



Africa Action Condemns Escalating Human Rights Abuses in Zimbabwe Calls for Immediate SADC and AU Intervention

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Africa Action, an organization that has stood in principled solidarity with the struggle for human rights, democracy and economic justice in Africa since 1953, roundly condemns the escalation of human rights violations in Zimbabwe. Guided by our belief that the defense of human rights is an international responsibility, Africa Action calls upon the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU), and the United Nations (UN) to immediately intervene to resolve the deteriorating post election crisis in Zimbabwe.

Africa Action strongly denounces the Zimbabwe Republic Police raid on the Zimbabwe Elections Support Network (ZESN) offices and the home of ZESN's National Director Ms Rindai Chipfunde Vava. We note with outrage the rising pattern of systematic violence and human rights abuses against members of Zimbabwe's civic society and the opposition. The ZESN raid, in which the police seized computers and organizational documents, was staged in tandem with a raid at the Movement for Democratic Change Harare headquarters where heavily armed police details arrested 215 opposition supporters and seized computers and documents purportedly to search for subversive material. The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights reports that most of those arrested were internally displaced persons (IDPs) forced to flee their rural homes because of escalating violence against villagers who voted for the opposition in the March 29 elections. Reports are that dozens of rural homes have been demolished and 10 lives lost in the post election violence.

Africa Action calls for the immediate release of those arrested in recent police raids, including ZESN Chairman Noel Kutukwa. We implore Zimbabwe's Security Forces to immediately cease acting in a partisan manner and professionally uphold Zimbabwe's constitution. Further, we call for an immediate end to systematic acts of intimidation and violence against civic society and opposition actors and remind perpetrators that one day they will be held to account.

Zimbabwe can only move forward when the results of the March 29 presidential elections are released and the human and civil rights of Zimbabwean voters is respected. It has become clear that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has failed to release the results because of undue interference from the President Mugabe administration. Africa Action urges SADC and the AU to decisively pressure President Mugabe to immediately release the election results forthwith and accept the outcome. Failure to act resolutely now will undermine SADC and the AU's standing in the region. Inaction by the international community will allow Zimbabwe to sink further into crisis and potentially destabilize the region and further undermine the integrity of the democratic process in Africa.

Africa Action recently joined with TransAfrica Forum in a delegation to Zimbabwe to consult with civic society in their quest for democracy and social justice. Africa Action can give evidence to the pressing need for change in Zimbabwe. The country's economy has virtually collapsed. The living conditions for many are unbearable. Despite the challenging reality, pro-democracy and human rights advocates have struggled to address the situation and have even been victorious in some efforts. Recently the South African Allied Transport Workers Union (SATAWU) and its allies were able to successfully block a shipment of Chinese arms to Zimbabwe that would have further escalated the violence. Africa Action invites Americans to join in solidarity with Zimbabwean civil society in a call for the immediate release of the presidential election results and for respect by all actors of democracy and human rights.