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Zimbabwe: Fear of increased level of violations in election aftermath

There is a real risk that there will be a serious increase in human rights violations in the aftermath of the elections in Zimbabwe, said Maina Kiai, Amnesty International's Director for Africa.

A recent Amnesty International mission to Zimbabwe revealed what appears to be a deliberate and well-thought out plan of systematic human rights violations with a clear strategy, constituting state-sponsored terror in the run-up to the elections. The human rights organization is concerned that the number of cases of arbitrary killings, torture and ill-treatment have not decreased in the last three weeks.

"All political party leaders and government officials must commit themselves to ensuring that there will be no retaliations following the elections and that they will uphold human rights regardless of the outcome," Maina Kiai said.

"President Mugabe must publicly state his commitment to respecting human rights during and after the elections, and most importantly, regardless of the outcome of these elections."

The commitment by the Government of Zimbabwe to uphold human rights is crucial over the coming electoral weekend. This must include the following aspects:

Journalists must be allowed to carry out their task of reporting the events and political climate surrounding the elections without fear of intimidation, harassment and assault.

Election monitors must be allowed unhindered access to all the polling stations, their safety must be guaranteed and they must be allowed to remain in Zimbabwe for as long as necessary after the elections.

Police must fulfil their obligations and provide impartial protection to anyone whose human rights might be at risk.

"Election monitors must not be silent witnesses to any violations, during and after the elections," Maina Kiai said. "They must report any human rights violations that they might witness and the institutions sponsoring them must not hesitate to raise these concerns with the Zimbabwean government."

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