



Human Rights Day 2023 - Press Release

21 March 2023

“Consolidating and Sustaining Human Rights Culture into the Future”.

South Africa, the month of March, is commemorated and celebrated as the “*National Human Rights Month*” to remind all who live in South Africa and across the globe about the sacrifices that accompanied the struggle for the attainment of democracy in South Africa. Human Rights Day on 21st March falls within this period. Historically, Human Rights Day commemoration, emanated from the 21st March 1960 protest when the communities of Sharpeville and Langa townships, embarked on a protest march against pass laws during the apartheid regime. The apartheid police shot and killed 69 protesters at Sharpeville, many of them were shot while fleeing. Many other people were killed in other parts of the country. The tragedy came to be known as the Sharpeville Massacre and it exposed the apartheid government’s deliberate violation of human rights to the world and in South Africa. Subsequently to that, the democratic South African government declared 21st March a “Human Rights Day” to commemorate and honour those who fought for our liberation and the rights we all enjoy today as enshrined in our constitution. The South African constitution is regarded as one of the most progressive in the world and the ultimate protector of our Human Rights, which were previously denied to the majority of the people under the apartheid regime.

To this note, CoRMSA, joins the rest of the country (South Africa) in commemorating and celebrating the Human Rights Day and encourages the government to underpin its commitment on the rights of everyone - the Bill of Rights- as enshrined in our Constitution. These rights include, the right to life and equality, human dignity, justice, freedom of movement and residence, language and culture. Having mentioned these rights, CoRMSA has noted the alarming numbers of media reports on cases related to racism, gender based violence and femicide, related intolerances and xenophobia. Recently, we have seen and witnessed the growing incidences of institutionalised xenophobia in our government health care facilities (clinics and hospitals) where access to health care is accessed and provided based on one’s nationality status. These practices violate and impede on the asylum seekers, refugees and migrants’ right to health care provisions. Additionally, lack of access to documentations has become a major hindrance in the lives of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. This includes the pending discontinuation of the Zimbabwe Exception Permit (ZEP) which violates child right to a name and a nationality, as stipulated in **Section 28 of the Constitution**. This further subjects ZEP holders to even more vulnerability, with limited access to basic services such as healthcare, education and social security services. All these social ill actions should be engaged and addressed.

In light of above, CoRMSA calls upon the government of South African and everyone who live within the South Africa borders and across to use this year’s Human Rights Month to protect and respect the human rights and dignity of everyone including asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in order to foster social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in our communities. We further call all Chapter 9 institutions to act upon their mandate to promote an inclusive and

equal socio-economic development and strengthen policies and mechanisms to curb racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all related intolerances as well as gender-based violence and femicide to protect everyone, regardless of nationality, documentation status or gender. In the same vein, CoRMSA calls the government to impose tough penalties on all perpetrators who violates the human rights of anyone. CoRMSA believes that all this will greatly contribute to the “**Consolidation and Sustainability of the Human Rights Culture into the Future**”.

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