INTRODUCTION

Allow me to congratulate the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights on the production of the report, Zimbabwe – A New Era/Error. I make a special mention of Dr Norman Matara (MBChB, MPH) Dr Fortune N Nyamande (MBChB) who did not only document the details of the effect of state violence on helpless civilians, but were messengers of life in responding to the needs of the victims and survivors. The report documents the cases attended to by ZADHR between 1 August 2018 - 5 September 2018, ZADHR. It accounts for 72 cases of politically motivated violence, involving 102 victims. It gives a summary of the physical and mental findings after the victims were interviewed and examined by trained health professionals. I can confirm that these cases are part of the dossier submitted to the Montlante Commission.
OUR CONTEXT TODAY

The report comes into existence exactly a year since the government of Robert Mugabe was overthrown through a so called bloodless coup and we entered the so called new dispensation. It gives us an opportunity to reflect on ‘the newness’ of the ‘new dispensation’ and maybe get to the bottom of violence in Zimbabwe.

MODEL FOR TACKLING VIOLENCE

There is no profession better qualified to understand violence that the medical profession. Johan Galtung, the world’s most celebrated peace researcher and founder of the discipline of peace studies comes from a family of medical professionals. His ancestors for several generations were doctors and nurses. When Johan Galtung was born on October 24, 1930, an uncle congratulated the family, “Today, a new doctor is born.” Although Johan Galtung never became a medical doctor but in some way, he is a doctor. His patients are not individuals, but rather whole societies with pathological diseases that are resulting in deaths of many people around the world.

In his analysis of violence, Johan Galtung says violence is like disease in many ways. For you to cure it, you have to understand it. And he has given us the model which make sense to many medical doctors. This is know as the DPT Model. When a patient visits a doctor, the doctor must do Diagnoses – what is this condition. Secondly, she does Prognosis – if no intervention is done, what will happen. Then Therapy – we design an intervention.

This report tackles all three aspects of this model. We need to understand the nature of violence that we are facing, and what will happen if we do not intervene, and the kind of interventions that will help contain the problem.

WHAT VIOLENCE ARE WE DEALING WITH?

I have participated in many meetings where I hear people saying things like, ‘Things are okay, now – there is no more violence.”

And these are human rights defenders who are supposed to understand the nature and character of violence. I hear them say, there is peace and I wonder what their understanding of peace is.
Johan Galtung defines peace as the absence of violence and much more. What is this ‘much more’?

In one of his many lectures, Johan Galtung reflects on his visit to Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) around 1965 after the white minority regime had declared the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).

“The white regime bragged that there was peace in the country,” Galtung reflects, “And I looked at the country and it was clear that if 4% of the population is controlling 96% of the resources while the 96% is scrambling for 4% of the resources, and you call that peace, then I do not want to be part of it. Keep your peace.” Despite the lack of overt violence and the lack of blood in the street, Johan Galtung refused to agree that this was peace.

The colonial state built a society that was in pangs of structural violence, keeping the majority of the people away from resources and decision making, in poverty without rights. That was not peace!

For us to be able to build sustainable peace, we must be able to confront violence in all its forms. Galtung says there three types of violence. These are direct violence - the direct infliction of harm on the physical person. This is what we dealt with on 1 August. But beneath this, there is structural violence - Structural violence refers to systematic ways in which social structures harm or otherwise disadvantage individuals. Structural violence is subtle, often invisible. In the case of August 1, the structural violence is the structure which allows the security sector to interfere with public life, control government and run the economy. The structure, even before a gun is fired, constitute violence. But structural violence goes beyond the military. If you take money that is supposed to go to towards water and sanitation and direct it towards election campaign – billboards and vehicles for chiefs – then that structural violence that will lead to deaths of many people by things like cholera.. Cultural violence is a culture that justifies both direct and structural violence. If you listened to the testimony by Commissioner of Police Matanga about why 1 August was justified, then you know what is cultural violence is – and its all over.

Some Comments on Cultural and Structural Violence
In his most celebrated work, *When the State Turns on Its Citizens: Institutionalised Violence and Political Culture* (2011) Professor Lloyd Sachikonye chronicles the tragic history and legacy of violence in Zimbabwe. He identifies several forms of violence that have characterised the Zimbabwean state, including the colonial state, nationalist movements, the liberation movements, Gukurahundi, food riots, election related violence, Operation Murambatsvina, violent farm invasions, inter and intra-party violence, among others. He concludes:

Our narrative on political violence suggests that over the past 50 years it has been a major instrument of ascendency to power as well as a bulwark against contenders for that power. But this necessitated that there should be a legitimation of political violence as both an instrument and an intrinsic part of the political system. It required that a supportive ideology be developed and disseminated to lend legitimacy to the recurrent use of political violence. (Sachikonye, 2011: 42-43)

This narrative has shaped a tragic glorification of violence in the society. Galtung (2008:57) gives a perfect perspective of how the liberation fighters viewed the struggle. “The struggle for independence is also a struggle for manhood, for self assertion, if needed through violence, not by “fighting like women, like Gandhi”

This philosophy has gone on to shape the current thinking of the political elite in both the ruling party and the opposition. It is because of the fact that violence is viewed as having redeeming qualities in sectors that waged the liberation struggles, and that the independence so won was somehow superior to that obtained on a “silver platter” (Sachikonye, 2011: xviii, paragraph 1). No wonder why the November 15, 2017 military coup which replaced overthrew Robert Mugabe received glorification from the most unlikely sections of society. This history has made the struggle for post-independence democracy difficult to pitch within the non-violence discourse, as the ability to execute violence has become a badge of honour and those who do not carry this badge of honour are sidelined from participating in the welfare of the country and their voices are ignored.

