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**Let Listening Be the Beginning. Let Truth Be the Path. Let Justice Be the Commitment. And Let a Thousand Dialogues Bloom, Opening the Way to a Future of Peace with Dignity!**



**DZIKAMAI BERE (ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION)**

## 1. Introduction

During the high-level webinar held on March 11, 2025 — “Truth and Justice for Post-Election Human Rights Violations in Mozambique” — transitional justice expert Dz-ikamai Bere, from the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, opened his intervention with humility and strategic vision. He made it clear that his contribution was not intended to provide definitive answers, but rather to spark initial provocations that could serve as a foundation for a deep, plural, and Africa-rooted debate.

Bere emphasized that, given the critical moment Mozambique is facing, it is imperative to foster a national conversation on transitional

justice that goes beyond political and academic circles — a conversation that reaches communities, grassroots actors, victims, and youth. He recalled the famous phrase of peace theorist Professor Johan Galtung: “*Let a thousand dialogues bloom*”, as a call for multiplicity of voices, active listening, and collective construction of pathways to peace, truth, and reconciliation.

In this spirit, Bere proposed an introductory reflection grounded in African values and in existing continental instruments, such as the African Union Transitional Justice Policy, suggesting that the way forward for Mozambique must be built with courage, memory, and popular participation.

## 2. Starting Point: The African Union Theme for 2025

A good starting point for this discussion is the African Union’s theme for the year 2025: “*Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations*.” This theme, recently launched at the African Union Summit, offers a valuable framework for this debate, anchoring it in African values.

However, the paradox is clear: while African leaders call for justice on the international stage,

their own citizens often face injustices at the hands of their governments — through action or omission. Therefore, this conversation is an opportunity to mobilize African thought around a comprehensive understanding of transitional justice — not as something to be demanded from the outside, but as a culture we must cultivate from within.

## 3. The African Concept of Transitional Justice

The most appropriate definition of transitional justice for the African context comes from the African Union’s Transitional Justice Policy, adopted by its Member States. The policy defines transitional justice as a set of formal, traditional, and institutional measures that societies adopt — through an inclusive and consultative process — to overcome past violations, divisions, and inequalities, thereby creating conditions for security, democratic and socioeconomic transformation.

This policy goes beyond retribution, valuing reconciliation, community participation, and restitution. It is a holistic approach that considers the cultural, gendered, generational, ethno-cultural, social, and developmental contexts of affected societies. This definition is essential, as it breaks the narrative that transitional justice is a Western concept — it is an African tool, validated by Africans themselves.

## 4. Transitional Justice as a Basket of Measures

Transitional justice is not a one-size-fits-all solution; it is a “*basket of measures*” or a “*set of tools*” available to societies seeking to transition from a violent past to a future of sustainable peace and justice. This basket includes:

- **Truth-Seeking:** Before thinking about reparations or accountability, we must understand what happened. The UN recognizes the victims’ right to the truth.
- **Accountability:** While historically centered on prosecution, today’s view is broader and includes traditional approaches. Accountability must consider local contexts and avoid creating threats that might undermine the process.
- **Reparations:** Recognizing that violence leaves deep scars, reparations seek to restore — even symbolically — the dignity of victims.
- **Reconciliation:** To rebuild coexistence, we must invest in healing and reconciliation, fostering collective healing processes.
- **Guarantees of Non-Recurrence:** This includes institutional reforms — especially in the security sector — to prevent new cycles of violence.

## 5. What Does “Transition” Mean?

It is crucial to clarify that, in the field of transitional justice, the term “transition” does not necessarily mean a change of regime or government. Rather, it refers to a deep process of social and institutional transformation, aiming to break with legacies of violence, repression, inequality, and impunity — and to build in their place a new order founded on peace, respect for human rights, justice, and participatory democracy.

As outlined in the AU’s Transitional Justice Policy, transition should be understood as a contin-

uous and progressive movement: from denial to truth, from exclusion to inclusion, from impunity to accountability, and from fragmentation to reconciliation. It is a path that demands political courage, active listening, and genuine commitment to victims and to rebuilding the social contract.

Thus, the real meaning of transition lies in a society’s ability to confront its past, acknowledge its wounds, and collectively commit to a more just and peaceful future.

## 6. National Dialogue with Community Leadership

It is essential to promote a national conversation on transitional justice that does not remain confined to formal spheres of power, but that flourishes from within communities — with active listening and genuine participation. Building a just and reconciled future cannot be the monopoly of political elites or central institutions: it must emerge from the grassroots — from villages, neighborhoods, and local organizations where the direct impact of violence, exclusion, and injustice has been lived and continues to be lived.

As Professor Johan Galtung, the theorist of peace and reconciliation, once said: “*Let a thousand dialogues bloom!*” — that is, let a thousand

spaces of listening open up, in multiple languages, cultures, and territories, so that all voices — especially those of victims and marginalized communities — may be heard. These dialogues must be local, intergenerational, intercommunal, interfaith, and cross-sectoral, valuing traditional knowledge and narratives silenced by official history.

