



SECOND SESSION-TENTH PARLIAMENT

**FIRST REPORT OF THE JOINT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE,
LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THEMATIC
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

**ON
THE STATE OF PRISONS IN ZIMBABWE**

S. C. 22, 2025

ORDER OF APPOINTMENT: SENATE STANDING ORDER NO. 17

1. At the commencement of every session, there shall be Committees designated according to such government policy areas as the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders may deem fit.
2. Each Thematic Committee must be known by the theme determined for it by the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders.

ORDER OF APPOINTMENT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY STANDING ORDER NO. 18

1. At the commencement of every session, there must be as many committees to be designated according to government portfolios as the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders may deem fit.
2. Each select committee must be known by the portfolio determined for it by the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THEMATIC COMMITTEES: STANDING ORDER NO. 20

Subject to these Standing Orders a Thematic Committee shall:

Examine government policies that fall under or relate to the designated theme or themes and other matters falling under their jurisdiction as the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders may determine.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES: STANDING ORDER NO. 21

Subject to these Standing Orders, a Portfolio Committee must -

- (a) examine expenditure administration and policy of government departments and other matters falling under their jurisdictions as Parliament may, by resolution determine;
- b) consider and deal with all Bills and Statutory Instruments or other matters which are referred to it by or under a resolution of the House or by the Speaker;
- c) consider or deal with an appropriation or money Bill or any aspect of an appropriation or money Bill referred to it by these Standing Orders or by or under resolution of this House; and
- d) monitor, investigate, inquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, policy or any other matter it may consider relevant to

- the government department falling within the category of affairs assigned to it, and may for that purpose consult and liaise with such department;
- e) consider or deal with all international treaties, relevant to it, which are from time to time negotiated, entered into or agreed upon within four weeks of tabling

MADAM PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT

On Wednesday, 8 October 2024, Madam President announced that the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders had appointed the following Members to serve on the Thematic Committee on Human Rights:

Hon. Sen. Chief Charumbira; Hon. Sen. Chief Chitanga, Hon. Sen. B. Chinyanga, Hon. Sen. Chief Masendu, Hon. Sen. Chief Matupula, Hon. Sen. Chief Nyangazonke, Hon. Sen. Chief Ngezi, Hon. Sen. Chief Ngungumbane, Hon. Sen. J. C. Gatora, Hon. Sen. E. Kambizi, Hon. Sen. M. Mbohwa, Hon. Sen. N. Mlotshwa, Hon. Sen. G. Mumpande, Hon. Sen. P. Mupfumira, Hon. Sen. T. V. Muzenda, Hon. Sen. S. Ndebele, Hon. Sen. C. Ndlovu, Hon. Sen. K. Phulu, Hon. Sen. A. Rungani, Hon. Sen. A. Shiri, Hon. Sen. B. Tsomondo, Hon. Sen. I. Zindi.

Sen. Mavenyengwa R. to be the Chairperson.

MR. SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

On Tuesday, 8 October 2024, the Hon. Speaker informed the House that in order to expedite the work of Parliament, all Committees of the First Session of the Tenth Parliament would continue to operate pending the appointment of new Committees by the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders. The following were Members of the Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs:

Hon. W. Chikombo, Hon. T. Chikomo, Hon. A. Gumbo, Hon. C. Kangausaru, Hon. T. D. Malinganiso, Hon. E. Masuku, Hon. J. Matambo, Hon. S. Matema, Hon. C. Matewu, Hon. Dr. E. Mutodi, Hon. M. Mavhunga, Hon. J. Mpasi, Hon. T. Mudowo, Hon. M. Mureri, Hon. P. Mutseyami, Hon. R. Musiyiwa, Hon. I. Ndudzo, Hon. S. Ngwenya, Hon. M. Nkomo, Hon. J. Samkange, Hon. E. Shiryedenga, Hon. Tsitsi Zhou, Hon. E. Zvobgo

Hon. Dr. E. Mutodi to be Chairperson

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The state of prisons remains a critical concern worldwide. With a growing incarcerated population, issues such as overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation programmes and inadequate facilities continue to negatively impact on the effectiveness of correctional systems. Addressing these challenges require a comprehensive approach that balances public safety, human rights, and the need for systemic reforms. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service is a department in the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs which is mandated to protect society from criminals through the incarceration and rehabilitation of convicted persons and administer Prisons and Correctional facilities.
- 1.2 The Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Thematic Committee on Human Rights resolved to conduct an enquiry into the State of Prisons in Zimbabwe. The enquiry delved into the current conditions within Zimbabwean prisons. This report seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities present within the Zimbabwean correctional system as it strives towards adherence to human rights standards.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF ENQUIRY

- 2.1 The key objectives of the enquiry were:
- a) To assess the legal and policy frameworks that provide for the administration of prisons;
 - b) To assess the current conditions within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services;
 - c) To evaluate the level of human rights compliance within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services;
 - d) To appreciate the challenges being faced by the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services; and
 - e) To examine levels of productivity and value addition within prisons' agricultural enterprises.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Committee used the following methods in conducting the enquiry:

- a) Oral evidence meeting with the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs;
- b) Oral evidence meeting with the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services;
- c) Fact-finding visits to selected prison facilities across the country's ten provinces; and
- d) A half-day workshop on the legal and policy frameworks for the management of prisons.

4.0 COMMITTEE FINDINGS

4.1 Legal and Policy Frameworks on the Management of Prisons

4.1.1 The Constitution of Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service is established in terms of Section 227 of the Constitution with a specific mandate to incarcerate, rehabilitate and reintegrate convicted criminals and any other inmates detained lawfully. Section 50 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe outlines the rights of arrested and detained persons. Arrested and detained persons are allowed to consult, in private, with a legal practitioner and a medical practitioner of their choice at their own expense. The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs officials submitted that in practice, this right is respected and facilitated the moment such a request is made by an inmate. They explained that the same provision also affords a person who is detained, to be treated humanely and with respect for their inherent dignity, which sets a human rights standard that governs how prison institutions conduct themselves. In addition, Section 86 of the Constitution clearly states that the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or humiliating treatment or punishment must not be restricted, even though it permits the limiting of some rights. Thus there is never an excuse for mistreatment or overuse of force in prison administration.

4.1.2 Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (CPEA)

The above-mentioned Act empowers the courts to postpone trials, but importantly, no postponement exceeding 14 days can be ordered without the consent of the accused. This ensures that inmates are not held indefinitely without trial. The Act also guarantees every accused person the right to apply for bail pending trial. Furthermore, should the pre-trial detention become unreasonably prolonged, an inmate is entitled to

apply for removal from remand. These provisions protect inmates from arbitrary or prolonged detention.

4.1.3 Death Penalty Abolition Act

Parliament of Zimbabwe recently passed the Death Penalty Abolition Act into law. The Act amends several existing statutes to eliminate any provisions concerning the death penalty, substituting them with sentences that emphasize the principles of rehabilitation, proportionality and justice. The Act also introduces transitional provisions to guarantee that individuals previously sentenced to death will be resentenced in accordance with the ideals of fairness and human dignity. The High Court has commenced the resentencing of the inmates.

4.1.4 Prisons and Correctional Service Act

Prisons and Correctional Service Act [*Chapter 7:23*] establishes the principles and guidelines on functions and administration of Prisons and Correctional Facilities. The Prisons and Correctional Service Act states the professional obligations of Prison Officers and the rights of incarcerated inmates. Incarceration, according to the Act, is not the beginning and end but the starting point in the journey of rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, thus a number of provisions in the Prisons and Correctional Service Act provide for alternatives to incarceration. The Act informs policy on prison administration and the letter and spirit of the Act reflects international norms and best practices on treatment of prison inmates. The Act is a departure from the old way, taking a trajectory of corrective and restorative path rather than a punitive and retributive course.

4.1.5 Other Regional and International Policy Frameworks

- a) The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners also known as the Mandela Rules, provide a comprehensive set of guidelines aimed at improving the conditions of imprisonment and ensuring the humane treatment of prisoners. The Mandela Rules emphasise the importance of dignity, rehabilitation, and the fundamental rights of prisoners. Zimbabwe ratified the Nelson Mandela Rules on December 17, 2015, when the UN General Assembly adopted them.
- b) The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures are also known as the Tokyo Rules. These Rules were adopted by the United Nations to

promote alternatives to imprisonment, recognizing that not all offences require incarceration and that justice systems should seek rehabilitation and reintegration rather than just punishment.

- c) The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders are also known as the Bangkok Rules. These Rules were adopted by the United Nations to fill a critical gap in global prison standards, recognizing that women in detention require special considerations due to their distinct circumstances.
- d) The Maputo Protocol specifically highlight the rights of women in prisons, addressing their dignity and the necessity of a suitable environment, particularly for pregnant or nursing women.
- e) The Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action is a guiding document for accelerating prison and penal reforms across Africa. It focuses on reducing prison populations, promoting alternatives to imprisonment, improving prison conditions and safeguarding the rights of persons deprived of liberty.
- f) The Kampala Declaration on Prison Conditions in Africa (1996) emphasise safeguarding prisoners' human rights, ensuring conditions compatible with human dignity and minimising the adverse effects of imprisonment. Below are the observations made during the visits to prisons.

