



Joint Civil Society Press Statement on the Cyber Bills 26th March 2025

The undersigned civil society organisations acknowledge and commend the Government’s decision to defer the Cyber Bills last year and facilitate dialogue with the civil society organizations that raised concerns. We further recognize the Government’s efforts in creating a platform for engagement to address issues surrounding these proposed laws. These discussions allowed stakeholders, including some of the undersigned organisations, to highlight critical concerns related to the Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Bills. The process demonstrated a commitment to dialogue and compromise; despite this, **not all** our recommendations were accepted by the government.

While we are disappointed that many of our key recommendations to strengthen the human rights protections in the Cyber Bills were not adopted, we appreciate the dialogue as a hallmark of our democratic governance. Our submissions sought to move the scale towards a more equitable balance of security and human rights. A number of our concerns remain, and these unresolved issues could pose risks to democratic freedoms and rights, which such legislation should seek to safeguard. Although the engagement between the Government and Civil Society led to minor adjustments, the Bills still require substantial safeguards to prevent abuse and overreach.

It is important to clarify that the Cyber Bills were not withdrawn; they were deferred to facilitate dialogue, and thus they remain under consideration within the National Assembly. Therefore, amendments must be made in accordance with the National Assembly Standing Orders to address outstanding concerns. We expect that the government will present the proposed amendments as agreed during the consultative process. During the dialogue, the government rejected many of our proposals and justified the provisions as they stand. Following the

conclusion of that dialogue, the responsibility of considering the Bills now shifts to Parliament. We urge Members of Parliament to ensure that the final provisions of the Cyber Bills include robust protection against potential misuse. The responsibility now lies with our elected representatives to shape these laws in a manner that prioritizes the protection of citizens' rights while addressing legitimate security concerns.

As the Bills progress through the legislative process, we stress that the exercise of legislative authority must align with the Constitution and uphold Zambia's democratic principles. All Members of Parliament must shed off their partisan or political affiliations and scrutinize and debate the Bills through the lens of what the Constitution, democracy, and the people of Zambia demand. Like all legislation, the Cyber Bills should reflect our national values of social justice, fairness, accountability, and respect for fundamental rights.

We call on all stakeholders, including the public, to take an active interest in the legislative process. Public participation is a cornerstone of democracy, and citizens, civil society, and other stakeholders must engage in discussions, provide input, and hold their representatives accountable. Ensuring transparency and inclusivity in the legislative process will contribute to a more balanced and rights-respecting legal framework.

We remain committed to monitoring this process and advocating legislation that serves the public interest. We will continue to advocate for the improvement and refinement of provisions that pose a threat to the principles of democracy – transparency, accountability, and the protection of fundamental rights.

Signed by



Josiah Kalala

Chapter One Foundation

For and on behalf of the following organisations:

- 1. Free Press Initiative**
- 2. PANOS Institute Southern Africa**

- 3. Alliance for Community Action**
- 4. Non-Governmental Gender Organisations Coordinating Council**
- 5. Transparency International Zambia**
- 6. Media Institute for Southern Africa**
- 7. Common Cause Zambia**
- 8. Zambia Council for Social Development**
- 9. People's Action for Accountability and Good Governance**
- 10. Advocates for Democratic Governance Foundation**
- 11. Zambian Cyber Security Initiative Foundation**