HRDC STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL TURMOIL AND IMPASSE IN MALAWI: AN APPEAL FOR PEACE, JUSTICE, LOVE AND UNITY AMONG MALAWIANS

We at Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) express our profound sadness and concern over the political turmoil and impasse that has engulfed our country particularly the unfolding tragic pre and post elections events that have taken place in the most recent past in Malawi and strongly condemn any and all sorts of violence regardless from which sect of community they are perpetuated. As an organization that promotes peaceful assembly, the respect of the rule of law and peaceful coexistence among other rights, HRDC has learnt with great shock the death of a police officer who was allegedly killed by irate citizens on 8th October, 2019 at Nsundwe in Lilongwe. To the bereaved family, our hearts and spirit are with you and we join every Malawian and other colleagues alike in mourning his death especially that he died in line of duty serving this nation.

Further, HRDC is saddened recalling that this is not the first time that our men and women in uniform have lost their lives when their only crime has been to protect the same people who run havoc at them. Memories are still fresh of one officer who was killed in Thyolo when the former President Her Excellency Dr. Joyce Banda held a rally in that district. HRDC, therefore demands that the Malawi Police Service should, in a professional manner investigate this brutal and heinous criminal act and that those suspected to have committed this crime face fair trial leading to a logical conclusion of the case.

We publicly ask for a strong official presence of leadership at these moments that arises above party politics and conspicuously condemn violence of any nature without regard to the consideration of favoring any of its supporters when they are the known culprits of the same. We fault the State President for being a fiend of pronouncements and emphasizing on his victory of the 21st May 2019 Presidential Elections and his threats and intimidation against dissent opinions and not his resolve to dealing with the cause of violence in the country. It is our position to remind the State President that even in his insistence of victory in the 21st May 2019 Elections, he must hold himself as a president of all including those who did not vote for him and desist from pouring hate speech against them.

Furthermore, we implore on the leadership to work on rebuilding the lost trust of the Malawi Police Service by the people of Malawi due to over politicization of the service and in the same vein applaud
the professionalism of the Malawi Defense from where the Malawi Police Service must emulate and borrow a leaf.

We at HRDC strongly believe that the continued holding of office of the chairperson of MEC by Justice Dr. Jane Ansah exacerbates the current political turmoil and is one crucial issue that has brought the country into this political division as such the call to her resignation is our continued commitment. We also opine that the insincerity and irresponsible remarks of the State President over the political situation in the country averted to the International World through Aljazeera and related international media outlets is an addition of fuel to the political fire that is burning in Malawi as many Malawians were angered by the same.

**Going Forward:** We call for an end to the violence and push for accountability of all those involved and bring them to book viz:

- The armed attack and deadliest hacking of Dr. Billy Mayaya and 4 other demonstrators
- The killing of a police officer at Nsundwe.
- Death of Justine Phiri in Karonga
- Death of a child at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital due to suffocation as a result of tear gas
- Brutal attack by Police Officers of Mr. Walita Mkandawire a Human Rights Defender in Rumphi
- And all those responsible for looting and vandalizing people’s properties outside HRDC demonstrations.
- The petrol bombing at the chairperson of HRDC Mr. Timothy Mtambo’s house in Lilongwe and
- The deliberate attempt to set fire on the Vice Chairperson, Mr. Gift Trapence’s house in Lilongwe

We also recommend that the State President commissions a **Peace, Justice and Unity Task Force** comprising people with high integrity and moral ground in the Malawi society who would advise leadership on the matters of security and peace in the country and we implore that this be all encompassing and non-partisan. This taskforce should be accepted by all critical stakeholders especially political parties

We also demand that Police must immediately stop violence against citizens rather strive to start rebuilding their image to the public by way of discharging their duties with the professionalism that it requires.

We also demand and petition the **Human Rights Commission** and the **Prison Inspectorate** (constitutional bodies) to expeditiously inspect and avail themselves to the conditions of the remandees currently under detention in this political impasse be it at police stations or indeed at prisons for the same reason.

Lastly, we appeal to the International Community especially the European Union and its sister diplomatic missions in Malawi to intervene in the Malawi situation vis-à-vis the human rights violations especially the threats aimed at fettering and closing the civic space in Malawi and affecting
the right to freedom of assembly and demonstrate. Further we seek their condemnation on the attacks on human rights defenders.

Signed by:

Timothy Mtambo                        Gift Trapence
HRDC National Chairperson             HRDC Vice National Chairperson

Endorsed By:

Billy Mayaya - HRDC Central Region Chair
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