4.2. Chawagona Hapana Prison (Bindura)

4.2.1 The holding capacity at Bindura Prison was 393 inmates against 443 inmates in custody at the time of the visit. Among the female inmates there were inmates with children. It was submitted that the inmates receive their breakfast at 7.30 am, lunch between 1.00 and 2.00 pm, and supper is between 3.00 and 4.00 pm. The meals consisted of breakfast, which was served with bread and a boiled egg. Lunch was served with sadza and beans or *mufushwa*. On other days they had rice or potatoes for lunch and sadza and meat for supper. It was submitted that children were given specialised diet which is prescribed by the regulations. The challenges that were currently being faced were shortage of sewing materials, shortage of blankets, overcrowding of inmates and shortage of essential drugs. Another challenge to note was the fencing. There were challenges with cooking as firewood was the source of

energy and they had dilapidated cooking pots and utensils. At the prison, there were minimum rehabilitation activities being offered.

4.3 Marondera Prison

4.3.1 Marondera Prison is a grade 3 prison which was established in 1910. On the day of the visit the unlock was 730 against a holding capacity of 358. There was need for inmate uniforms including jerseys and blankets especially when approaching the winter seasons. On accommodation, the officer in charge applauded the completion of the female cell but expressed the need of a perimeter fence and washing space for inmates. Buildings at the station including cells for inmates were in shambles and needed sprucing up. The roofs were rotten such that they leaked when raining. Cell toilets lacked running water and inmates used the bucket system. The outside toilets and bathrooms were substandard and the sewer system was old.

4.3.2 On food, the inmates were given 3 meals per day. On health, they had a shortage of drugs even general paracetamol. There was no protective clothing for inmates e.g. masks and gloves for cleaning the toilets. There was an ambulance to transport inmates to the main hospital if there was an emergency. Other challenges included shortages of cooking pots and use of firewood for cooking. Rehabilitation for inmates was not fully functional because of lack of resources. The station did not have farming equipment and relied on borrowing from neighbouring farms. The station had water challenges. They were relying on ZINWA boreholes which were down due to electrical pump faults.

4.4 Marondera Female Prison

4.4.1 Marondera Female Prison is a grade 1 prison and the only female open correctional institution not only in Zimbabwe but in the Southern African Region. The unlock figure at the day of the visit was 22 against a holding capacity of 50. The institution was opened in June 2021 and it had relatively new structures. They had a clinic but their major challenge was the availability of major drugs. Their major challenges were limited resources to facilitate rehabilitation and follow-ups after incarceration, stigma attached to imprisonment, absence of starter packs after giving them skills, a kitchen to prepare food and the clinic had not yet been equipped to cater for maternity care and furniture for the Vocational Training Centre was still inadequate.

4.5 Chipinge Prison

4.5.1 Chipinge prison is a grade 3 prison. On the day of the visit unlock was at 531 against a holding capacity of 384. Prison uniforms, blankets, mattresses and jerseys were some of the major challenges affecting the prison. The prison was involved in the production of cereals and vegetables for the consumption of the prison population. The prison officials submitted that in 2024, they had produced 107 tonnes of maize which they were currently consuming. Other challenges included transport with the station having only two vehicles. There were challenges of drugs especially for chronic illnesses.

4.6 Mutimurefu Prison (Masvingo)

4.6.1 Mutimurefu Prison Farm is a grade 3 prison which was established in 1980. On the day of the visit, the unlock was 824 against a holding capacity of 580. The officers applauded the improvement of inmate's rations. The inmates were getting 3 meals per day. Major challenges highlighted included, uniforms for both officers and inmates, a collapsed perimeter fence, short supply of drugs and inadequate farm machinery.

4.7 Gwanda Prison

4.7. Gwanda Prison was built in 1910 with a holding capacity of 60. At the time of the visit the unlock was 210 against a holding capacity of 60 which translated to 350% overcrowding. Officers submitted that at the time they had 7 cases of Tuberculosis in the province and skin diseases. The other challenge was that Gwanda is a provisional capital, and all satellites and all courts feed into Gwanda. So, all cases that were supposed to be held by the magistrate were referred to Gwanda. The prison had 3 juveniles and these stayed together with other inmates. In terms of food, the officials submitted they have had more than enough. Inmates had eggs, bread, bananas, apples, rice, sadza, meat, chicken and beef. The inmates were served with breakfast at 7 am, lunch at 12 noon and supper at 4.30 pm. The prison had electric pots but they did not have thermal oil thus they resorted to the use of firewood. In terms of correctional services, they submitted that they train inmates in agriculture and welding at the prison. On challenges, the issue of delay by the courts to pass judgements was a major challenge which was resulting in overcrowding at the institution. On staff accommodation they submitted that, they had 17 houses catering for 23 families. They had a shortage of drugs at the clinic.

