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Human Rights Commission

Head Office

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PRESS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**

CONDEMNATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES AND CALL FOR IMMEDIATE PROSECUTION OF KNOWN PERPETRATORS

The Human Rights Commission strongly condemns the harassment and physical attacks against some independent parliamentary candidates during the filing of nominations in selected districts. Whilst the Zambia Police Service has reportedly arrested some suspects, the Commission is calling for speedy prosecution of all those responsible.

The viral video showing former Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Mr. Gary Nkombo, being harassed and physically attacked by visibly identifiable individuals as he sought to file his nomination as an independent candidate for Mazabuka Central Constituency is deeply disturbing and wholly unacceptable. Political violence of this nature is not only criminal conduct, but also a direct violation of fundamental human rights, including the rights to personal security, dignity, equality before the law, freedom of association, and the right to participate in public affairs.

The Commission notes with grave concern that the incident in Mazabuka occurred within the nomination centre and in the presence of law enforcement officers as seen in the viral video. In the circumstances, the Commission is of the firm belief that there should be no difficulty in identifying, apprehending and prosecuting the well-known perpetrators.

Further, the Commission condemns all similar acts of violence and intimidation reported in Chavuma District in North-Western Province and Choma District in

Southern Province, where independent candidates were reportedly obstructed in the course of lodging their nomination papers. Such reprehensible acts undermine the constitutional and democratic rights of all citizens to freely participate in governance, whether as candidates, supporters or voters. Elections must be a platform for the peaceful exercise of democratic choice, not a theatre of violence, intimidation and exclusion.

The Commission is particularly concerned that these acts of intra political party violence create a climate of fear that discourages participation by vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women, persons with disabilities, youths, and other individuals who may already be facing structural barriers to political participation. If violence and intimidation are allowed to take root in the electoral process, many capable citizens will be deterred from seeking public office or participating meaningfully in democratic processes out of fear for their safety and dignity. This will undermine efforts to promote inclusive participation and weaken the established democratic foundations in the Republic of Zambia.

Political competition must never be pursued through violence, coercion or threats. There is an urgent need for the United Party for National Development (UPND) leadership to send a clear and unequivocal message that political violence has no place in a democratic society, and that such lawlessness will attract firm and impartial legal consequences, regardless of the identity or political affiliation of the perpetrators.

The Commission therefore calls upon the Zambia Police Service and other relevant law enforcement and prosecutorial authorities to act swiftly, professionally and impartially to ensure accountability in all reported cases of political violence. Failure to do so risks fostering a culture of impunity that may embolden further violations as the country approaches the 13th August 2026 General Elections.

The Human Rights Commission will continue to closely monitor the conduct of all stakeholders, including institutions within the justice delivery sector, in order to promote a peaceful, inclusive and rights-respecting electoral environment necessary for the holding of free, fair and credible elections.

(Original Signed)

Dr Pamela Towela Sambo

**CHAIRPERSON
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**