

## **Rapid Response to the Zimbabwe political crisis:**

### **What needs to be done now?**

**June 23, 2008**

## **RAPID RESPONSE TO THE ZIMBABWE POLITICAL CRISIS: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NOW?**

The opposition political party in Zimbabwe, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has pulled out of the presidential runoff which was scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2008. The leader of the MDC, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai cited the following reasons for his party's withdrawal:

### **STATE SPONSORED VIOLENCE**

The police have been reduced to bystanders while ZANU PF militia commit crimes against humanity varying from rape, torture, murder, arson, abductions and other atrocities.

ZANU PF militia, dressed in army regalia has been deployed to spearhead the terror campaign in the rural and urban areas. Armed ZANU PF youths are waging a terror campaign and have vowed that the MDC will not rule the county even if it wins.

The Joint Operations Command (JOC) is engineering a violent campaign to subvert the will of the people. The Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) has designed covert operations to destabilize the nation.

ZANU PF has set up over 3000 militia bases across the length and breadth of the country in order to cow and intimidate MDC supporters into submission.

Death and hit squads are on the loose in all the provinces.

War veterans and ZANU PF youths are manning illegal roadblocks with impunity in complicity with the police.

The use of guns and arms of war by ZANU PF militia and war vets to campaign for ZANU PF has virtually militarized the election atmosphere.

All this is being done as State sponsored ploy to tilt the vote in favor of ZANU PF.

## **MDC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE'S CAMPAIGN**

The regime has crippled the MDC Presidential Candidate's campaign. MDC rallies have been banned. Court orders have been ignored. Today, Sunday the 22nd of June 2008, a mere five days before the run-off date, police refused MDC permission to hold its only Star Rally at the open space across the Harare Show Grounds. The MDC successfully sought a High Court Order which granted permission to proceed with the rally. Regrettably, armed ZANU PF thugs occupied the venue in order to prevent the MDC from gathering. MDC supporters were attacked and cars were stoned at the venue. This happened in full view of the police.

Unlawful arrests of the MDC Presidential Candidate have been going on unabated. The public media has flatly refused to flight MDC adverts. To date, no single commercial has aired by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. There is a total blackout of the MDC in the public media in clear contravention of the SADC guidelines and standards governing a free and fair election.

The hate language and the vilification of the MDC Presidential candidate by the public broadcasters and public media are unprecedented. By denying the MDC access to the media the regime has managed to deny them access to the people.

## **DECIMATION OF MDC STRUCTURES**

The MDC Secretary General, Hon. Tendai Biti and MP Advocate Matinenga are illegally detained. Over 2000 MDC supporters including our polling agents are in illegal detention. The arrests have targeted members of Parliament, Councilors, the MDC structures and election agents. Over 200 000 people have been internally displaced. The whole game plan is designed to cripple the MDC campaign.

## **THE ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION (ZEC)**

The MDC is shocked by the level of partisanship of ZEC. We have lost confidence in ZEC. The organization has been staffed by war veterans and ZANU PF militia. In fact, as it stands now, ZEC is not in charge of the management of this election.

## **THE MEDIA**

The media is under attack. There is a complete blackout of the MDC's campaign. Journalists are being harassed and intimidated and foreign journalists barred from entering the country.

## **THE ZANU PF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE**

The ZANU PF candidate has no respect for the MDC, observers, the regional and international community. He has made public pronouncements to the effect that he will not accept defeat. He has declared war by saying that the bullet has replaced the ballot. The statement by General Chiwenga and Commissioner of Prisons Zimondi that they will not respect and accept the will of the people is regrettable and is a clear manifestation that a free and fair election is impossible.

## **PLANNED ELECTION RIGGING BY ZANU PF**

The MDC has unearthed an elaborate and decisive plan by ZANU PF to rig the elections through the following measures:

1. Commandeering the uniformed forces to use the postal ballot and forcing them to vote in front of their superiors.
2. The prevention of MDC election agents to get to the polling stations through roadblocks and arrests.
3. The three Mashonaland provinces have been identified as rigging centers where ballots are going to be stuffed.
4. Villagers are having their national identity cards confiscated denying them their right to vote.
5. There is a plan to record the serial numbers of ballot papers so as to intimidate voters.
6. The holding of forced *pungwes* (overnight meetings) where MDC supporters are beaten and forced to undergo "re-education".
7. The abuse of traditional leaders.
8. The use of massive violence as a weapon to influence the ballot.

## **URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A SADC emergency summit is a must within the next few days and the EU must push for this to happen.
- Push for UN, AU and SADC not to recognize President Mugabe and his government, if he goes ahead to declare himself winner.
- There is need to push the AU during the forthcoming AU Heads of State Summit on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2008 in Cairo, Egypt to suspend Mugabe from the African Union for violating its ban on unconstitutional transfer of power and take assertive action towards reconstituting Zimbabwe into a democratic state.

- The AU/SADC with the help of the EU, UN must pressure Mugabe to call off the run off and restart the process that leads to an internationally assisted/run or supervised election with a definitive democratic process.
- Work towards a transitional authority to be in place for a fixed time frame while working towards a rerun under circumstances that would be conducive to a free and fair election.
- Immediate and unconditional release of the MDC Secretary General, Mr. Tendai Biti and all other political prisoners. (There are about 2000 MDC Activists in detention)
- An exhaustive address of the concerns raised by the opposition, MDC and the dissolution of all infrastructures of violence and impediments to a free and fair election.
- The AU in particular must prepare measures to avert a possible military coup by working with the international community to establish a UN backed peace keeping mission<sup>1</sup>. This can be done in collaboration with the United Nations and the European Union can help lobby for this preparation and offer technical and financial assistance where it is needed.
- Denounce the failure by the police, army, intelligence, courts and the election authorities to abide by International Human Rights standards of professionalism in ensuring free and fair elections, safety of election observers, human rights monitors and civil society actors.
- Withhold development aid until the situation in Zimbabwe returns to normalcy and there is clear and evident compliance with the rule of law, democratic principles, protection and promotion of human rights and clear and sustentative accountability systems and mechanisms<sup>2</sup>.

There is to need to also think about how to engage the rest of civil society in the rest of Africa to support any position that the AU/SADC should act upon. The networks from East and West Africa who were very supportive during the 25<sup>th</sup> Day of Action/Stand up for Zimbabwe campaign and will be critical to get the AU to act. These need to be galvanized once more.

The attention of the International Community's attention is drawn to their responsibility to protect<sup>3</sup> (the people of Zimbabwe). The EU, AU and SADC have obligations to protect the people of Zimbabwe against the systematic violation of human rights and violence.

---

<sup>1</sup> Recently Romeo Dallaire, the Canadian [Army General] who led a[...]United Nations peacekeeping mission in Rwanda just before the genocide, told a workshop on peace and security in Pretoria, South Africa that the situation in Zimbabwe and the Darfur Region was similar to that of Rwanda during the pre-genocide era.(<http://www.thezimbabwetimes.com/?p=527>)

<sup>2</sup> The Zimbabwe government has repeatedly manipulated food for political expediency. There are no guarantees that the government will account for the aid and whether the aid will reach the intended beneficiaries. In this regard, the European Union would rather channel aid through development NGOs in Zimbabwe in order to cushion the poor and vulnerable groups.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This brief was written by Promise Mkwanzani who is currently working with Europe External Policy Advisors (EEPA) on lobby of the European Union and its Member States.

The brief was edited by Washington Katema, from the Zimbabwe Civil Society, Pascal Richard who is the Co-coordinator of Zimbabwe Watch and Mirjam Van Reisen the Director of Europe External Policy Advisors.

EEPA would like to thank civil society organizations in Zimbabwe who provided valuable information and who are doing so under extremely difficult conditions and sometimes at the risk of their lives.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity is an international commitment by governments to prevent and react to grave crises, wherever they may occur. In 2005, world leaders agreed, for the first time, that states have a primary responsibility to protect their own populations and that the international community has a responsibility to act when [...] governments fail to protect the most vulnerable [groups].