4.8 Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison

4.8.1 Chikurubi Maximum Prison is a Grade 4 prison which has the highest security in the country. It has a holding capacity of 1114 against 2689 inmates who were in at the time of the visit. Amongst these, they had those under the psychiatric section who are under treatment awaiting confirmation by doctors on their status, whether they could go to court or they had to be discharged. Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison was facing a number of challenges. The Prison had a challenge of water. Electricity was also a problem which affected availability of water as they did not have solar powered boreholes. On health, their major challenge was drugs especially for chronic illnesses. They were facing challenges with uniforms, prison garb and the orange cloth for the convicted inmates.

4.8.2 There were also challenges with consumables like toiletries, toilet dip and dishwashers which compromised the health of both the inmates and the staff. They had challenges with cooking facilities. They were using firewood and there were no longer trees around their area for firewood. Another challenge raised was that for the past years, judges of the High Court had not been visiting the institutions. Other challenges raised were that inmates slept on the floor as they did not have mats. In terms of meals, they were having 3 meals per day. For breakfast, they were having tea with bread and eggs. If there was no tea, they would be provided with porridge, but for the past three months it was submitted that they were having their tea with bread, eggs, butter and milk. For lunch, they had vegetables in the afternoon and beans or meat for supper. Beans and meat provided inmates with protein. The officials raised a challenge with printing their materials.

4.9 Harare Remand Prison

4.9.1 Harare Remand Prison was built in 1910 and as such the structure was old and blockages were common. It is a male only prison with a holding capacity of 900 inmates but had an unlock of 1361 on the day of the visit. The staff complement was 414 officers against a requirement of 300 to 400 officers for the Remand Prison and about 200 for four courts. The inmates were getting three meals per day. Water supply was a major challenge at the institution. The prison did not get water on a daily basis and could go for a week without water supply. The prison had a shortage of blankets for the inmates and toiletries were also in short supply. The increased number of

courts had also exacerbated transport challenges resulting in officers finishing work late. The prison clinic had a challenge in securing drugs especially for chronic diseases. There was only a consistent supply of Anti-Retroviral drugs which were provided by either the Government or partners. The prison also faced cooking challenges as firewood was the source of energy used.

4.10 Hurungwe Prison

4.10.1 Hurungwe Prison is a Grade 2 prison which houses Class A and B inmates. Hurungwe Prison is the biggest farming prison with a combined hectarage of 1729. The prison was established in 2001 and it has 1000 hectares of arable land and potential irrigable of up to 446 hectares. 6729 hectares on non-arable land was occupied by 3 dams, livestock and other farm developments. The Prison had 252 inmates against a holding capacity of 350 during the Committees' visit. The food provisions for inmates consisted of mealie meal, salt, cooking oil, fresh vegetables, bread, rice, peanut butter, sugar and milk. Inmates were provided with three meals per day, breakfast, lunch and supper at about 85% provision of a balanced diet. Clothing and bedding were inadequate and in a poor state.

4.10.2 In 2025, 95 hectares had been put under maize cropping on irrigated and dryland with a total expected yield of 445 tonnes. There were centre pivots on 80 km and drip irrigation covering 15 kilometres. The farm also engaged in horticultural production for consumption and for marketing. There was a thriving nursery for onions and maturing cabbages. Climate change had resulted in the drying of dams and inadequate irrigation facilities was major drawbacks to high production levels. Another major challenge was the untimely provision of inputs. The strategy to overcome climate change included full utilisation of the dams, timely servicing of farm equipment and the need for a solar plant in the absence of consistent supply of electricity. In the long-term irrigation was the way to go with the purchase of bigger tractors. The farm retained its food requirements and the remainder was distributed to other prisons. Drug availability was at about 60% with relatives providing for patients with chronic illnesses. The perimeter fence at the prison was old and no longer secure enough by prison standards.

4.11 Connemara Open Correctional Institution

4.11.1 Established in 1924, Connemara served as a pre-release facility, accommodating inmates who had demonstrated good behaviour and signs of rehabilitation. On the day of the visit, it housed 115 inmates against a holding capacity of 108. Inmates enjoyed relatively humane conditions as they are allowed to wear their own clothes interchangeably with prison garb. Further, single beds were provided, as opposed to overcrowded and bedless cells in closed prisons. Inmates can move unescorted, receive unlimited weekend visits, possess radios and televisions and even take-home leave once a month for up to five days.

4.11.2 Additionally, the institution integrated vocational and academic training into its operations. Inmates were trained in skills such as tailoring, welding, carpentry, plumbing, and bricklaying, with some sitting for ZIMSEC examinations, making it a certified examination centre. The prison also engaged in agricultural production, including maize farming, horticulture, and animal husbandry, promoting self-reliance and rehabilitation through productivity. Nonetheless, despite these successes, Connemara faced challenges such as inadequate technical staff and instructors in vocational training areas, shortage of modern tools and machinery for workshops, lack of a boundary fence, making crops vulnerable to stray animals, water insecurity, exacerbated by a lack of a solar-powered borehole, shortage of funds to pay for hefty examination fees for inmates as they are categorised as private students and climate change affecting their farming yields.

4.12 Hwahwa Prison

4.12.1 Hwahwa Prison comprises of Hwahwa Medium Prison, Hwahwa Young Offenders Prison and Hwahwa Workshop. The Medium Prison had a capacity to hold 1344 inmates but this capacity had been reduced to 1114 due to damages to some cells by heavy storms in 2016 and 2023. Although inmates were having three meals a day, the challenge faced related to the preparation of meals. The Prison had resorted to using firewood since all the electrical pots were down. At the time of the visit the station had last received sanitary provisions such as toilet paper and soaps more than twelve months ago. There was a serious shortage of the orange uniforms for convicted inmates as well as blankets and a critical shortage of drugs. Other challenges faced by the Prison were shortage of health personnel, dilapidated physical security structures,

shortage of staff accommodation and shortage of computers to digitalise the prison processes.

4.13 Hwahwa Young Offenders Prison

4.13.1 Whawha Young Offenders Prison was transformed in 2004 from Hwahwa Prison which catered for adult inmates to keep juveniles separate from persons over 18 years. The thrust of the station was academic education and skills training in order to equip the juveniles so that they can contribute to national development upon release. Inmates on the day of the visit were 245 inmates. The holding capacity was 450 but because some of the cells were no longer inhabitable, the capacity had been reduced to 296 inmates. On the academic side, the prison had classes from primary to secondary with 13 qualified teachers and two in the technical section. There was a shortage of staff accommodation with some officers staying in rented houses around town and Lalapanzi. Consumables, electrical pots, blankets and uniforms were some of the challenges. Other challenges were lack of examination fees in both education and skills training, lack of bus fare upon release of inmates, lack of computers and the absence of a science laboratory. The prison required textbooks, alternative power to electricity, uniforms, blankets and toiletries. The general security situation at the prison was good save for infrastructure that needed attention. The food situation was reported to be good with inmates receiving three meals a day.

4.14 Hwahwa Workshop

4.14.1 The workshop was established in 2006 as a workshop for the Midlands Province and it was involved in the maintenance of the provincial vehicle fleet, infrastructure, training of inmates as well as training of officers and youth from the community, apprentice and attachment for students from other institutions. The workshop was granted Vocational Training Centre status but could not become fully fledged due to lack of accommodation for students. The prison was in the process of retooling the workshop by purchasing machines. The workshop required safety clothing for inmates. It was also facing challenges in servicing vehicles due to money shortages.

4.15 Khami Prison

4.15.1 Khami Prison is a high-class prison which accepts inmates from all over the country. Some of the inmates were reported to be from the uniformed forces, individuals who

had been convicted of murder and armed robbery. In terms of food rations, inmates and staff were reported to be well fed as bulk procurement was being done. The prison's infrastructure was dilapidated with the ablution facilities requiring complete rehabilitation. The prison had a fully equipped borehole recently commissioned but it required three more to be adequate as it received water from Council once a week. The provision of water was under threat as water ran the risk of being contaminated because of mining activities in the vicinity. There were a number of psychiatric patients at Mlondolozu prison who required appropriate drugs. The officers faced challenges with accommodation because only 550 houses were available. Land to build houses for the officers had been secured from the City Council but progress had been stalled due to lack of funding.

4.16 Binga Prison

4.16.1 Binga Prison was built in 1920 and it houses Class A and B inmates. At the time of the visit there were 78 inmates, 73 of them convicted and 5 un-convicted. The holding capacity was 45. Of these, 28 inmates were Zambians mostly convicted for poaching. There were two female convicts that were due to be released on 25 May 2025. Inmates were having 3 meals a day and their relish included meat, kapenta, chunks, sugar beans and vegetables. All inmates were well clothed although more uniforms were needed so that each inmate would have 2 pairs. Officers faced accommodation challenges. Inmates engaged in farming, church going and recreation activities with members of the society. During the 2024/2025 farming season, the station dry planted 42 hectares of maize but the crop had been affected by the dry spell and was a complete write off. 15 hectares of maize had been replanted and out of an expected 60 tonnes, 8 tonnes was the expected. Other crops planted were sorghum (25 ha), sunflower (12 ha) and cow peas (2 ha). The station had 45 goats and 12 sheep, with a new rabbit project. It also had a kapenta project whose average catch was 5 bags per fishing period.

5.0 COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATION

5.1 Food Supply and Rations for Inmates

5.1.1 The Committee applauds Government for the improvement on food and nutrition. Generally, inmates were now being served three meals per day, breakfast, lunch, and supper—marking a notable shift from previous years where rations were inconsistent and inadequate. Some facilities even integrate fresh produce from prison farms into the daily menu, contributing to dietary diversity and sustainability. The Committee however, observed that the feeding times, in particular, supper time was too early to be served dinner especially for people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes.

5.2 Cooking Facilities

5.2.1 The Committee observed that the availability and condition of cooking infrastructure remain as one of the major concerns. Many prisons relied heavily on firewood for cooking, with all the institutions reporting a shortage of cooking pots, and cooking utensils such as plates and cups. In some cases, cooking was done under exposed conditions, raising concerns about hygiene and safety. The use of firewood as a source of energy was also a threat to the environment. Water shortages and erratic electricity supply also affect food preparation, especially where boreholes or electric pots are used. For instance, Harare Remand Prison may go a week without water, relying solely on the borehole systems that require electricity to function.

5.3 Overcrowding and Accommodation Challenges

5.3.1 The Committee observed that overcrowding remains as one of the most critical and persistent challenges affecting the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS). Most prison facilities are operating well beyond their designed holding capacities, with some institutions experiencing severe congestion levels of over 200–300%. Notably, Gwanda Prison was holding 210 inmates against a capacity of only 60 representing 350% overcrowding while Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison had 2,689 inmates crammed into facilities designed for 1,114 and Binga Prison had 78 inmates with the holding capacity of 45. Similarly, Harare Remand Prison was overcrowded by over 50%, with 1,361 inmates held in a facility meant for 900. Bindura Prison reported 443 inmates versus its capacity of 393, and Marondera stood at 730 inmates for a space meant to accommodate only 358. Overcrowding has led to

serious human rights and health implications, including inmates sleeping in cramped, poorly ventilated, and leaking cells, strained sanitation systems, insufficient bedding and increased risk of disease transmission, and limited access to healthcare. While open prisons like Connemara and Marondera Female Open Prison offer slightly better conditions due to lower populations and progressive models, these facilities represent exceptions rather than the norm.

5.4 Inmates' Clothing and Bedding Provisions

5.4.1 The Committee observed that inmates across most prisons were facing severe shortages of clothing and bedding, a situation that compromises both dignity and health, especially during winter. Many prisons reported inadequate supply of uniforms, jerseys, blankets, and even basic personal items such as shoes and undergarments. At some prisons visited, the Committee found inmates wearing torn or worn-out clothes, with some relying on donations from relatives. Additionally, blankets were in critically short supply. Inmates were permitted to bring their own blankets due to a mismatch between inmate numbers and available bedding. In female sections at prisons visited, inmates also lacked feminine hygiene supplies, warm clothing, and diapers for children, where applicable. The shortage was particularly concerning given the presence of mothers with infants in some of these facilities. In summary, the Committee concluded that the current state of clothing and bedding provision is inadequate, uneven, and a clear violation of inmates' basic rights to humane treatment.

5.5 Healthcare services

5.5.1 The Committee observed that healthcare services within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS) remained severely under-resourced and inadequate, undermining the constitutional right of inmates to basic health and medical care. Across nearly all facilities visited, the Committee noted a shortage of essential drugs for chronic ailments, lack of proper functional dispensaries among the prisons, lack of adequate and qualified medical personnel, and poorly equipped clinics, leaving both inmates and officers vulnerable to untreated illnesses. All prisons, including Harare Remand, Hurungwe, Khami, Marondera, Chikurubi, Chipinge, and Gwanda, reported frequent shortages of medication, especially for chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and mental health disorders. In several instances, inmates were

entirely dependent on relatives for the supply of essential medicines. Psychiatric inmates were particularly affected by the non-availability of psychiatric drugs, with facilities like Khami and Chikurubi reporting dangerously low supplies . Prison clinics were often under-equipped. For example, Bindura Prison's clinic lacks a toilet, fridge for storing temperature-sensitive medication, and sufficient space. Many facilities have only one nurse servicing hundreds of inmates, officers, and even surrounding communities. Despite these challenges, efforts had been made to provide care where possible. Some institutions benefited from partnerships with government or from donor-supported programmes, such as ARV supply chains and counselling services for minor mental health concerns.

