

Zimbabwe COVID-19 Lockdown Weekly Monitoring Report 12 to 18 February 2021, Days 39 to 45

1. Introduction

This report covers the period Friday 12 February to Thursday 18 February 2021 of the national lockdown period that was declared by the Minister of Health and Child Care, Vice President Constantino Chiwenga on 2 January 2021 and subsequently extended for another 14 days on 15 February 2021. As of Thursday 18 February 2021, the confirmed number of COVID-19 cases had increased to 34 949, with 85 new cases being reported on the same day. The death toll increased to 1 382, with 18 deaths being reported on the day.

2. Methodology

This report encompasses data gathered nationally by the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), and excerpts from a report generated by the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR).

3. Cabinet Decision Matrix (9 February 2021)

Cabinet received an update on the country's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, which the Minister of Defence and War Veterans Affairs presented as the Chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on the COVID-19 Outbreak on 16 February 2021. The following developments were highlighted:

- There is now a 61% dominance of the new South African variant of the COVID-19 virus which spreads faster and has a higher fatality rate.
- Security personnel have therefore been directed to intensify monitoring and enforcement to enhance compliance.
- A committee will monitor the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines.
- A consignment of 200 000 Sinopharm vaccines was received on Monday, 15 February 2021 as a donation from the Peoples Republic of China.
- The vaccination programme will commence on 18 February 2020. It will be free and accessible on a voluntary basis. The first phase of inoculation is targeted at 22% of the population, 18,4% under the second phase 2 and 18,4% under the third phase, thereby yielding a national vaccination rate of nearly 60%.
- In terms of the DVP prioritisation in terms of the first phase of inoculation will be given to the country's health workers, followed by the Zimbabwe Republic Police, the Defence Forces, and the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services. The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, immigration personnel and Agritex workers will be prioritised as well. Persons who are over 60 years and other vulnerable groups will also be targeted under the initial phase.
- The second phase of inoculation will encompass college and university lecturers and school teachers.
- The rest of the population will be catered for under the third phase of inoculation.

4. State of the Nation address

On 15 February 2021, President Mnangagwa extended the national lockdown by another two weeks. The following regulations were imposed:

- Businesses to operate between 8am and 5pm
- Curfew operational between 8pm and 5.30am
- Intercity and interprovincial travel remain barred
- Social gatherings remain banned
- Funerals are restricted to 30 people
- Essential services to remain functional with government offices set to increase capacity from 10% to 25%
- All private companies seeking to operate to test staff members and adhere to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines

- The courts will only attend to serious/urgent cases
- Schools to remain closed
- The informal sector may operate subject to fulfillment of WHO guidelines

5. COVID-19 vaccination update

Zimbabwe took delivery of 200 000 Sinopharm vaccine doses donated by the People's Republic of China on 15 February 2021. The Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care, (Rtd) General Dr. Constantino Chiwenga advised that the vaccination programme will commence on 18 February 2021, on a free and voluntary basis. The Vice President volunteered to become the first recipient of the vaccine to assure health care workers who are set to benefit from the first phase of the vaccination programme. He was vaccinated at Wilkins Infectious Diseases Hospital in Harare on 18 February 2021. The Citizens COVID-19 Monitoring Mechanism warned the government against partisan distribution of the vaccine.

The DVP and related issues to the administration of the vaccination process remained topical. Honourable Tendai Biti in Parliament noted that the Sinopharm vaccine donated by China cannot be administered to:

- HIV or cancer patients and those with uncontrolled chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes.
- Individuals with conditions that suppress their immune system.
- Children or young people under the age of 16 years.
- Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning a pregnancy within six weeks from the time of intended inoculation.
- Anyone with allergies to other vaccines.
- Anyone who develops an allergic reaction from the first inoculation.
- Anyone with a history of serious allergies (anaphylaxis) requiring emergency care, people with conditions that suppress the immune system, e.g HIV-AIDS, on steroid medication or receiving chemotherapy.

About 1.2 million Zimbabweans between the ages of 15 and 64 are living with HIV (14.6% of the population) while hypertension has a recorded prevalence of about 21%.

6. General updates

The Forum petitioned President Emmerson Mnangagwa to pardon some prisoners to decongest prison correctional facilities in line with COVID-19 safety protocols. The petition was delivered to the President's Offices in Harare. Human rights lawyers have been concerned over the congestion in prisons and lack of adequate medical care and facilities to protect prisoners from COVID-19.

Suspected MDC Alliance youths staged a flash protest outside the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) premises on 12 February 2021 demanding the holding of by-elections. A few dozen opposition activists picketed while hoisting placards with a variety of messages. This follows the announcement of the banning of elections by the ZEC Chairperson, Priscilla Chigumba in 2020, pursuant to President Emmerson Mnangagwa declaring a state of national disaster.

ZANU PF Muzarabani South legislator, Tapera Saizi, and traditional leader Chief Chiweshe Mukore-kore on 14 February allegedly defied the lockdown by conducting a ZANU-PF meeting with over 60 village heads at Chitemamuswe Primary School. In Mutare, the party conducted elections to fill the senate vacancy left by Minister of State for Manicaland Province, Ellen Gwaradzimba, who succumbed to coronavirus recently. The party has defended its position of holding meetings and internal elections in violation of COVID-19 lockdown regulation. Party secretary for administration said they are observing health and safety guidelines in their activities.

7. Arrests

Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) officers from Machipisa Police Station allegedly arrested a pregnant woman, Fungai Mutsvairo, in Highfield for not wearing a face mask and detained her for over 48 hours after she failed to pay a solicited bribe of US\$10 to police officers. She was subsequently released without charge.

8. Court update

Following the pronouncement by the President of Zimbabwe on 15 February 2021, extending the Level IV National Lockdown period by a further two weeks, the Chief Justice of Zimbabwe, Hon. Luke Malaba issued Practice Directive 4 of 2021 which sets out guidelines on court operations for the period 16 February 2021 to 1 March 2021, being the indicated expiration of the extended level IV national lockdown. The following are key guidelines established by the practice directive:

- The filing of new cases, process, documents, pleadings and papers shall remain suspended for the period up to 1 March 2021, unless the period is earlier extended or revoked.
- Registries will only accept initial remands; urgent processes and applications; and bail applications.
- Registries shall be open for litigants and legal practitioners on weekdays, between 0800hrs and 1600hrs to accept process related to the matters outlined above.
- The Sheriff and the Messenger of Court will be available to attend to matters that are connected to or related to urgent applications.
- Persons who attend court will be:
 - o Subject to temperature checks and shall be required to sanitise their hands upon entry;
 - o Required to wear face masks in the manner prescribed by law;
 - o Required to avoid person to person contact; and
 - o Required to maintain social distancing as prescribed by law.
- Entry into court premises/courthouses/courtrooms shall be limited to litigants, their legal practitioners, necessary witnesses and identified members of the press.
- Entry into court premises/courthouses shall strictly not be permitted to members of the public who have no business at court.
- Litigants who are required to attend Court in a Province or District other than where they are normally resident shall obtain the necessary letters of clearance at the nearest police station.

The Harare High Court granted a provisional order against Econet Wireless Zimbabwe to stop sending COVID-19 alert messages. The order was successfully obtained by Harare lawyer, Sikhumbuzo Moyo, after he took the telecommunications giant to court, saying the messages irritated him. Moyo had filed an urgent chamber application at the High Court seeking to block Econet from sending COVID-19 messages through his mobile phone, saying it violated section 53 (no person may be subjected to physical or psychological torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) and the right to privacy under section 57 of the Constitution. Moyo said his father succumbed to COVID-19 and he told Econet that the messages were depressing him since he was still recovering from losing his father.

9. Summary of Violations

The table below summarises COVID-19 related human rights violations documented by the Forum Secretariat and Forum Members from 5 January 2021 to 18 February 2021.

Nature of Violation	Number of Victims	Location
Assaults and Torture	23	Hwange, Binga, Bulawayo, Chipinge, Fig tree, Gweru, Mt Darwin, Harare, Beitbridge
Arbitrary arrests	29	Gweru, Nkulumane
Attacks against journalists	2	Harare

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