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

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Dear Hon. Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda,

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

If signed into law, the 2024 PVO Amendment Bill will impose severe restrictions on the important work of NGOs in Zimbabwe. The bill will violate human rights including the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and association, as all NGOs will be compelled to register as PVOs, and NGOs that may be denied registration will not be able to continue with their operations; this includes NGOs that have already been operating as trusts and common law universitas.

The Bill also gives significant powers to the Minister and Registrar, which can be used to interfere with the operations and independence of NGOs. The Minister can remove executive committees and board members of NGOs and replace them with interim trustees who are empowered to make significant decisions which can affect the operations and the existence of organisations. The Registrar at the direction of the Minister is also empowered to order the termination of NGO employees’ contracts of employment, in violation of national labour laws. The Bill further introduces civil and criminal penalties which can be imposed against NGO board members, officers and employees. Such penalties will discourage people from associating with NGOs as they fear that some of the vague provisions of this law may be used against them.

**I therefore urge Parliament to urgently repeal the provisions in the 2024 Private Voluntary Organization Amendment Bill that violate the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and the work of non-governmental organizations, and ensure that such provisions are removed or amended and brought in line with the country’s constitutional and international human rights obligations and commitments. I urge you to ensure genuine public consultations are conducted which take into account the views of the people. I further urge you to engage NGOs and ensure that their views and feedback are taken into consideration in the process, especially as they would be significantly affected by this Bill if passed into law.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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