



PRESS STATEMENT ON SAFETY CRISIS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE CITY OF HARARE

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) is one of the Independent Commissions established by Chapter 12 of the Constitution to support democracy with the objectives set by section 233, to entrench human rights and democracy, promote constitutionalism, and secure observance of democratic values and principles by the State and its agencies. The ZHRC's particular functions, as mandated by section 243, are to promote awareness of and respect for human rights and freedoms, their protection and attainment; monitor, assess, and ensure their observance; and recommend to Parliament effective measures to promote them.

In line with its constitutional mandate to promote, protect, and enforce human rights and administrative justice, the ZHRC expresses deep concern over the preventable loss of life and ongoing human rights violations under the Harare City Council. The recent deaths of two council workers, Mr. Peter Mupinga and Mr. Steven Mangombe, on the 31st of August 2025 at the Firlle Sewage Treatment Plant in Glenview, highlight gross negligence and systemic failure, as they reportedly inhaled toxic gases due to a faulty biogas valve. Testimonies reveal that workers regularly operate in hazardous environments without adequate protective equipment, violating their rights to life, dignity, and safe working conditions as guaranteed under Sections 51 and 65 of the Constitution and international labour standards.

Recent incidents reveal a systemic failure to uphold both workers' rights and public safety. Employees report non-payment of salaries since June 2025, lack of basic hygiene provisions, and continued exposure to hazardous conditions without protective equipment. The above conduct violates their constitutional rights to fair labour conditions (Section 65), health and sanitation (Section 76), and protection from inhuman treatment

(Section 53). This neglect extends to the broader community, as seen in the preventable death of Ms. Clara Ngombengombe, who fell into an uncovered trench in Madzima Road, Mbare National left by council workers. The Commission has also noted that there are numerous and similar open trenches around the city, which continue to pose a risk for residents. Such incidents highlight the City Council's disregard for its duty of care and its failure to ensure safe infrastructure, thereby violating the public's right to life, personal security, and safe living conditions.

In accordance with Sections 194(1)(a) and (e), all levels of government, including government institutions, are mandated to uphold high standards of professional ethics and to respond to the needs of the public within a reasonable timeframe.

This situation reflects not only a troubling pattern of negligence but also a concerning disregard for human dignity and life within municipal governance. The right to life is the supreme right for all human beings in terms of section 48 of the Constitution and therefore should be protected. The Harare City Council must take immediate responsibility for the recent tragic deaths and the ongoing unsafe conditions that endanger workers and residents alike. The ZHRC strongly urges the City of Harare to prioritize the protection of human rights and ensure that all necessary measures are implemented to rectify these failures. It is crucial that the Council demonstrates a commitment to upholding the safety and well-being of its citizens, as neglecting these responsibilities is unacceptable. The ZHRC will continue to investigate these matters and stands in solidarity with all affected workers and residents.

#JusticeForCityWorkers #DignityForAllResidents #SafeHarareNow

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