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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW | THE PRICE OF TELLING THE TRUTH



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW | The Price of Telling the Truth

By Charles Mafa

He says he followed the evidence wherever it led. What happened next, he argues, raises troubling questions about the protection of whistleblowers and the cost of exposing alleged corruption in Zambia.

He led investigations into alleged corruption involving millions of kwacha in public funds. Soon afterwards, Grandy Ntumbo says he was removed from his position and taken off the government payroll.

Ntumbo, Principal Internal Auditor at Zambia's Ministry of Finance, led forensic investigations into the alleged misuse of donor funds and other financial irregularities involving public institutions. According to audit reports and his account in an exclusive interview with MakanDay, the investigations uncovered evidence of payroll fraud, fictitious allowances, unauthorised withdrawals from government accounts, and the suspected misappropriation of public resources.

One of the key investigations was a 2019 special audit into the Ministry of General Education, which reportedly identified a payroll fraud scheme worth more than K2 million within the Zambia Education Projects Implementation Unit (ZEPIU). The audit also documented alleged irregularities involving the World Bank-funded Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP) and raised questions about financial management under the Keeping Girls in School (KGS) programme.

Ntumbo says the investigations later expanded beyond the education sector. According to him, subsequent forensic audits uncovered alleged financial misconduct involving Treasury accounts, the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS), and other public institutions. He further alleges that the findings pointed to a wider network involving senior public officials and resulted in engagement with the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

In this exclusive interview, Ntumbo speaks publicly for the first time about the investigations he led, the evidence he says was uncovered, the personal consequences he has faced, and why he believes Zambia's fight against corruption remains unfinished.

Watch the full interview on MakanDay's YouTube channel:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqREg44PcbA>

INSIDE “CAMBODIA”: The Hidden Settlement in the Heart of Luanshya Town

By Pride Nyirenda | Luanshya

By day, “Cambodia” in Luanshya's central business district appears to be a busy commercial area. But behind the shop fronts, a different reality exists.

A Spice FM report has revealed that several business premises have quietly been converted into homes, with mattresses tucked behind shop counters, cooking taking place inside trading spaces, and some families living in buildings never intended for human habitation.

The report also found concerns over poor sanitation, the absence of running water and proper toilets, as well as allegations that the area has become a hotspot for illicit drug use and excessive alcohol consumption.

While some occupants say rising rental costs and economic hardship have left them with no alternative, the situation raises important questions about public health, urban planning, and enforcement of Zambia's planning and public health laws.

How did a regulated commercial zone become an informal settlement? Why were the apparent violations allowed to continue? And who is responsible for protecting the health and safety of both traders and residents?

Watch the full report by Spice FM's Pride Nyirenda <https://makanday.org/inside-cambodia-the-hidden.../>

Abolishing the Death Penalty: How Zambia Ended Capital Punishment—and Why It Still Matters

More than three years after Zambia abolished the death penalty, the decision remains one of the country's most significant legal and human rights reforms since the return of multiparty democracy - writes Moses Walubita.

Although no executions had taken place since 1997, capital punishment remained part of Zambia's Penal Code until December 2022, when President Hakainde Hichilema signed into law legislation removing it from the country's criminal justice system. The same law also repealed the offence of criminal defamation of the President, ending two colonial-era legal provisions that had long attracted criticism from human rights advocates.

The reforms fulfilled one of the United Party for National Development (UPND)'s campaign promises and were widely welcomed by civil society organisations, legal practitioners, religious leaders and international partners as an important step towards strengthening constitutional freedoms and aligning Zambia's laws with international human rights standards.

Today, Zambia stands among a growing number of African countries that have formally abolished capital punishment, marking a decisive shift in how the state administers justice.

Ending a punishment that had long fallen into disuse

When President Hichilema assented to the Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 25 of 2022 on 23 December 2022, Zambia formally removed the death penalty from its laws.

The decision reflected a reality that had already existed for decades. Although courts continued sentencing offenders to death for crimes such as aggravated robbery, murder and treason, successive presidents had declined to sign execution warrants since 1997.

