



In reply please quote:

No.....

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA THE JUDICIARY

All communication should be addressed to the Chief Administrator, to the Judiciary and not to any individual by name
Telephone: +260 211 252016
Fax: +260 211 251743
Telegraphic address: JUDICIAL

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION
PLOT No. 438 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE
P.O. BOX 50067
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

PRESS RELEASE

JUDICIARY OF ZAMBIA LAUNCHES PILOT MOBILE COURTS TO DECONGEST PRISONS

Lusaka, 20th February 2025 – The Judiciary of Zambia, in partnership with the National Prosecution Authority (NPA), Zambia Correctional Service, and Legal Aid Board, has launched the first pilot project of mobile courts at Lusaka Central Correctional Facility. With the support of the Irish Embassy in Zambia and Irish Rule of Law International, the initiative aims to decongest correctional facilities, which have largely exceeded their carrying capacities.

Speaking during the launch in his keynote address, Hon. Mr. Justice Charles Zulu, Judge-in-Charge of the High Court Generalist, on behalf of the Hon. Chief Justice of Zambia, Dr. Mumba Malila, SC, stated that the mobile court project will involve magistrates and, progressively, High Court judges carrying actual court records and constituting court sittings within correctional facilities. He described this as “a step forward in entrenching the principle of access to justice for inmates by taking justice to their doorsteps.” He further noted that the initiative would help address logistical challenges, particularly where the Zambia Correctional Service and the Police struggle with vehicle breakdowns that hinder the transportation of inmates to court.

Hon. Mr. Justice Zulu clarified that no trials will take place under the mobile courts initiative. Instead, the initiative will facilitate non-contentious processes such as updating court records, setting trial dates, reviewing cases where the State is not proceeding with prosecution, and granting or varying bail conditions. “This project will be supplemental to the visiting justice programme,

where courts go into correctional facilities to assess the conditions under which inmates are living,” he stated.

He further highlighted that the concept of mobile courts aligns with the Judiciary of Zambia’s mandate and vision, which is “a just and accountable Judiciary guaranteeing justice for all.” He emphasized that the Hon. Chief Justice remains committed to promoting open justice and eliminating barriers to efficient and effective justice delivery.

Speaking at the same event, Zambia Correctional Service Deputy Commissioner General Mr. Bwalya Kuyomba stated that many inmates experience mental and emotional distress due to uncertainties surrounding their cases. He added that mobile courts will provide timely relief by facilitating quicker access to judicial processes.

Recognizing these challenges, both Irish Rule of Law International and Undikumukire Project Zambia commended the initiative’s potential to transform access to justice for inmates. The Country Director of Irish Rule of Law International, Mr. Norville Connolly, stated that mobile courts will “assist countless prisoners who have been overlooked in the system,” enabling applications for bail, trial scheduling, and sentence deliveries to be expedited within correctional facilities. He expressed optimism that the pilot scheme would soon extend to Kabwe and the Copperbelt in collaboration with the Prisoners Future Foundation.

Similarly, the Executive Director of Undikumukire Project Zambia, Ms. Sara Larios, emphasized that “access to justice is a fundamental human right,” yet many face barriers such as geographic isolation and financial constraints. She described the mobile courts as a practical solution that ensures justice reaches those who need it most.

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Mr. Gilbert Phiri, welcomed the launch as a historic milestone in Zambia’s justice system, describing it as a groundbreaking initiative that brings together the Judiciary, Legal Aid Board, Zambia Correctional Service, NAP, and Irish Rule of Law International to collectively address prison overcrowding. He commended all stakeholders for their strategic collaboration, which will provide timely intervention for inmates who have long awaited progress in their cases.

The launch of this initiative is particularly significant as it coincides with the United Nations World Day of Social Justice, a day dedicated to promoting social well-being, poverty eradication, equal access to justice, and human rights. As Zambia joins the global community in observing this day, the introduction of mobile courts reaffirms the country's commitment to ensuring that justice is accessible, efficient, and inclusive for all.

The mobile court project was conceptualized by Irish Rule of Law International, with the support of the Government of Ireland through the Irish Embassy in Zambia, in 2022. It is modeled on the Camp Courts initiative in Malawi, where it has been successfully implemented. Given that Zambia and Malawi share similar legal systems, the project was introduced in Zambia to improve access to justice. In January 2024, the Judiciary of Zambia, NAP, the Legal Aid Board, and the Zambia Correctional Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Irish Rule of Law International to formalize the implementation of mobile courts in Zambia.

Contact:

Kalumba Chisambisha-Slavin

Deputy Director – Corporate Communication

JUDICIARY OF ZAMBIA

Email: kalumba.slavin@judiciaryzambia.com

Website: www.judiciaryzambia.com