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Human Rights Commission

Head Office

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Press Statement

For Immediate Release

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COMMENDS PRESIDENT HAKAINDE HICHILEMA FOR PARDONING 943 INMATES UNDER HIS PREROGATIVE OF MERCY CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS IN COMMEMORATION OF THE AFRICA FREEDOM DAY-25TH MAY 2025

The Human Rights Commission commends President Hakainde Hichilema for pardoning a total of 943 inmates in exercise of his constitutional prerogative of mercy powers in commemoration of the Africa Freedom Day, which falls on 25th May of every year.

The pardoning of 882 male and 61 female inmates, including 10 elderly women and 10 mothers, from various correctional facilities across the country is a commendable gesture of compassion and respect for human rights, especially for the vulnerable individuals.

Incarcerated individuals are one of the most vulnerable groups of people due to deprivation of the right to liberty and living in extremely poor and inhumane conditions caused by historical and systemic inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding and a pervasive punitive justice system.

Therefore, the pardoning of the inmates by President Hichilema is a demonstration of the government's commitment to upholding a paradigm shift from a punitive to restorative justice, which prioritises human rights and dignity.

It should be noted that President Hichilema exercised the Presidential Prerogative of Mercy Powers under Article 97 of the Constitution of Zambia [Amendment] Act No. 2 of 2016 on behalf of the people of Zambia who have entrusted him with executive authority.

To this end, the Commission calls upon the pardoned ex-inmates not to betray the confidence and trust shown in them by the people of Zambia through the Presidential Pardon by falling into recidivism or re-offending society.

The pardoned individuals should appreciate the restoration of their right to liberty and dignity by leading exemplary lives of being law-abiding citizens and contributing to the overall well-being of society at large.

The inmates must use the technical and vocation skills which they acquired during their rehabilitation and correctional training to rebuild their lives and that of their families and community development, including promotion of public safety and order.

Further, the Commission is appealing to the family and community members to provide a conducive environment for successful re-integration of the Correctional Service Graduates by, among other measures, avoiding stigmatising and discriminating them but accepting them as reformed members of the human family.

Finally, the Commission wishes to take this opportunity to commend the Zambia Correctional Service, various Faith-Based Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, the Private Sector and individuals for their continued guidance and counselling services, material, financial and spiritual support to inmates across the country in order to uphold their inherent rights and dignity as human beings.

Mweelwa Muleya

Spokesperson/Director-Education, Training and Advocacy

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION