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Zimbabwe: Secret footage reveals desperate plight of homeless

On 20 August, Amnesty International will release secret footage recently smuggled out of Zimbabwe. The footage graphically illustrates the plight of the victims of the Zimbabwean government's Operation *Murambatsvina* -- or Operation "Drive out the rubbish".

The footage was filmed earlier this month and includes shots of victims currently being held in Hopley Farm -- an informal camp on the outskirts of Harare, set up after an official transit camp was closed by the government. The plight of the homeless people at Hopley Farm was only made public when human rights lawyers raise grave concern about the situation and notified humanitarian agencies. Access by the humanitarian agencies was denied until late last week.

"Rather than confront the massive humanitarian crisis that its actions have created, the government of Zimbabwe is compounding suffering and human rights violations by attempting to hide the most visible signs of internal displacement," said Audrey Gaughran, Amnesty International's researcher on Zimbabwe.

"We now know about Hopley Farm -- but how many other locations are there that the world is not aware of? How many thousands of ordinary Zimbabweans are now living in these horrifying conditions? We are calling on the Government of Zimbabwe to immediately make public all the locations to which it has transported victims of Operation *Murambatsvina* and to allow full and unfettered humanitarian access to them."

Last month, the UN released a damning report on the effects of Operation *Murambatsvina*. Transit camps in Harare and Bulawayo were swiftly closed down and the inhabitants taken, mainly under cover of darkness, to be scattered in various rural areas -- such as Hopley Farm -- or sent back to the sites of their demolished homes. Humanitarian actors and NGOs believe the swift closure of the camps was a response to the UN report.

Operation *Murambatsvina* is estimated to have affected some 700,000 people. The Transit Camps housed perhaps 5,000 - 6,000. The vast majority of the victims of home demolitions appear to have been absorbed into now severely overcrowded households in urban and rural areas or are sleeping outside in small groups scattered across the country.

For an interview on the issues raised by the footage, please contact:

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The material is available for download at the following times from the following unencrypted satellites:

0900 - 0915 GMT and 1300 - 1315 GMT

PATH 1 (covering Europe): W2 XP B6 CH H

Downlink freq: 11189.83 Y

FEC: $\frac{3}{4}$

S/R: 5.632

PATH 2 (covering Africa): AB3 MCPC XP C7 (BIT RATE: 7.785)

Downlink freq: 3727 RHCP

FEC: $\frac{7}{8}$

S/R: 29.95

A script of the footage will be available on news.amnesty.org

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

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