For twenty-five years, Zambia maintained what legal experts described as a de facto moratorium on executions. Convicted prisoners remained on death row, but none were executed.

By abolishing the death penalty altogether, government converted that long-standing practice into law, ensuring that future courts could no longer impose capital punishment.

Announcing the reform, President Hichilema said the changes honoured commitments his administration had made during the election campaign.

"During our campaign for the presidency, we promised to amend laws that inhibit democracy, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Today we have delivered."

The President described the abolition not simply as a legal reform but as a recognition of the value of human life.

Speaking during a State House luncheon marking the abolition of the death penalty, he said the issue extended beyond politics or criminal justice. "The death penalty is not only a legal issue or a human rights issue—it is a humanity issue," he said.

Why government abolished capital punishment

Government argued that the death penalty was no longer compatible with modern principles of justice.

Then Justice Minister Mulambo Haimbe said one of the strongest reasons for abolition was the irreversible nature of executions.

Unlike imprisonment, an execution cannot be reversed if new evidence later proves a person's innocence or demonstrates that the conviction was unsafe.

"The punishment cannot be undone," Haimbe said, adding that the justice system must

Abolishing the Death Penalty: How Zambia Ended Capital Punishment—and Why It Still Matters cont...

always recognise the possibility of human error.

Government also argued that execution constituted an inhuman form of punishment and was increasingly inconsistent with international human rights norms.

What happened to prisoners on death row?

Following the abolition of the death penalty, prisoners previously sentenced to death no longer faced execution.

Earlier, in February 2023, President Hichilema had commuted approximately 390 death sentences to life imprisonment, effectively clearing Zambia's death row population.

The move ensured that no prisoner remained under sentence of execution after the legal reforms took effect.

A reform rooted in international human rights

The abolition aligned Zambia more closely with international human rights standards that increasingly discourage the use of capital punishment. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, recognises the inherent dignity and equal rights of every human being.

Although the Declaration does not explicitly prohibit the death penalty, international human rights law has steadily evolved towards its abolition, particularly through the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Second Optional Protocol, which seeks the global elimination of capital punishment.

For many human rights organisations, Zambia's decision represented an important contribution to that international movement.

Broad support across society

The reforms attracted praise from a wide range of organisations and public figures.

The United Nations in Zambia described the decision as historic, saying the abolition of the death penalty and the repeal of criminal defamation strengthened democratic

governance and the protection of human rights.

Civil society organisations similarly welcomed the reforms, arguing they reflected growing respect for constitutional freedoms and the rule of law.

Among political leaders who commended the decision was United National Independence Party (UNIP) president Dr Trevor Selwyn Mwamba.

Speaking in 2023, Dr Mwamba said repealing the death penalty and criminal defamation demonstrated government's commitment to advancing democracy and protecting freedom of expression.

He also welcomed efforts to reform other colonial-era legislation, including the Public Order Act.

Zambia's long relationship with capital punishment

The death penalty has deep historical roots in Zambia's legal system. It was introduced during the colonial administration of Northern Rhodesia in the early 1930s and became the mandatory punishment for offences including murder, aggravated robbery and treason.

Following independence in 1964, the law remained largely unchanged. According to historical records, Zambia carried out 72 executions after independence.

The country's founding President, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, authorised the largest number of executions, while his successor, Frederick Chiluba, approved eight before executions effectively ceased in 1997.

Although courts continued imposing death sentences for many years afterwards, no president signed further execution warrants. The result was a growing gap between what the law permitted and what government actually practised.

Beyond the death penalty

The 2022 reforms extended beyond capital punishment. Government also repealed the offence of criminal defamation of the President,

another law that critics argued had been used to suppress free expression and discourage public criticism of those in authority.

The simultaneous repeal of both laws reflected a broader effort to modernise Zambia's legal framework and remove provisions considered inconsistent with democratic governance.

Why the reform still matters

More than three years after abolition, Zambia's decision continues to influence discussions about justice, human rights and constitutional reform. Supporters argue that the changes reinforce the principle that even those convicted of the most serious crimes retain their fundamental right to life and should not face irreversible punishment in a justice system that is capable of error.