5.6 Rehabilitation and Reintegration Activities

5.6.1 The Committee noted that rehabilitation and reintegration efforts were gaining momentum within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS, with most prisons actively implementing a range of vocational and academic training programmes. These efforts signalled a shift from a punitive model to a more correctional and transformative approach. Inmates across several institutions were engaged in vocational training in areas such as farming, carpentry, tailoring, welding, plumbing, bricklaying, and hairdressing. However, the Committee observed the need for starter packs or small grants upon release to help them translate these skills into livelihood projects. Furthermore, religious and psychosocial support programmes such as bible studies and counselling were also in place in some institutions, contributing to moral reform and emotional well-being. Despite these commendable initiatives, the Committee found that most rehabilitation workshops lack modern tools, qualified instructors, and consistent funding. At Bindura and Chipinge, for instance, vocational training is hampered by a shortage of sewing machines, raw materials, and protective clothing. Additionally, the absence of reintegration packages or linkages to employment and capital support for ex-inmates remains a significant gap.

5.7 Staff compliment and accommodation

5.7.1 The Committee noted that the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS) is grappling with critical staff shortages and substandard staff accommodation, which were negatively impacting prison operations, security, and service delivery. In several

facilities visited, the staffing levels were either below the required thresholds or insufficient to meet increasing demands. For instance, Harare Remand Prison, which had over 1,300 inmates, was operating with 414 officers, stretched across both prison and court duties, with some officers assigned to as many as four courts . Midlands Province, with eight prisons and two workshops, reported a high staff attrition rate primarily due to early retirements. This shortage of staff compromised security, rehabilitation, and healthcare services, and increased pressure on the few officers remaining—often resulting in long working hours, burnout, and operational inefficiencies.

5.7.2 Equally concerning is the state of staff accommodation, which remains inadequate, overcrowded, and in some cases non-existent. In institutions such as Hwahwa and Gwanda, officers were forced to share rooms or seek rental accommodation in surrounding communities, which affects their availability and response times. At Hurungwe and Marondera, the Committee noted that plans to construct modern staff housing were in place, but implementation was hampered by funding constraints. The lack of decent housing had further impacted on staff morale and retention, making it difficult for the ZPCS to attract and retain skilled professionals such as health workers, instructors, and farm technicians, particularly in remote prison stations.

5.8 Information and Communications Technology

5.8.1 The Committee observed that the adoption and integration of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS) remained critically low and largely underdeveloped, despite the sector's growing complexity and the urgent need for digital transformation. Although plans to digitalise prison systems were in place since 2000, implementation had been extremely limited and slow. The absence of a centralised digital system had led to administrative inefficiencies, particularly in tracking inmate records, parole history, and recidivism trends. As a result, it remained difficult to determine the number of repeat offenders, especially where inmates use multiple identities.

5.8.2 This lack of digital infrastructure had also adversely affected access to justice, with many inmates unable to follow up on their appeals due to lack of printing facilities, computers, or access to the electronic case management system. At Marondera Prison,

inmates reported being unable to produce critical legal paperwork because of shortages in ICT tools such as scanners, printers, and computers, delaying their ability to lodge appeals within legally prescribed timelines.

5.8.3 In terms of education and rehabilitation, ICT infrastructure was also lacking. Inmates who were interested in furthering their studies reported an absence of electronic learning materials, updated syllabi, and access to digital libraries or online resources, particularly in facilities like Chipinge and Chikurubi. Additionally, prisons did not utilise digital health records, which could improve efficiency and continuity in inmates' medical care.

5.8.4 The Committee acknowledged that while the shift toward digitalisation is recognised in policy terms, financial, technical and institutional constraints continue to hinder progress. There was a clear need for modern ICT infrastructure across all prisons, including centralised inmate databases, digital court and appeal tracking systems, access to e-learning platforms and ICT tools to support legal rights and rehabilitation programmes.

5.9 Infrastructure

5.9.1 The Committee observed that prison infrastructure in Zimbabwe is in a dire state, characterized by severe overcrowding, dilapidated facilities, and inadequate basic amenities. Many prisons visited were constructed in 1910, during the colonial era and had not been properly maintained or expanded to accommodate the growing inmate population, leading to cramped and unsanitary conditions. Cells which were designed for a few dozen inmates often hold hundreds, exacerbating the spread of diseases like tuberculosis due to poor ventilation and limited medical care. Cells at Connemara Prison that had been destroyed as far back as 2016 had not been repaired. On the day of the visit Gwanda Prison reported it had active cases of TB.

5.9.2 The Committee also noted that the sewer and reticulation systems in Zimbabwe's prisons were in a deplorable state, contributing to unsanitary and hazardous living conditions for inmates. Many prisons still relied on outdated, colonial-era infrastructure that has suffered from decades of neglect, poor maintenance and lack of upgrades. Water reticulation was equally problematic, with many prisons experiencing inconsistent or completely cut-off water supplies due to failing pipes, pump

breakdowns, and municipal water shortages. Inmates often endured days without running water, forcing them to rely on the bucket system, worsening hygiene and sanitation.

