



NGOCC
PRESS RELEASE
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**AFRICA FREEDOM DAY MEANINGLESS WHEN GOVERNMENT VIOLATES
CITIZEN'S RIGHTS**

THE Non Governmental Organisations Coordinating Council (NGOCC) joins the rest of Africa in commemorating this year's Africa Freedom Day, which falls on the 25th of May every year.

Africa Freedom Day will however remain meaningless if African leaders will continue to oppress citizens and disregard the rule of law. As Zambians celebrate this historic day, we remember the sacrifices made during the struggle for independence by the gallant women and men and we ask, what does freedom mean and whether the expectations of 1964 are being met?

As the women's movement, we are sad to note that tomorrow 25th May 2017, as we celebrate the Africa Freedom Day, Zambia still has political prisoners. It is sad to observe that while we Zambians claim to be independent from colonial masters, fellow Africans are limiting other citizen's freedoms of expression and movement through archaic and draconian legislation.

Never in the history of the country, has Zambia attracted negative media reports in the international media for the wrong reasons. Tensions are high in the country because of the political situation. Therefore, as we celebrate this year's African Freedom Day we call upon our leaders, especially those in the ruling party, to provide the necessary leadership that will reunite the country. As we have stated before, the August 11, 2016 elections, left the country deeply divided, a fact that has been acknowledged by President Edgar Lungu.

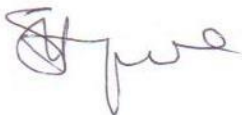
It is also sad to note that while Zambia celebrates political independence, the country is not yet economically independent. Zambians are still yoked in economic bondage as evidenced by the high levels of unemployment and high cost of living. Poverty levels in Zambia are estimated at 60% female headed households accounting for 62.1 %. The maternal mortality is still unacceptably high at 398 deaths per 100,000 live births while the infant mortality at 45 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively. Employment in the agriculture area is estimated at 55.81% with women accounting for 79.57%. Despite agriculture employing the majority of the population, the sector is hampered from growth by poor agricultural marketing policies, late delivery of farming inputs and lack of statistical data to determine who is benefiting from the subsidized farming implements. Girl child education is still hampered with teen pregnancies and early child marriages. According to UNESCO (2005), Zambia is estimated to have 11.80 % primary school dropouts. The national drop out rate for grades 1-9 in 2005 stood at 2.36 %.

With the foregoing, we demand that Governments in Africa stop the rhetorical promises to end poverty by taking concrete measures in ending this dehumanizing vice through equitable distribution of the national resources by ensuring development is taken to all corners of our countries and ensuring balance power with representation from both women and men in politics, economics and all social structures.

Further, let us, as a people, liberate ourselves from the bonds that enslave our society such as harmful traditional practices and Gender Based Violence.

Let us, as Zambians, experience the full meaning of African freedom.

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for/NGOCC



Sara H. Longwe
CHAIRPERSON