



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS COALITION

*P.O BOX 5132, LILONGWE 3*

19<sup>th</sup> September, 2018

The Chief Secretary  
Office of the President and Cabinet  
Private Bag 301  
Capital City  
Lilongwe 3

**ATTENTION MR Loyd Muhara**

**CC:** Mr Cliff K. Chiunda

Dear Sir,

### **CSOS DISSATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT'S CALLS FOR DIALOGUE**

We write to express deepening dissatisfaction with government's response to the dialogue scheduled for today, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018. HRDC has noted with great concern that government has chosen to undermine the seriousness of the matter using half-hearted calls for dialogue to frustrate our preparations for mass demonstrations slated for September 21, 2018.

Furthermore, Government has ignored terms of engagement proposed by HRDC by offering vague assurances that do not offer any hopeful prospects for fruitful dialogue. We strongly believe that Government has a hidden agenda to sabotage and derail our planned nationwide demonstrations against a culture of corruption and impunity, which will go ahead on Friday, 21 September, 2018

Our parameters for dialogue were clear.

In line with our unwavering demands for transparency and accountability, we requested the following senior government officials to be part of the dialogue for a purpose:

- i) The Head of State, His Excellency, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika
- ii) The Minister of Finance Goodall Gondwe
- iii) Minister of Information and Technology, Mr. Nicholas Dausi
- iv) Chief Secretary to the Government, Mr. Lloyd Muhara
- v) Attorney General, Mr. Charles Mhango
- vi) Inspector General of Malawi Police Service
- vii) Director Generals of ACB, MACRA, MERA, MBC
- viii) Chief Executive Officers of ADMARC, ESCOM, TEVETA

Surprisingly, government has opted to make vague reference to an unspecified ensemble of the so-called senior government earmarked to be on the dialogue table when outstanding and emerging public concerns are tabled for dialogue. This is not only unsatisfactory and contrary to our proposed terms and conditions but also a signal of a culture of impunity and secrecy which have necessitated the nationwide demonstrations on Friday. The motive behind the government response preventing Senior Officers who are decision-makers is questionable.

Contrary to what the Presidential Advisor on NGOs said in *The Nation* newspaper today, the HRDC holds and maintains that requesting the presence of the President, Cabinet Ministers and relevant senior Government officials to be part of the dialogue is not asking for too much, for these duty-bearers ought to account to Malawians to whom they owe their positions and allegiance.

Therefore, please be informed that HRDC cannot have a dialogue without the presence of the aforementioned Government officials.

The belated calls for dialogue and overzealous propaganda trivialising this process have led us to the conclusion that the government is simply playing games with us as they continue taking the suffering and voices of Malawians for granted.

Is it asking for too much when citizens who are employers are demanding to meet their servants? This attitude towards demands for transparency, accountability and rule of law does not assure any Malawian of prospects of fruitful contact and dialogue with the Government, even though we know that it was not genuine.

We wonder why It took government 150 days to think about having a dialogue with citizens when it is just 3 days to demonstrations.

We would like to notify you that we think that you are taking us for granted and we do not have time for political games when Malawians are suffering.

Through this statement, we would like to inform government that HRDC will not engage in dialogue until such a time the President, Ministers and the senior government officials are available to engage the citizens.

Last but not least, we would like to remind you that we are expecting our President, Prof. Mutharika to receive the Peoples' PETITION on Friday at Capital Hill during the demonstrations.

**Sincerely Yours,**

**Timothy Mtambo**  
National HRDC Chair

**Giff Trapence**  
National HRDC Vice Chair

**Happy Mhango**  
Northern Region HRDC Chair

**Billy Mayaya**  
Central Region HRDC Chair

**Masauko Thawe**  
Southern Region HRDC Chair

**Madalitso Banda**  
Eastern Region HRDC Chair