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Zimbabwe: Human rights and civic groups call for African leadership to address human rights and humanitarian crisis

Amnesty International, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

Joint Press Release

Today, a coalition of human rights and civic organizations across Africa issued a Joint Appeal on Zimbabwe, sending letters to their Heads of State calling for African leaders and the African Union (AU) to address the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe.

Today's mass letter writing appeal highlights the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country and the failure of African States and the AU to address the situation in any meaningful way.

The organizations also sent letters to President Obasanjo of Nigeria, as Chair of the African Union, and to President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

"The silence of African leaders on Zimbabwe represents a failure to honour their commitments to the human rights of ordinary Africans," said a coalition spokesperson. "Hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans have seen their homes demolished. Now desperate displaced and homeless people are being denied the aid they so badly need - and forced evictions and demolitions continue to take place. When the United Nations Secretary-General calls the situation a 'catastrophic injustice', the African Union cannot continue to remain silent," continued the spokesperson.

Today's letter writing action is also supported by human rights and non-governmental organizations in Asia, Latin America and Europe, many of whom work on the right to housing and shelter, and are appalled by the Zimbabwean government's programme of mass evictions and demolition of homes. Today these organisations also sent the Joint Appeal to their Heads of State and to President Mugabe.

Amongst the calls made by the coalition are for AU action to ensure Zimbabweans can receive humanitarian aid denied them by their government and for the AU to address the human rights situation in Zimbabwe at the Summit of its Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2006.

The Joint Appeal coalition includes Zimbabwean organizations, led by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. International groups supporting the action include the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and international coalitions including the Housing and Land Rights Network -- Habitat International Coalition, CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation and the Latin American coalition Connectas.

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See also: *A Joint Appeal to African Leaders to address the human rights situation in Zimbabwe* (AI Index: AFR 46/030/2005) <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf460302005>

Public Document

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