Others maintain that the criminal justice system must continue strengthening investigations, prosecutions and victim support to ensure abolition does not weaken public confidence in the rule of law.

Regardless of those debates, the repeal marked the end of one of Zambia's last remaining colonial-era criminal punishments.

By replacing execution with life imprisonment and removing criminal defamation from the statute books, Zambia reshaped two important areas of its criminal law and signalled a commitment to strengthening democracy, protecting human rights and aligning its legal system with evolving international standards.

Moses Walubita is a seasoned Zambian Journalist/Historian.

Opinion | If Grandy Ntumbo Cannot Find Justice, What Hope Is There for Other Whistleblowers?

What more must Grandy Ntumbo do before he is reinstated, paid the salary he he is owed, and allowed to resume the public service career to which he dedicated years of his life?

It is a question that goes far beyond one individual. It speaks to the credibility of Zambia's commitment to fighting corruption and protecting those who expose it.

Ntumbo, the Principal Internal Auditor at the Ministry of Finance, led forensic investigations into the alleged misuse of donor funds and other financial irregularities involving public institutions. Audit reports, together with his account in a [recent interview with MakanDay](#), indicate that the investigations uncovered payroll fraud, fictitious allowances, unauthorised withdrawals from government accounts, and the suspected misappropriation of public resources.

A 2019 special audit into the Ministry of General Education reportedly identified a payroll fraud scheme worth more than K2 million within the Zambia Education Projects Implementation Unit (ZEPIU). It also documented alleged misuse of funds under the World Bank-funded Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP) and questioned financial practices within the Keeping Girls in School (KGS) programme.

The investigations reportedly extended beyond the Ministry of General Education. Ntumbo says subsequent forensic work uncovered alleged financial misconduct involving Treasury accounts, the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS), and other public institutions. He further alleges that investigations pointed to a broader network involving senior public officials and prompted engagement with the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

These are serious allegations. They concern not only the misuse of public funds but also public confidence in the institutions entrusted with safeguarding national resources.

Yet the story did not end with the audits. Ntumbo's professional life changed dramatically after pursuing these investigations.

He was transferred from the Forensic Audit Unit to the Revenue Audit Unit, stripped of meaningful assignments, assigned junior officers to supervise,

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and eventually removed from the government payroll altogether. For more than two years, he has not received his salary.

These actions raise an uncomfortable question. What message does this send to other public servants who discover wrongdoing?

Governments around the world encourage officials to report corruption. Zambia has repeatedly declared its commitment to transparency, accountability and prudent management of public resources. Yet those commitments lose meaning if individuals like Ntumbo, who expose suspected corruption lose their careers for doing their jobs.

The issue is bigger than Ntumbo. It is about whether internal auditors, accountants, investigators and civil servants can perform their statutory duties without fear of retaliation.

It is also about whether institutions respond consistently when credible allegations of corruption emerge.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has not publicly provided an update regarding investigations into officials allegedly implicated in the forensic audit findings, including senior officials at the Ministry of Finance. The absence of public information and prolonged silence inevitably fuels public speculation and weakens confidence.

This is precisely the challenge highlighted recently by Integrity Initiatives International (III), the Coalition for the International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC), and African partner on 11 July 2026 to mark African Anti-Corruption Day. They observed:

"Africa does not lack anti-corruption commitments. The continent has laws, conventions, anti-corruption agencies, financial intelligence units, audit institutions, ombudsman offices, procurement rules and regional accountability frameworks. What remains urgent is enforcement. Integrity cannot be scaled up if powerful people and their conspirators can steal public resources,

launder the proceeds, intimidate truth-tellers and escape accountability."

Those words resonate because they describe a dilemma confronting many countries, including Zambia.

Anti-corruption campaigns are not judged by speeches, strategies or commemorative events. They are judged by whether institutions protect those who expose wrongdoing and hold accountable those responsible for it, regardless of rank or influence.

