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Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA) makes inroads in strengthening a stronger voice for accountable human rights response in South Africa.

HURISA Human Rights Forum was identified during the launch of the National Report on the 25th Anniversary of human rights and democracy in South Africa, facilitated by HURISA on 7th August 2019 at Parktonian Hotel in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

This Human Rights Forum was provoked by the communities' desperation for action beyond dialogue and will serve as a new vehicle to amplify Voices from the ground in keeping communities abreast and engaged on the human rights crisis facing the country and as well as contributing solutions to the crisis, *to move forward from promise to delivery*.

With this, a new paradigm shift is realised for holding government and communities accountable to human rights in the country. The launch of the national report brought together a diverse grouping of community activists from nine provinces of the country which includes human rights defenders, journalists, academicians, cultural and religious activists, some local municipalities and representatives from provincial government departments.

It was noted that while South Africa's Constitutional framework is hailed as a beacon of hope and globally acclaimed as a progressive human rights instrument, unfortunately implementation has been thwarted by among others, extreme lack of political will displayed in the flagrant corruption in state institutions, constant breaches of public duties, increasing crime levels, brutal violence and gender based violence.

As for the current and past human rights violations that grapple the country, especially the backlog on service delivery, violation of freedom of association, assembly and expression including the lack of implementation of basic fundamental rights and irregular compliance with national, regional and international human rights obligations have resulted in violent protests that dubbed South Africa as a violent society.

The collapse of state institutions, break down of the rule of law and unaccountable leadership have sparked violent service delivery and the current anarchy in our society including uncontrollable crime. While the scourge of violence against women, children and other vulnerable groups such as People with Albinism, People with Disability, Indigenous Group and Refugees requires concrete plan of action and supportive and competent law enforcement. In addition, substance abuse and crime amongst youth needs urgent attention in efforts to build South Africa's future.

Unfortunately this bad picture of human rights mostly affects the poor who live in rural communities and whose situation remain unchanged. It is concerning that the suffering of the poor has been increased by the very leaders they have voted in power as many of them wonder why their situation remains unchanged even in the new human rights and democratic dispensation.

For example, many wonder why they continue to use pits toilets, why should children continue to walk long distances to school, and taught in inhuman and degrading school environment characterised by mud and dilapidated schools buildings and as well as the mushrooming of informal settlements. They question the ruling party for the existence of extreme gaps of inequality between the haves and have not, including a few privileged enjoying human rights and democracy in the country.

The political deployments, nepotism, violent political intolerance, exoneration of the perpetrators of human rights violations disregard commitment to tackle the past economic and social injustices. This picture negates the hard earned aspiration of a democratic country based on human dignity and freedom. It also attributes negatively on South Africa's nascent human rights and democratic dispensation.

South Africa as world leader and non-permanent member of the United Nation's Security Council for the next two years calls for renewed commitment to upholding human rights obligation for upliftment of the poor and disadvantaged. This includes installation of competent and value based leadership at all spheres of governance and community. Furthermore, South Africa's chairship to the African Union is positive and will need to maintain a good example of human rights and democracy for Africa's upliftment and to be innovative towards achievement of the African Union Agenda 2063.

A High Level Panel is planned for 10 September 2019, where Retired Justice Richard Goldstone will be in conversation with key legal fraternal and civil society in search of a solution to the worrying state of human rights in South Africa.

For more information contact

Lindiwe Khoza

HURISA Communication and Advocacy

lindiwe@hurisa.org.za

Mobile 063 319 8346