



# WOZA MOYA

WOMEN OF ZIMBABWE ARISE (WOZA) SEPTEMBER 2010  
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WOZA means 'Come forward'. By women for women and with women, across race, colour, creed, class or political persuasion. Empowering women to be courageous, caring, committed and in communication with their communities.



## *21 September – International Day of Peace Zimbabweans need peace – community safety is our right*

For many years now, Zimbabweans have not known the meaning of the word - PEACE. We know too well the word VIOLENCE because it is part of our daily lives. Since we changed to the US dollar last year, crime has got worse and violence in our homes also increased. Zimbabweans are peace-loving people, but we no longer can feel safe in our homes and in our communities. Women are particularly vulnerable. We should be able to look to the Zimbabwe Republic Police to make us feel safe. Instead some police officers make us feel even more unsafe. Whilst it is important for us to be responsible for our own safety, **on this International Day of Peace, WOZA calls on the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to work together more professionally with citizens so that we can see, feel and enjoy peace and make our communities a safe place for everyone.**

Because WOZA members have been worried about the performance and professionalism of our police officers, we decided to study their behavior for four months in Bulawayo and Harare. What we saw was shocking.

WOZA members observed police officers misbehaving in the following ways:

- Shamelessly beating suspects in public.
- Harassing vendors and taking their goods for their own use, without any receipting.
- Not wearing proper uniforms - many do not wear their names and police identification numbers, making it difficult to identify them.
- Demanding and accepting bribes, both in public and at police stations.
- Drinking in uniform in public and sometimes they even stop to drink while escorting suspects who will be under arrest.
- Making people under arrest 'run' in front of their motor bikes and/or horses to the police station.
- In Bulawayo, many police officers refuse to respond to citizens' complaints if they speak in the Ndebele language and insisting they speak in Shona.

75% of people whose rights were violated during arrest reported damages, injuries and or loss of property, particularly around Western Commonage in Bulawayo and Kuwadzana in Harare. These incidents are common when one is arrested by the plain-clothed and municipal police.

Police officers asking for bribes is an everyday problem for those who have tried and failed to get vending licences. People caught public drinking or for public nuisance and those accused of theft are quickly told to pay bribes. 74% of the people we interviewed who were arrested for illegal vending and public drinking were asked to pay bribes ranging from US\$ 5 to US\$ 20 in Bulawayo and Harare. All types of police, uniformed, plain-clothed police and municipal, were involved in asking for bribes in both cities.

We noticed the speed with which the police respond depends on how big the crime or the bribe. Smaller common crimes like theft and assault still cause us a lot of stress but they do not respond efficiently. **So must we suffer serious crimes like rape for them to do their job?** They do not treat cases and suspects equally – all crimes should be investigated properly.

Proper arrest protocols are not followed. This was noted by the number of people who were arrested, detained and released without a charge, or paid a bribe to be released. The police no longer **investigate to arrest** but they **arrest to investigate** which is a clear violation of human rights and the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'.

It was also obvious that both the soliciting of bribes and illegal confiscation of vendors goods increased from the middle to end of the month, suggesting that police officers use these violations to supplement their income. Many people interviewed also believe that paying police is now normal. Many people considered it necessary to pay a bribe to get a service with regard to a complaint/crime or to avoid being arrested.

## Conclusion

The investigations done during the four months is just a small part of what is happening and are a reflection of a poor relationship between police and the community. It is clear that police officers routinely violate human rights and do not follow proper protocols of arrest and detention. In this regard, they are not following the Zimbabwe Police Act, the ZRP Service Charter and ZRP Service Standards as well as regional and international standards and instruments.

It is also clear that they choose which cases need proper police procedure and some they do not give professional attention, or they just chase the complainant away. The result is that many people do not trust the police. This is sad. We think there are still professional police officers in Zimbabwe. They are our brothers and sisters, our friends and our neighbours. The solution is simple. We need a professional police service that works hand in hand with community members to promote community safety. If we can work together to fight crime, our homes will be safer and we will build more trust which means criminals cannot take advantage that police do not react.

WOZA calls upon our brothers and sisters in the **Zimbabwe Republic Police** to:

- Put into practice your Service Charter and Service Standards – in particular the promise to carry out your duties diligently, courteously, without fear or favour, with honesty and integrity, within the limits of the law and with due respect for human rights.
- Stop indiscriminate arrests and arresting to investigate. By law, people are innocent until proven guilty. You should be investigating crime before arresting.
- Remember that we, the citizens of Zimbabwe, are not your enemy. We are your brothers and sisters and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Stop harassment and illegal confiscation of vendors' goods. They are only trying to make a living in these difficult times.
- Stop drinking beer in public.
- Provide swift and proper service procedures in your charge office.
- Conduct proper investigations or follow up of reports of crimes. Stop demanding bribes before a case can be reported and/or investigated
- Stop the improper use of neighbourhood watch. They should patrol in the company of a trained police officer.
- Allow members of the public to use their own language when interacting with police officers. Suspects have the right to be informed of the charges against them in a language that they understand.
- Investigate and convict all militia conducting terror campaigns – harassing and intimidating people.
- Abductions must be investigated as any other crime.

WOZA calls upon the **Ministers of Home Affairs** and the **Commissioner of Police** to:

- Ensure that police behave in a non-partisan manner – we want a police service NOT a police force.
- Implement the Harare Resolution on the Southern African Regional Police Chief Co-operation Organisation (SARPCCO) Code of Conduct for Police Officials with immediate effect.
- Ensure all police officers adhere to protocols for arrest procedures and treatment of suspects and detainees.
- Adopt a zero tolerance strategy towards bribery and corruption. Police officers that solicit for bribes must be disciplined as outlined in the Police Act.
- Ensure that police officers receive a living wage so that they do not need to supplement their income through bribery.
- Police officers must also be provided with proper working conditions. Deal with inhumane degrading and inhabitable conditions in police.
- Provide more resources for police so that all forms of crime can be adequately dealt with.
- Enforce discipline amongst police officers – there must be respect for the uniform as outlined in the Police Act.
- Ensure that there is a transparent system of determining fines and the paying of fines so that it is clear to members of the public and police officers alike.
- Ensure that there clear and transparent mechanisms that members of the public can use if their rights have been violated by specific officers. Make these mechanisms public knowledge and encourage members of the public to report violations.
- All uniformed police officers should clearly display identification on their uniform so that rogue officers can be reported by members of the uniform. Plain-clothed officers should be able to show identification if asked by a member of the public.
- Implement community policing forums to re-establish trust amongst community members and the police and involve community members in identifying public safety concerns.
- Set up an independent Police Complaints Commission.
- Stop the selective application of Public Order and Security Act provisions under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act.

WOZA calls upon the **President, Prime Minister** and **SADC**, guarantors to the Global Political Agreement, to:

- Ensure that Article 12 (b) and Article 13 1(a) of the GPA are implemented with immediate effect.