If a senior internal auditor can spend years fighting simply to receive his salary after leading sensitive investigations, it is reasonable to ask what incentive remains for the next auditor, accountant or investigator to report suspected corruption.

Silence becomes safer than integrity. Compliance becomes easier than courage. That is a dangerous place for any democracy.

The Ministry of Finance has an opportunity to address these concerns transparently. If Ntumbo's removal from the payroll was lawful and justified, the reasons should be clearly explained. If administrative or legal processes remain ongoing, the public deserves to know their status. And if he has been unfairly treated, corrective action should follow without further delay.

Equally, the ACC owes the public clarity on the status of investigations arising from the forensic audits. Accountability requires not only investigations but visible progress and communication that reinforces public confidence.

The question, ultimately, is not whether Grandy Ntumbo is right about every allegation he has made. Those matters should be determined through due process and independent investigation.

The real question is whether Zambia is creating an environment where honest public officers are encouraged to expose corruption—or one where doing so carries unacceptable personal and professional consequences.

This week in the Bulletin & Record

The Dutch in Zambia:

“There was no other country aside from the United Kingdom and South Africa that had so many citizens in Zambia”

Following closure of the Netherlands Embassy In Lusaka last year, a book entitled From Idealism to Realism. A Social History of the Dutch in Zambia, 1965-2013, by Anne-Lot Hoek was published to record the Dutch presence in Zambia. The book seeks to portray a social history of the Dutch in Zambia. In this article, historian Marja Hineflaar focuses on the first part of the book: what is the origin of (Dutch) development aid?

Over almost five decades, many Dutch men and women were involved in Zambia’s development: from merchants and missionaries in the 1950s to the arrival of an embassy with its staff in Lusaka in 1965, to development workers and Dutch doctors throughout Zambia after independence.

Development cooperation in the Netherlands was awakening at the end of their colonial involvement in Asia while at the same time international organisations were taking the lead in guiding developing countries into modernity.

The many Dutch development workers sent to Zambia during these very active decades were involved in a dynamic relationship with the country and its many peoples. This was particularly true of the Dutch presence in Western Province, which jokingly became known as “the thirteenth province of the Netherlands”.

The Dutch contribution is considered modest, especially when compared with the contribution of international organisations or impressive infrastructure projects like those of the Chinese.

The Dutch shift from idealism to a more economic perspective (“Aid to Trade”) is paralleled on a micro-level by Dutch development associates. They remained in Zambia after their development

adventure and today make a living as entrepreneurs. Former volunteers who initially arrived to help Zambia develop are now availed of opportunities and witnessed Zambia’s evolution into today’s society. After Chiluba took office and privatised the economy, a new wave of Dutch adventurers came to set up businesses.

How did it start?

“It is considered that the sort of people we need are the type of young volunteers, such as yours, who have enthusiasm, initiative, ability to get on with the people, and willingness to work and to rough it.”

This was the formal request for Dutch volunteers made by the Zambian Permanent Secretary of National Development and Planning in 1966 that paved the way for the Dutch-Zambian relationship. It was no coincidence that Kenneth Kaunda, the first Zambian president, asked for the assistance of Dutch volunteers two years after independence. This was in line with his optimistic vision of the future of Zambia.

Kaunda, the former freedom fighter and leader of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), was a strong believer in development support. Like the Dutch, he assumed that development would be a matter of transferring knowledge in order for Zambia to become a ‘normal market economy’ within a short period of time. It was clear from the start that Zambia took the lead: Kaunda signed an agreement with the Netherlands concerning the employment of Dutch volunteers “at the disposal of the Zambian government upon the request of the latter”.



President Kaunda and Mr. P. van Raalte, the chargé d'affaires of the Netherlands in Lusaka, sign an agreement at State House on December 17th 1966 for volunteers from the Netherlands to work in development fields in Zambia’

The Dutch in Zambia: cont..

