

Communiqué

African Solidarity Visit to Zimbabwe 27 November - 1 December 2006

We, the members of the African Solidarity team visiting Zimbabwe from seven African countries, express our strong support to all the citizens and civil society of Zimbabwe who are struggling to realize their fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression, association and assembly and the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

During our visit, we met with representatives of civil society including those from non-governmental organisations, women, students, business, trade unions and faith-based groups, as well as individuals in government and opposition parties. They informed us about the high levels of serious violations of human rights, such crimes as rape and torture and the struggles of ordinary Zimbabweans to attain a decent standard of living. We were also informed of the efforts of the courageous human rights defenders who are challenging the system and demanding respect for and restoration of basic human rights, despite ongoing intimidation and arrests. We observed considerable mistrust of government by civil society and general intolerance of opposing views, even among civil society.

We are concerned, shocked and alarmed at the impact of repressive laws and at the severe human rights abuses by the state machinery that have resulted in deepening poverty, torture and rape, especially amongst women and children. A lady whose business was demolished through Operation Murambatsvina captured the situation as thus: 'The Zimbabwe of today – typified by ongoing wide-spread demolitions, crushing of peaceful dissent and a spiraling standard of living – is not the country we once prayed for and envisioned'.

Despite the frequent human rights abuses by the Government of Zimbabwe on its people, there has been insignificant intervention from governments and civil society in the region and beyond.

Recommendations:

Based on our observations, we recommend that the Government of Zimbabwe:

- Begin building, along with the people of Zimbabwe, the spirit of dialogue, tolerance and peace in order for them to enjoy and realise basic freedoms and socio-economic development.
- Be accountable to its nationals by ensuring that it promotes and protects the human rights of its people through the establishment of an enabling democratic environment.
- Heed the recommendations of the 2005 UN Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe by Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka regarding Operation Murambatsvina, and ensure the housing promised to those whose homes were destroyed is made available.
- Repeal all the repressive laws that impinge on the enjoyment of fundamental human rights - such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Public Order and Security Act, Constitutional Amendment No. 17, and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, as well as the pending NGO Bill.
- Work with the people of Zimbabwe to review the current constitution to make it conform with accepted standards and best practice.
- Establish independent democratic governance institutions such as the Human Rights Commission and Anti-Corruption Commission that will, in a transparent manner, promote and protect the enjoyment of human rights.

In addition, we urge international partners to support the democratic reform of governance institutions in Zimbabwe.

In conclusion, we commit ourselves, and further urge regional governments and civil society institutions, to continue to offer practical solidarity and tangible assistance to the government and people of Zimbabwe.

Signed in Harare on November 30, 2006:

John Kapito (Malawi)

Don Deya (Kenya)

Jeremias Langa (Mozambique)

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