Only through this plural and horizontal movement can a shared national narrative be built — one that supports a legitimate, transformative, and enduring transitional justice process. Without these “thousand dialogues,” any reconciliation agenda risks being superficial and exclusionary.

## 7. Conclusion

If Mozambique succeeds in activating the five pillars — community dialogue, documentation of violations, strengthening local leadership, youth inclusion, and a regional approach — it will be laying fertile ground for the blossoming of a genuine, transformative, and effective transitional justice process.

Transitional justice must not be a top-down process nor reduced to centralized political decisions. It must rise from the communities, from shared memories and aspirations for peace and justice rooted in grassroots realities. As Professor Johan Galtung wisely put it: *“Let a thousand dialogues bloom”* — a thousand spaces of listening and sharing where every voice matters, especially the voices of victims, women, youth, the marginalized, and those silenced by fear or oblivion.

These thousand dialogues — local, intergenerational, intercultural — are the foundation of lasting reconciliation. They turn truth into bridges, not walls; they turn pain into living memory, not sterile resentment.

Thus, more than an institutional architecture, transitional justice must be a deeply human process, grounded in African values of solidarity, dignity, memory, and collective belonging. Mozambique now has the opportunity to build a new social pact — inclusive, participatory, and rooted in truth.

Let listening be the beginning.  
Let truth be the path.  
Let justice be the commitment.  
And let a thousand dialogues bloom, opening the way to a future of peace with dignity.

## 8. Recommendations for the Path Forward in Mozambique

Based on the reflections presented, Dzikamai Bere proposed five priority actions:

### A. National Dialogue with Community Leadership

It is essential to promote a national conversation on transitional justice that is community-led and participatory — not just a debate among elites. As Professor Johan Galtung once said: *“Let a thousand dialogues bloom!”* — local, inclusive dialogues that are attentive to the ideas and needs of grassroots communities.

### B. Systematic Documentation of Violations

Transitional justice cannot be pursued in an information vacuum. Civil society must begin, without delay, to document human rights violations. This documentation will serve as a foundation for future truth-seeking and accountability efforts.

### C. Strengthening Community Leadership

To sustain dialogue and action on the ground, it is essential to empower local leaders who can guide conversations and keep the aspirations for justice alive within their communities.

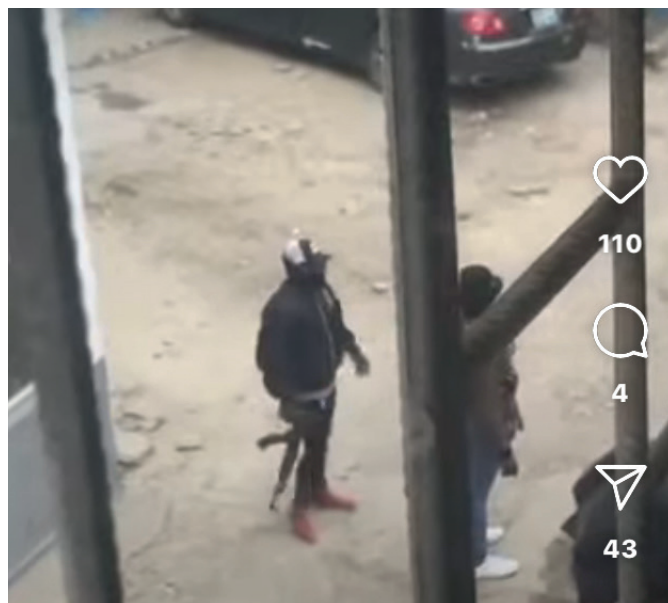
### D. Inclusion of Youth in Peacebuilding Processes

Young people are both the victims and the bearers of the future. Their active participation is crucial, as the consequences of today’s violations will weigh heavily on future generations.

### E. Regional Approach to Transitional Justice

Mozambique is not alone. As Samora Machel once said: *“The independence of one country is meaningless without the independence of another.”* The same applies to justice. Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, and the entire region must move forward together — sharing strategies, experiences, and solidarity.







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*Inspirar e impulsionar ações para proteger os direitos humanos, fortalecer a democracia e promover a justiça.*

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### EDITORIAL INFORMATION

**Property:** CDD – Centro para Democracia e Direitos Humanos  
**Director:** Prof. Adriano Nuvunga  
**Editor:** André Mulungo  
**Program Assistants:** Artur Malate; Sheila Wilson; Marcia Massosste; Florentina Cassabue.  
**Author:** CDD  
**Layout:** CDD

#### Address:

Rua de Dar-Es-Salaam Nº 279, Bairro da Sommerschild, Cidade de Maputo.  
Telephone: +258 21 085 797

 CDD\_moz

**E-mail:** [info@cddmoz.org](mailto:info@cddmoz.org)

**Website:** <http://www.cddmoz.org>

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