Development aid in Western Europe was until then a concept that was tightly intertwined with the work of missionaries and colonialism. They were the first pioneers in what we would later call development cooperation. The missionaries engaged in education and health and agricultural projects. Their influence in the field of development was widespread and considerable. The Netherlands was in fact one of the largest “suppliers” of missionaries. In 1940 there were almost 6,300 Dutch missionaries worldwide, reaching a peak in the 1960s, when the numbers mounted to 8,860.

After World War II, Dutch motivation for participating in development aid was closely tied to colonial heritage. From a diplomatic point of view, development was meant to improve Dutch-Indonesian relations and provide job opportunities for former colonials who returned from overseas. The Dutch initially focused primarily on their former colonies.

Aside from the colonial context, the principal motivation behind development work was economic: development aid could benefit Dutch trade and industry and Dutch export possibilities. Above all, it could boost the Dutch international profile. As Dutch Prime Minister Drees argued in 1953, technical assistance “was of importance to the whole world, but above all to the Netherlands”. The political context of the Cold War also played a role. According to an internally discussed memo of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1954 and later in a memo of 1956, the fight against Communism formed an important motive for development aid.

After World War II, the concept of development cooperation came to be used by the West in a new institutional context, namely that of the United Nations. The first formal form of Dutch development aid was therefore financial support for the multilateral aid programme of the United Nations in the late 1940s. Dutch experts were sent out to

provide technical assistance – the transmission of knowledge and skills – in United Nations organizations.

In the 1960s there was a shift towards a bilateral approach in the form of programme aid: general financial support for development policy. Because of the rapid growth of welfare in the Netherlands, society became more aware and interested in development aid. The budget for aid increased from 4.5 million Dutch guilders to 328 million in 1972. A new ministerial post was set up within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the Minister without Portfolio, in Charge of Aid to Developing Countries.

The Zambian request for Dutch volunteers did not arise accidentally: Zambian–Dutch relations had already been established outside the development context as a result of Dutch presence in Zambia before independence. According to the first Dutch ambassador in Zambia, Junker Matthias Beelaerts van Blokland, “there was no other country aside from the United Kingdom and South Africa that had so many citizens in Zambia”. Immediately after independence, there were approximately 1,200 Dutch residents in Zambia, the majority of whom were mineworkers or specialists working in the Copperbelt in the 1950s. There were also farmers and Dutch businessmen working for food and liquor companies such as Bols and Honig. Some had a colonial background and knowledge of coffee or tobacco; others came from northern Holland (Friesland) to work with cattle.

Diplomatic relations

Because of the presence of numerous Dutch citizens working in Zambia, the decision was taken to establish a Dutch consulate in 1961 in Ndola, the capital of what was then called the Western Province. The vice-consul was Dutch war veteran Willem Van der Elst, who was working

for Rhodesian Industries Company, a Rhodesian company. The consulate was set up not just for administrative convenience but rather for reasons of safety with regards to the upcoming independence of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), as demonstrated in a letter from the Dutch Consul General in Salisbury (formerly Harare) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

