbabweans. Neither the departure of Former President Mugabe nor the recent elections have been a solution to these deep-seated problems. The people of Zimbabwe have serious grievances borne out of a Country that has lost its way and has become a fragile state.

The SADC-LA therefore calls:

- for the immediate return of the President of Zimbabwe to address the Nation on what needs to be done. Among other things that the President is required to initiate is the Call for a National Dialogue with political leaders, Civil Society, Churches, Trade Unions and Human Rights Bodies. The end objective of that process is to reach a common understanding of the nature and extent of the problem that confronts Zimbabwe, to design a common agenda to rebuild the Country and to get all the parties behind a common commitment to resolve the Zimbabwe crisis,
- for the immediate stoppage of violence, killings and displacements perpetuated by the State Security Agencies and restoration of essential services which have been compromised in this process including the internet access and other forms of communication,
- for the institution of immediate investigations into the violence and facilitation of due process in the trial of suspected perpetrators on both sides. It will be critical that a detailed report of findings of investigations and measures taken be shared with all stakeholders.
- on SADC Region and the AU to lead a process of assisting Zimbabweans to find a lasting solution to the current challenges,

The SADCLA, with its extensive human resources base in the Region stands ready to work with the Civil Society, Government of Zimbabwe, the SADC and the AU to find both short term and long-term inclusive solution to the problems of Zimbabwe. In the final analysis Zimbabweans must be the owners of that process and its outcomes.

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CONTACT DETAILS (Please ask for SADC-LA CEO, Stanley Nyamanhindi)



SADC LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



la@sadcla



stanley@sadcla.org



www.sadcla.org



+27651823300