



Box 2340, Lilongwe

IN RESPONSE TO THE MISGUIDED JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM ON GOVERNANCE WILD ALLEGATIONS: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

1. Introduction

The Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) takes this opportunity to set the record straight on a myriad of issues as raised in statement issued by The Joint Civil Society Platform on Governance statement. We do not usually belabour ourselves in fighting mercenary institutions and individuals masquerading as civil society organizations, but we find the allegations levelled against us not only baseless, unfounded and disturbing and malicious but also defamatory and libelous hence the need for us put issues in perspective. To say the least, the content of their statement is not only ridiculous but outright false and laughable. To this end we belabour to highlight the following

2. Mutharika's Incompetent Commission of Inquiry

We still maintain that the Commission of Inquiry as set by the State President is just a ploy to hoodwink Malawians into thinking that government is seriously addressing the national tragedy that is abduction and killings of persons with albinism in Malawi. Some individuals were suspiciously removed from the commission when they had already announced their nominations. We are not afraid to tell the President that the commission lacks necessary technical capabilities to lead the process of establishing the truth behind the killings of persons with albinism. We wish to remind Malawians that we still vehemently protest the composition of the commission as we believe some commissioners do not have the capacity and are clueless on how to probe the nature and scope of issues of persons with albinism. We continue to express concern that the alleged group has not taken on board recommendations HRDC gave changing the composition of the commission of inquiry. We therefore view this as a lost opportunity to establish the truth. As HRDC, we are not surprised that the Joint Civil Society Platform on Governance turns a blind eye to our concerns and praises government for parading failure to deal with the abduction and killings of persons with albinism. Instead of questioning the legality of the commission, the grouping has resorted to mud sliding and propaganda.

3. Association of Persons with Albinism Vigils

We categorically condemn baseless allegations that HRDC hijacked APAM's vigil and pocketed money from UTM Leaders. These allegations are rubbish as they are insensitive to the current plight being faced by People With Albinism and defamatory with the intent of assassinating the character of HRDC's leadership. We wish to challenge these baseless and foolish allegations. Our expectation is that government is the primary duty bearer in protecting the human rights of persons with albinism but astonishingly, the same government is at the forefront of violating them. This must be the primary concern of every Malawian rather than diverting the issue by levelling stupid allegations at the HRDC leadership. We challenge the group to provide evidence of these allegations as we are ready to face them in court.

4. Allegations on Rigging elections and attacks on religious groupings and Opposition

The other allegation regarding rigging claims lack seriousness and understanding of how elections are run. Allegations levelled against religious groups and opposition leaders are simply a ploy to divert the attention of Malawians from the Democratic Progressive Party Government's actions to frustrate the electoral process. It is ludicrous that the so called Joint platform fails to understand electoral dynamics to the extent that they cannot gather facts simply reinforcing its stupidity.

Furthermore, baseless attacks on the leader of opposition as well as the leader of HRDC are a direct attack to the collective efforts being made by the opposition, citizens and civil society in holding the government accountable. The DPP led government is making desperate attempts to muzzle civic and political space knowing full well that it has failed to deliver on its election promises. We at HRDC will continue to criticise President Mutharika's regime for its poor governance. We are aware that the DPP is spending sleepless nights resorting to tactics aimed at rigging the 2019 elections. We therefore want to caution DPP propagandists that if they continue spreading baseless allegations against HRDC, we shall resort to legal action based on the defamatory statements directed at the leadership of HRDC.

5. Arrest Honourable Dausi

We call upon the Homeland Security Minister Nicholas Dausi to clear his name on allegations that he is responsible for the torching of a warehouse which held amongst other things ballots for a vote recount. We believe the allegations made by the Vice President as serious and we call upon relevant authorities to arrest Mr Dausi so that he can answer these allegations.

6. Failure of DPP candidate to sign peace accord

We would like to congratulate the other presidential candidates for committing themselves to a peaceful and fair general election, free from intimidation and violence. We are disappointed that DPP party candidate President Peter Mutharika has refused to sign this important accord that is essential to safeguarding democratic principles and ensuring free, safe, and fair elections for all Malawians. No wonder DPP is known as a violent party among many Malawians. The failure to

sign the accord is a lost opportunity for the party to clear this image from people's minds.

7. Failure to release British investigators' report on the death of Njaunju

HRDC is shocked that the government, through the Ministry of Justice, has been hiding the report on the death of Njaunju. The report was finalized and submitted to government some months ago, yet they have hidden it from Malawians, who deserve to know who killed Njaunju. We ask: Why is the government hiding this important report from citizens? Why is the government not coming forth to use this report to prosecute and arrest those implicated?

8. Death of Buleya

Malawians are still awaiting the arrest of those police officers who were involved in the killing of Buleya. The autopsy report was clear that Mr. Buleya was brutally killed while in his police cell. We are worried about the conflict of interest that deters the police from essentially investigating themselves. This is a clear case where the police leadership should be aware of who was on duty when this unfortunate event occurred.

9. Our Demands

We demand

- The Joint CSO platform to retract assertions made through their statement within 10 days or else HRDC will seek legal action
- The immediate arrest of Nicholas Dausi so that allegations of his involvement in the torching of the MEC warehouse are established
- DPP government must immediately stop sponsoring NGOs to attack well meaning and credible NGOs who are demanding accountability from the government
- The Commission of inquiry probing the abduction and killing of Persons with Albinism be dissolved forthwith
- The Government publicly release the report regarding Njaunju death within five (5) days, failing which HRDC will utilize the Access to Information Law to force the release of this report
- We demand the arrest of police officers linked to the killing of Mr. Buleya Lule
- DPP led government to stop linking HRDC to political parties since it an independent Organization that does not incline to cheap political influence and affiliation

We take this opportunity to once again remind DPP led government that no amount of intimidation or threats will deter us from acting within our mandate to protect the hard-won democracy we enjoy in this country.

Signed By

Timothy Mtambo

**HRDC National Chair
Chair**

Gift Trapence

HRDC National Vice

Endorsed By

Billy Mayaya - HRDC Central Region Chair

Madalitso Banda - HRDC Eastern Region Chair

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