



## PRESS STATEMENT ON THE FATAL ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS SPIKE IN ZIMBABWE

1. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) notes with concern the road traffic accident statistics released by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) for the 2025 festive season, dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2025. The doubling of total road accidents from 1,211 in 2024 to 2,412 in 2025, alongside significant increases in fatalities and injuries, represents not just a statistical increase, but a profound national emergency demanding urgent and comprehensive interventions.
2. Behind these numbers lie shattered families, lifelong disabilities, and preventable loss of human life. Each of the one hundred (100) lives lost and four hundred and seventy-one (471) injuries, represents a story of pain and a community in mourning. The data revealing that forty-four (44) passengers and thirty-seven (37) pedestrians constitute the overwhelming majority of fatalities points to systemic failures that endanger the most vulnerable road users.
3. The ZHRC acknowledges the Government's efforts in upgrading public roads across the country since the coming in of the Second Republic. Nevertheless, the ZHRC is gravely disconcerted with the increase in accidents, which it considers to be linked to a number of factors, including the disorganized, under-regulated, and overstressed transportation sector.
4. Through its human rights monitoring and assessment functions, the ZHRC notes that the lack of reliable, affordable formal public transport has led to the proliferation of poorly maintained vehicles, including unroadworthy buses, kombis, and private cars operating as informal taxis. Crowding turns these vehicles into mass death traps, significantly increasing fatality rates when accidents occur, as evidenced by the high passenger death toll, not to mention the indignity the commuting public suffers in being packed in those vehicles.
5. Furthermore, the lack of a mass public transport system results in pressure on private transport operators who step in to save the public from the shortage of transport. Drivers in the informal transport sector often facing extreme economic pressure to complete more trips, leading to dangerous practices such as overloading, speeding, overtaking on blind curves, driving while fatigued, and ignoring traffic laws.
6. In addition, the absence of safe, dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure, coupled with unreliable public transport, forces millions of Zimbabweans to walk along high-speed roads or use unsafe modes such as scooters and scotch carts

(which also appear in the fatality data). Pedestrians and cyclists are exposed to constant danger, accounting for 40% of all deaths in this reporting period.

7. The ZHRC also notes that a disorganized transport sector overwhelms law enforcement capabilities. Coupled with deteriorating road infrastructure, potholes, missing signage, and non-functional traffic lights, the environment becomes predictably hazardous, especially during high-volume periods like the festive season.
8. The ZHRC notes that such a transportation crisis constitutes a serious and ongoing violation of fundamental human rights. Section 48 of the Constitution provides for the right to life, by obligating the State to protect life by creating a safe regulatory environment. Citizens also have the right to personal security (Section 52), that is the right to bodily and psychological integrity. The constant threat of road trauma, and the reality of injury and death, violates the security of every person who must use Zimbabwe's roads. More so, the Constitution protects the rights of vulnerable groups amongst the general populace. The high death toll among passengers and pedestrians indicates a disproportionate impact on those who cannot afford private transport such as the poor, women, children, and the elderly. This exacerbates existing social and economic inequalities.
9. Due to these traffic accidents the risk to the right to life and healthcare are all worsened by the fact that no provisions have yet been made to ensure that 'no person may be refused emergency medical treatment in any healthcare institution' as mandated by section 77(3) of the constitution. Many lose their lives due to lack of access to ambulances and critical emergency care facilities that they can afford.
10. The ZHRC therefore recommends the Government of Zimbabwe to:
  - i. Conduct an immediate inquiry into the causes of the road carnage, with findings made public.
  - ii. Urgently invest in a formalized, regulated, and safe public transport system, including reliable buses, proper terminals, and trained, fairly compensated drivers.
  - iii. Provide for the enjoyment of emergency medical care for all at any institution as required by the Constitution
  - iv. Prioritise infrastructure development for pedestrian walkways, bicycle lanes, and road repairs to protect vulnerable users.
  - v. Develop a National Road Safety Strategy that is holistic, well-funded, and recognizes safe mobility as a non-negotiable human right.

Issue Date: 30 December 2025

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**Contact details:**

**Harare Head Office**  
144 Samora Machel Ave, Harare  
P. Bag 7759 Causeway  
Tel: +263 242 703 569/701 811  
Email: [info@zhrc.org.zw](mailto:info@zhrc.org.zw)  
Website: [www.zhrc.org.zw](http://www.zhrc.org.zw)  
Facebook Page: [@zhrc.zw](https://www.facebook.com/@zhrc.zw)

**Bulawayo Office**  
Number 46 Park Road  
Suburbs  
Bulawayo  
Tel: +263 292 232 205  
+263 292 230 825  
+263 292 232 207

Twitter: @zhrc365  
Hotline: +263 77 183 8656

**Manicaland Province Office**  
5 Arcadia Road, Morning Side  
Mutare  
Hotline: +263 71 963 5068  
Tel: +263 202 021 628/+263 202 021  
753/ +263 202 021 855/+263 202 021  
697/+263 202 060 030

**Matabeleland North Province  
Office**  
Lubhancho House  
F35/36 Lwendulu  
Number 1, Hwange  
Tel: +263 8128 29431  
Hotline: +263 77 183 868

Hotline +263 78 005 1684

**Masvingo Province Office**  
9 Shuvai Mahofa/ Hellet Street  
Masvingo  
Tel: +263 292 618 14  
+263 78 350 9152  
+263 78 350 9185

**Mashonaland West  
Province Office**  
Office 24, Block Number 2  
Chinese Complex  
Chinhoyi  
Hotline: +263 77 183 8656