

*Speaker of Parliament  
Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda  
Parliament of Zimbabwe  
Kwame Nkrumah & 3rd Street  
Box CY 298 Causeway  
Harare  
Zimbabwe*

April 2024

Dear Hon. Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda,

On 1 March, the Zimbabwean government gazetted the Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) Amendment Bill of 2024, and it was introduced immediately in parliament for the first reading. I am therefore writing to express my concern about the PVO Amendment Bill and its implications to the work of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the rights to freedom of expression and association in Zimbabwe.

In November 2021, the authorities first gazetted the Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) Amendment Bill HB 10 of 2021. The government cited that the bill was to curb money-laundering and financing of terrorism and ensure that NGOs do not undertake political lobbying. The government justified the amendments made to the existing Private Voluntary Organisation Act on the grounds that they were implementing the Financial Action Task Force's asks, in regard to curbing money laundering and financing terrorism. It is concerning that parliament has disregarded inputs from the public during parliamentary public hearings in 2022 which revealed that many people were against the enactment of the Bill. In February 2023, the Bill was passed by both the National Assembly and Senate and was submitted to the president for signing. However, in September 2023, it was reported that the President had refused to sign the Bill and sent it back to parliament with reservations.

If signed into law, the 2024 PVO Amendment Bill would impose severe restrictions on the important work of civil society organizations in Zimbabwe. Currently, some provisions in the Bill give significant powers to the Minister and Registrar which could be used to interfere with the independence and operations of NGOs. The Bill must be dropped or amended so as to bring it in line with Zimbabwe's human rights obligations.

I urge you to conduct a genuine public consultation and to remove any clauses in the PVO Amendment Bill 2024 that undermines the rights to freedom of association, freedom of expression and the work of civil society organizations. I also urge you to ensure that consideration within this process is given to the recommendations made by civil society organizations during the consultation process. Additionally, the authorities must conduct a thorough assessment of laws enacted in the past five years and repeal/ amend provisions that are inconsistent with the Zimbabwe's constitution and international human rights treaties to which the country is a state party.

Yours sincerely,