President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

H.E Emmerson Mnangagwa

Office of the President, Munhumutapa Building

Samora Machel Avenue, Private Bag 7700

Causeway

Harare

Zimbabwe

**More than 160 activists, including JAMESON TIMBA (Citizens Coalition for Change) and ROBSON CHERE (ARTUZ)**

His Excellency,

I am writing to express my grave concerns regarding the worrying trend of suppression of civic space, arrests of opposition members, human rights defenders and activists, and threats against dissenting views in Zimbabwe ahead of the 44th Ordinary Summit of Heads State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), scheduled to take place on 17 August in Harare, Zimbabwe. This crackdown includes the arbitrary detention of approximately 160 people, comprising of members of the opposition, activists and human rights defenders, some of whom have allegedly been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

The arrest and arbitrary detention of the activists is deeply concerning and a violation of Zimbabwe’s constitutional and international human rights obligations including under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which the country is a state party. I am concerned about the misuse of the criminal justice system as a tool to harass and intimidate protesters, activists and those with dissenting views.

I urge you and your government to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all those – including the 76 members of the Citizens Coalition for Change, like Jameson Timba –detained for exercising their rights in the recent crackdown on civic space and drop all charges against them as they are detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. I also strongly urge you to ensure Robson Chere, pending his release, is granted urgent medical attention; and ensure an effective investigation into his torture. As you assume the position of SADC Chairperson, I also urge you and the authorities to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of everyone in the country, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Yours sincerely,