



PRESS STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES, 30 AUGUST 2025

1. International Day for Victims of Enforced Disappearances is commemorated on the 30th of August 2025 since 2010 following adoption of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in 2006. The Convention aims to prevent enforced disappearances, uncover the truth about what happened to victims, bring those responsible to justice and prevent the re-occurrence of such atrocities in future.
2. Enforced disappearances occur when individuals are secretly arrested, abducted, detained or otherwise deprived of liberty by agents of the State or by individuals working with State support or complicity. Victims are often held in secret, without any legal process. Their fate and whereabouts remain unknown, placing them outside the protection of the law. In most instances where the victim of an enforced disappearance resurfaces, there are visible signs of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
3. The Commission has so far received tens of advocacy letters from abroad about Itayi Dzamara's disappearance which is a possibly forced disappearance, and urges the government to redouble its investigations about the disappearance in order to detect it and bring respite to his family.
4. Enforced disappearances violate many rights and freedoms enshrined in international and regional human rights instruments as well as the Constitution of Zimbabwe. For example, the Constitution provides for the following rights; personal liberty (section 49), freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (section 53), personal security (section 52), the right to a fair trial (section 69), the right to human dignity (section 51) and the right to life (section 48).
5. Furthermore, Section 50 (7) (a) provides for the right to obtain an order of *habeas corpus* denoting it as an absolute right. *Habeas corpus* is a formal court order requiring a detained person to be released or to be brought before the courts to establish the lawfulness of the

detention. In essence, the aforementioned rights safeguard against enforced disappearances which in effect place victims outside the protection of the law.

6. International Day for Victims of Enforced Disappearances commemorations serve as a reminder to the State, every institution and agency of government to collaborate against the gross human rights violations emanating from acts of enforced disappearances. For the ZHRC, the commemorations are an opportune time to reiterate its constitutional mandate to protect, promote and enforce human rights and freedoms of citizens that are threatened by acts of enforced disappearances.
7. The ZHRC calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to ratify or accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. The ZHRC also urges the government to sign the United Nations Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading treatment or Punishment (UNCAT). Zimbabwe remains one of the two (2) African countries that have not done so as that would enable the establishment of a torture prevention mechanism and enactment of specific and effective anti-torture laws to complement the provisions in the Constitution that prohibit it.

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