

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AFR 46/019/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 160
23 June 2004

Zimbabwe/South Africa: President Mbeki should be more publicly active in resolving the Zimbabwean crisis

President Thabo Mbeki must intensify efforts to put pressure on the Government of Zimbabwe to end the continued violation of human rights, according to an open letter from human rights and civil society organizations delivered today to President Mbeki.

The letter, signed by Amnesty International (AI) South Africa, AI Zimbabwe and other human rights and civil society organizations from South Africa and Zimbabwe underlines the ongoing and unrelenting nature of the crisis in Zimbabwe. The signatories highlight the disparity between the ideals and principles enshrined both in the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Vision and Mission of the African Union, and the reality of the situation in Zimbabwe as experienced by millions of Zimbabweans.

"In elaborating the Vision of the African Union and Mission of the African Union Commission, African leaders prioritized the realization of social, economic, civil, cultural and political rights, and made a commitment to assist member states to realize these rights. We are therefore urging African states to take a more public stand in resolving the crisis in Zimbabwe," the signatories said.

The organizations that signed the open letter - many of whom are involved in monitoring the human rights situation in Zimbabwe - outlined concrete steps which are needed to tackle human rights abuses. These steps include: the repeal or amendment of all legislation which violates internationally recognized rights; an immediate commitment to restore systems for state accountability; the impartial investigation of all allegations of human rights violations, leading to those responsible being brought to justice; a public commitment to ensuring the right of all Zimbabweans to food, including transparent and impartial distribution of all state-controlled food supplies.

Background

The letter will be published as a full page advert in the South African Mail and Guardian newspaper on Friday 25 June.

Its signatories include: The Amani Trust, AI Zimbabwe, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Zimbabwe), Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, CIVICUS, Coalition for Peace in Africa, Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, Human Rights Institute of South Africa, Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa, Legal Resources Foundation, Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe, Non-violent Action and Strategies for Social Change, Transparency International (Zimbabwe), University of Zimbabwe Legal Aid and Advice Scheme, Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and

Rehabilitation of the Offender, Zimbabwe Association for Doctors for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust, Zimbabwe Human Rights Association, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Zimbabwe Watch, Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association

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