**PROGNOSIS: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?**

One does not need to throw bones to understand what will happen if there is not right interventions to break the cycle of violence.
In the recently launch report Pathways for Peace by the UN and the Work Bank, the authors say one of the pathways for peace is in Prediction and Early Warning: Act Early or Quickly, say the authors of Pathways for Peace.

Prognosis allows us to see things before they happen. Its not supernatural. It simply means we are paying attention to the things that matter.

On 26 July 2018, a few days before the 2018 elections, the National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) issued a Pre-Election Transitional Justice Briefing titled, Embracing the Imperatives of Peace, Avoiding Violence. NTJWG stated,

“As we enter the 2018 harmonised elections, Zimbabwe is walking a tight rope, a space that is as fluid as it is unpredictable. Several issues are of concern in as much as they contribute to the fluidity of the situation in Zimbabwe. We here raise red flags over the following issues that, unless resolved, create a real risk of instability and bloodshed in Zimbabwe.”

The issues identified were: the role of the military in elections, the collapse of confidence in Zimbabwe’s election management body, the escalating language of hate, the increase in cases of political violence and intimidation, and the risk of continuing a legacy of contested elections.

And of course, we know, this warning was not acted upon and on 1 August 2018, violence broke out and as we speak, 7 people died. This was precisely because of the factors mentioned.

THERAPY
Martin Luther King Junior onces said, those who want peace, must learn to organise, just as those who want war.

I am on record saying violence is an investment. It cost money to wage violence. And the structures of violence in our country are complex and well funded. You tell me! How much do you think it costs to wage a coup?

Do not answer.
How much investment is sufficient enough to ensure that we dismantle the infrastructure of violence in Zimbabwe?

This seems like mission impossible, until we start putting the pieces together.

I will share with you some of the key investments which civil society needs to put in place to advance the struggle against violence.

**Understanding the Root Causes and Giving it the Rights Name**

Responding to violence requires us to understand its root cause. And there is no easy way of going around it. The Churches have described the problem of violence as a moral crisis. In our of the pastoral letters, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference talk about dismantling the structures of sin. In this, they are pointing to the aspects of cultural violence and structural violence. Political parties have said it’s a political problem. It’s a crisis of legitimacy. Lawyers tell us, it’s the problem with the rule of law. At the AMH Pre-Budget Breakfast meeting, I said it’s a crisis of integrity. When we look at all these, we at the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum have said that the problem is impunity. What is impunity? This is the concoction we get when there is not accountability. In the international law of human rights, it refers to the failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and, as such, itself constitutes a denial of the victims' right to justice and redress.

**The Truth will set you free - Taking Steps to Build the True Story**

The report being launched today is one way of responding to organised violence and torture. The story must be told in all its gory details. The victims have the right to know. The society has the right to know. The report tells us what happened, who its happened and the effects of what happens. This helps build a repository of undeniable truths regarding past human rights violations. It helps us create the evidence we need to confront lies and possible hold perpetrators to account. It helps us engage in evidence based advocacy for justice on behalf of victims.

**The Human Face of Human Rights Work - Find Remedy for Victims**

Reports like this would be useless if there was nothing for the victims and survivors. It is our sincere hope that this work helps bring justice to the victims and that victims do not remain mere numbers. Their stories must be heard.
Solve the Conflicts, Process the Trauma, Heal the Wounds

Over the years, we have come to understand violence to be the outcome of unresolved conflicts. When we predicted the violence of August 1, it was precisely because of this. The mistake we do is we see things, and simply hope that they will go away. Unfortunately, things don’t work that way. Steps must be taken. Unresolved conflicts? Solve them. Trauma? Process it? Wounds? Heal them. Doctors understand this better than anyone.

Never Again!

All the work we do would be useless if we did not put in place mechanisms for non-recurrence.

CONCLUSION

Human rights work sometimes seems to be less significant. We can learn that the work of human rights defenders is not in vain when we understand the Working with the Grain Approach by Brian Levy. In his book of the same title, Levy says that a with-the-grain approach conceives of change in evolutionary rather than engineering terms and so directs attention away from the search for “optimal” policies and toward the challenges of initiating and sustaining forward development momentum.

“The aim is to nudge things along, seeking gains that, though useful, often are initially likely to seem quite modest but can, sometimes, give rise to a cascading sequence of change for the better.”

Human rights defenders need not lose hope that their work is many times ignored or dismissed by politicians who are many times the perpetrators. These contributions, no matter how small, feed into an oceans of efforts by many likeminded actors across the country. When looked together, they form many islands of effectiveness whose connection can set big things in motion. It is my prayer that many survivors of the August 1 tragedy, will take comfort in the efforts of human rights defenders striving to ensure justice and accountability.

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