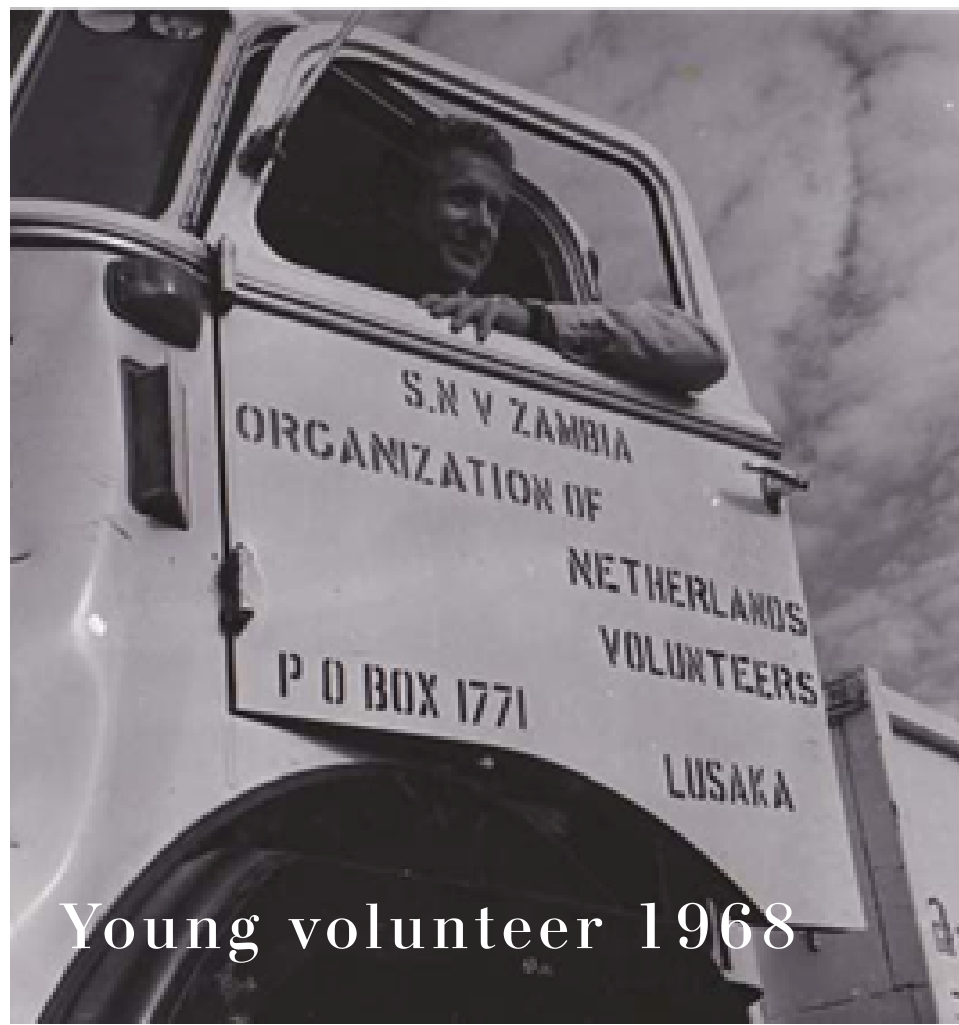
“Indeed, the transition of the colonial rule to a black government will be a fact in a small number of years in Nyasaland, while this development will be postponed for as long as possible in Southern Rhodesia. Northern Rhodesia takes a middle position; there are 70,000 whites against 2.5 million blacks. The white community is therefore too large to just give up the fight for hegemony, but is not large enough to offer resistance to the rise of African nationalism for long (...). The transition to self-regulation in Northern Rhodesia will be accompanied by heavy shocks. Those who speak of a second Congo may be pessimistic, but problems of that scale are certainly among the possibilities. If these eventualities occur, Dutch nationals should be able to rely on active support from the official Dutch side, which from Salisbury could be provided only occasionally.”

After Zambian independence the consulate was moved from Ndola to Lusaka, because the Zambian government demanded that diplomats be based in the capital. The Dutch Consul General of Salisbury, however, who was accredited with Zambia, pleaded for an embassy instead of a consulate, because the Dutch community strongly resisted authority coming from Rhodesia:

“Under the present circumstances, it would be highly objectionable and indefensible if the consulate in Lusaka did not have their own powers at their disposal and would therefore have to rely on the Consulate-General of Salisbury. Anyone who is familiar with the intensity of reaction in Zambia to the companies that operate from Salisbury and with how much favour there is for establishment in Zambia cannot but plead for the swift exclusion of the countries of Zambia and Malawi from the operational area of the Consul General of Salisbury.”

The Royal Netherlands Embassy was therefore opened in Lusaka in 1965. Kaunda received the verification of credentials of the first Dutch ambassador during an official ceremony in 1967. The ambassador remembers it as follows: “The president responded to my speech with kind words and stated that there were no problems with the 1,200 Dutchmen – I omitted to mention that there is a Dutchman in prison in Ndola...”

The failed solar manufacturing venture raises questions about Convalt's track record as it pursues what would be the largest foreign direct investment in Lesotho's history.



Young volunteer 1968



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