**ZUJ Demands Safe Working Conditions for Journalists in COVID19  Fight**

 The Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, ZUJ, joins the local and international family of journalists and those who support the vision and activities of a Free Press in commemorating World Press Freedom Day, WPFD.

 This year, we are running under the global theme: Journalism Without Fear or Favour.

 The theme should act as a reminder of our commitment to professional and ethical journalism.

 This, among other things, means journalists who are doing their work should be allowed to work without being subjected to threats, harassment, torture and arbitrary arrests or detention by State and non State Actors.

 ZUJ  believes  that professional and ethical journalism cannot thrive in an environment of fear and poverty.

 Hence our call that in addition to non interference in the way professional and ethical  journalists conduct themselves, they should be paid wages which are above the Poverty Datum Line, PDL.

This year’s commemorations are being held under very difficult circumstances in which journalists once more find themselves at the frontline in the fight against the global pandemic, COVID19 or Coronavirus.

That the first casualty of the COVID19 was a journalist, is enough evidence on the high levels of exposure of journalists to the pandemic.

 ZUJ has conducted a national needs assessment for its members across the country and what  emerged is that journalists felt that they were working in a very unsafe environment due to the Coronavirus.

As a recommendation, it has been suggested that employers, embassies, the corporate sector and international organisations should support journalists by providing adequate protective material to ensure their safety and security.

This can be done through availing  hand sanitisers, face masks and other types of  protective clothing.

In the broadcasting sector, employers are urged to invest  in longer micro phones  which will enable journalists and their interviewees to observe the social distancing requirements.

We call on the telecoms sector to also support the work of journalists by providing free internet and free phone calls for journalists conducting interviews and disseminating information.

That can easily be absorbed under their corporate social responsibility activities.

In all these efforts to ensure the safety and security of journalists, ZUJ is emphasizing the need to ensure that both formally employed journalists and freelance journalists are exposed to COVID19 and need everyone’s support and protection  to ensure that Zimbabweans continue to receive correct, verified information.

In Solidarity

 Foster Dongozi

 Secretary General