

## 2024 was tough, cruel: Teachers

NewsDay By Jairos Saunyama

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*Teachers have been knocking on government's door demanding an increase of their salaries to at least US\$1 200 for the lowest paid teacher, but in vain.*

Teachers in rural areas have admitted that the year 2024 was tough due to a cocktail of challenges that included meagre salaries and shrinking democratic space.

In a Christmas Day statement, Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union (Artuz) secretary-general Robson Chere bemoaned the harsh economic conditions that prevailed in the country, which condemned the educators to abject poverty.

"As we approach the end of 2024, fellow educators, comrades and progressive citizens, we can't help but look back to a gruelling year. Such was 2024 from January to date," Chere said.

"In our short history as a nation since 1980, 2024 probably rivals year 2008 in terms of being economically tough coupled with the unfortunate shrinking of the democratic space.

"This is the year that saw the unjustified continued decrease of real disposable income of teachers, civil servants and the majority of citizens due to low nominal salaries, inflation and an anti-poor tax regime."

Teachers have been knocking on government's door demanding an increase of their salaries to at least US\$1 200 for the lowest paid teacher, but in vain.

"The ZiG [Zimbabwe Gold] strange currency completed our collective economic demise and ushered us into a gloomy and sorrowful festive season," Chere added.

“This is a festive season in terms of the calendar dates and it ends there. The majority of citizens cannot afford basics, hence find themselves without means nor cause to celebrate.

Some teacher unions, including Artuz, this year declared incapacitation, to force government into action, but their moves yielded little to no responses.

Recently, government failed to pay teachers on time and staggered their salaries as national coffers went dry.

“We are ushered into the festive season with gifts of low salaries and staggered bonuses from government,” Chere said.

“Those of us going for retirement are going out to pasture with virtually no savings. A pasture of dry land and destitution is beckoning. Such is our time.”

Artuz said it would amplify its voice in demanding a living wage in 2025.

“For our sake and for our children’s sake, 2025 is the year of joining forces and march forward to reclaim our collective dignity,” the educators’ organisation said.

“On our part as leaders, we make no apology for demanding what rightfully belong to workers and citizens.

“We can only continue to fight. That is our uncompromising pledge.”

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/local-news/article/200036527/2024-was-tough-cruelteachers>

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