3 June 2019

Press Statement

ARBITRARY ARRESTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, AN INFRINGEMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT) is extremely dismayed by the arbitrary arrest and detention of its volunteer Farirai Gumbonzvanda and other six human rights defenders on serious charges of subversion of a duly elected government.

Rozaria Memorial Trust takes offence in the continued characterisation as a "shadowy organisation" by The Herald newspaper’s article of 3 June 2019, titled, “CANVAS: New insights into subversion emerge”, which is defamatory to our character and integrity. The Herald is continuing with these false and malicious statements despite not ever having sought a comment from RMT, and a statement from RMT setting the record straight.

RMT is a registered organisation according to the laws of Zimbabwe, (MA1050/2007), headquartered in Murewa and with activities in Shamva District. Our work has always been open and transparent with involvement and information sharing with the relevant government officials at all times. We submit periodic reports through the District Administrator’s office and relevant sectoral ministries. Our finances are audited and it is open to public scrutiny.

The Trust is a non-profit, non-political and non-partisan organisation. Our work on human rights centres on social and economic rights, improving opportunities for women and girls in rural communities especially in health and education, and offering leadership training and mentorship to girls. The organisation has no professional relationship or linkages with the other human rights defender organisations in its years of operation, though RMT respects and values their human rights work and mandates.

Farirai Gumbonzvanda, who is the daughter to the Founder and Chief Executive Officer, is a volunteer for Rozaria Memorial Trust. Farirai has dedicated years of her life to working with other girls and supporting their social empowerment activities. We continue to value opportunities for girls and young people to build their skills and develop their knowledge to enable their work. As an organisation, we were therefore pleased to know she had applied and received a scholarship to attend a workshop on non-violent engagement in Maldives, though such participation was in her personal capacity.

We are deeply concerned with the erosion of the freedom of participation, association and assembly that characterise the allegations and charges facing Farirai Gumbonzvanda and her co-accused. We request that justice be done. We further request The Herald to retract its statement defining Rozaria Memorial Trust as a "shadowy organisation" with subversive intentions. We have instructed our lawyers to review the matter and advise us on the appropriate recourse.

We want to thank the hundreds of people in Zimbabwe and across the world who are standing with Farirai and other human rights defenders.

About Rozaria Memorial Trust:
RMT is a registered organisation under the laws of Zimbabwe, (MA1050/2007) working at community levels and equally engaged in national, regional and global processes. Its main mission is to create opportunities and unleash the potential of young women and girls through education, health and entrepreneurship.

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