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Zimbabwe: Unprecedented call for UN and AU action over evictions by 200 rights groups

As the human rights situation in Zimbabwe steadily deteriorates, with more than 300,000 now evicted from their homes by the government and a UN Special Envoy appointed to investigate the destruction and evictions, a coalition of more than 200 African and international NGOs today issued an unprecedented Joint Appeal to the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) to help the people of Zimbabwe.

Strongly condemning the mass forced evictions, the coalition of organizations urged Nigerian President Obasanjo, as Chair of the AU, to put the crisis in Zimbabwe on the agenda of the upcoming AU Assembly -- scheduled to take place in Libya on 4 - 5 July.

The coalition also called on relevant bodies at the UN, including the Secretary-General, to publicly condemn the ongoing mass violations and take effective action to stop them.

"The appointment of a UN Special Envoy to investigate the mass violations taking place in Zimbabwe is welcome," said a representative of the coalition. "But effective action must also be taken immediately to help those already sleeping on the streets, beside the rubble of their homes -- and to ensure that the evictions and demolitions stop immediately."

"The AU and UN simply cannot ignore such an unprecedented, wide-ranging appeal on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe, particularly from African civil society," said a coalition representative. "African solidarity should be with the people of Africa -- not their repressive leaders."

Amongst the human rights and civic groups signing the Joint Appeal are Zimbabwean Lawyers for Human Rights, the Inter Africa Network for Human Rights (AFRONET), Amnesty International, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and the International Crisis Group.

For interview requests, please ring the following local coalition contact numbers:

UN:	Tel: +1 212 867 8878 ext 4 or +44 (0)7778472 109
Lagos:	Tel: +234 (01) 5550277 / 493560
Johannesburg:	Tel: +27 (082) 4112946, +27 (011) 4037746; +27(082) 5487441
Windhoek:	Tel: +264 (0)61 223 356

Cairo: Tel: +20 (0)2 347 4360 or +20 (0) 12 347 5203 or +41 (0)79 503 1485
Harare: Tel: +263 (0)11 209 468 or +263 4 708 118

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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