

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



**Zimbabwe Election
Support Network** ■
Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe

Press Statement

ZESN COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) joins Zimbabwe and the World at large in commemorating the International Day of Democracy on this 15th day of September 2022 running under the theme, “**Media freedom.**” Democracy Day is celebrated annually to review the state of democracy in the world and uphold and promote democracy and its principles.

This day comes amid concerns on upholding and promoting media freedoms across the globe while at the same ensuring the safety of journalists and media practitioners from attacks such as assault, lawsuits, arbitrary arrests and detention, and incarceration that are unfavourable to freedom of expression. The right to access information is a fundamental human right that enables citizens to make informed decisions and effectively participate in the governance and electoral processes while holding duty bearers accountable.

On this International Day of Democracy ZESN reiterates its calls for the government to uphold the principle of holding periodic elections by universal suffrage and to put in place measures that ensure the promotion of media freedoms.

ZESN notes that media is the hallmark of any democratic society. The media determines the political agenda; serves as a conduit for public debates; flags opportunities for reconciliation; and promotes dialogue between contesting candidates, reducing polarization and informing peacebuilding as well as educating the masses on voter and political rights.

Principle 1 of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa calls upon States Parties to the African Charter (States) to create an enabling environment for the exercise of freedom of expression and access to information, including ensuring protection against acts or omissions of non-State actors that curtail the enjoyment of freedom of expression and access to information.

ZESN notes with concern the continued attacks, with impunity, of journalists across the divide and calls on the law enforcement agencies and the powers that be to ensure the safety of journalists as it is of paramount importance ahead of 2023 harmonised elections. There is need for the State to take effective legal and other measures to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of attacks against journalists and other media practitioners, ensuring that victims have access to effective remedies as well

as upholding and guaranteeing freedom of expression and access to information rights which enable journalists to do their work.

The Network implores the government, political parties and all stakeholders including the security sector to ensure the safety of journalists as they conduct their watchdog role. On the other hand, journalists should, without fail, always strive to ensure balance and fairness in their reportage and stories.

ZESN remains committed to promoting democratic elections in Zimbabwe that are free and fair elections in line with international best practices and respect for human rights.
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PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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