5.10 Production and Value Addition in Farms

5.10.1 The Committee observed that prison farms under the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS) hold significant potential for self-sufficiency, skills development, and value addition, but this potential remains largely underutilized due to systemic challenges. Facilities such as Hurungwe, Connemara, Mutimurefu, and Chawagona Farm (Bindura) have been actively engaged in crop production, horticulture, and livestock rearing. For instance, Hurungwe Prison boasts a total of 1,729 hectares of land, with 446 hectares irrigable, and produces maize, vegetables, and nursery crops like onions and cabbages. It also supports livestock and operates three dams for water retention . Similarly, Connemara Open Prison planted 31 hectares of maize and runs a successful drip irrigation horticulture project, producing vegetables for both consumption and sale. Prisons like Chikurubi, Gwanda, Chipinge and Marondera also reported food production activities, including maize, sorghum, and animal husbandry, which contribute directly to feeding inmates and supporting nearby institutions . In some cases, surplus produce is redistributed to other prisons in need, enhancing institutional interdependence and sustainability.

5.10.2 However, value addition remains minimal. Most products were consumed in raw form, with little to no post-harvest processing or packaging. The Committee noted lack of equipment, delayed input provision, inadequate irrigation infrastructure and failure to adapt to climate change as major constraints. For example, several prisons lack modern tractors and rely on rainfall-dependent agriculture, making them vulnerable to climate variability, as seen during dry spells.

5.11 Long Remand Period

5.11.1 During the visit, the Committee observed the profound human cost and systemic failure of individuals held on remand for extended periods without trial. The palpable anxiety and despair the Committee encountered stand in stark contrast to the foundational principle of innocent until proven guilty. These visits crystallized how prolonged pre-trial detention not only inflicts severe individual harm but also strains

prison resources, fuels overcrowding, and erodes public confidence in the justice system's fairness and efficiency.

5.12 Treatment of Inmates

5.12.1 During the visit to Harare Remand Prison, the Committee noted instances of inhuman treatment of inmates. The Committee witnessed inmates sitting on a wet floor, which had recently been cleaned. During the interactive session with Class D inmates, the Committee was informed that some inmates had recently been beaten following the escape of two inmates from the Prison. The Committee was concerned by the reported treatment of inmates as these were not in conformity with the local and international legal frameworks governing the management of prisons.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Cognizant for the above observations, the Committee recommends the following:

6.1.1 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should enact a law that explicitly gives a timeline of remand periods by August 2026.

6.1.2 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should ensure operationalization of female-friendly facilities including maternity clinics, child-friendly spaces and proper feminine hygiene provision by December 2027.

6.1.3 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should ensure that Regional Magistrates and High Court Judges frequently visit the prisons for monitoring purposes.

6.1.4 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should digitise inmate records, appeal system and case tracking to enhance efficiency and access to justice by June 2026.

6.1.5 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should provide ICT equipment in all prisons to support education, appeals and communication by December 2026.

6.1.6 The Ministry of Health and Child Care take up the responsibility of equipping prison clinics with essential medicine and equipment by December 2025.

- 6.1.7 The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development should allocate sufficient budget to the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services for modern machinery, inputs and irrigation infrastructure to make prison farms climate resilient and commercially viable and ultimately self-sufficient by December 2026.
- 6.1.8 The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should make prison institutions ZIMSEC Examination Centres to avoid inmates being charged hefty centre fees as private students by January 2026.
- 6.1.9 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should introduce starter packs for inmates who have been released by June 2026, to avoid reoffending.
- 6.1.10 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should encourage and ensure implementation of non-custodial sentencing options particularly for non-violent and minor offences to decongest prisons by December 2025.
- 6.1.11 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should construct more juvenile prisons across the country to avoid mixing juveniles with adult inmates by December 2027.
- 6.1.12 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should build new prison infrastructure that is disability friendly by January 2027.
- 6.1.13 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs should procure blankets and proper prison garb by January 2026.
- 6.1.14 The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs must conduct investigations on the inhuman treatment and report back its findings to the Committee within three months of tabling of this Report.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS) is a vital pillar of the nation's justice system, playing a crucial role not only in the secure custody of offenders but also in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Its mandate reflects a shift from punitive justice to restorative justice, emphasizing the humane treatment of inmates in line with the Constitution of Zimbabwe and international human rights standards. ZPCS facilities must be centres of transformation by

providing education, vocational training and psychosocial support to reduce recidivism and prepare inmates for productive reintegration. However, outdated infrastructure, overcrowding and resource constraints continue to hinder the full realisation of this vision. It is, therefore, imperative that ZPCS be adequately funded and supported to modernise its operations, improve prison conditions and enhance rehabilitation programmes. A well-resourced correctional system strengthens national security, upholds human dignity and contributes to a just and progressive society.