

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
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Open Letter to Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa, Chair of SADC

Dear President Mwanawasa,

I am writing to you in your capacity as the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). I am appealing to you to convene an emergency summit of the SADC heads of state and government to discuss the deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe.

Since March 2007, Amnesty International has been closely monitoring efforts by SADC states to ensure that the conditions in Zimbabwe enable the country to hold free and fair elections. We welcomed the emergency summit held on 12 April 2008 in Lusaka to try to break the political impasse in Zimbabwe after the 29 March elections. However, the current state-sponsored violence, harassment and intimidation of people perceived to have a political affiliation with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is undermining SADC efforts to end the crisis. People are being killed, tortured and subjected to other ill-treatment while the perpetrators are enjoying complete impunity.

Amnesty International expressed shock yesterday at the discovery of 12 people whose bodies were found dumped in various parts of the country after their abduction. In some cases, the victims were beaten to death. This pattern of human rights violations appears to be intensifying as the country gets closer to the second round of the presidential election, set for 27 June 2008. African election observers who are currently in Zimbabwe have also witnessed some of the violence.

Most of the violence appears to be instigated by soldiers who were deployed first in the rural areas, and later in the urban centres to coordinate President Mugabe's re-election campaign. The soldiers are working closely with "war veterans" and ZANU-PF supporters in intimidating and harassing people accused of having voted "wrongly" during the first round of the election. Reliable sources in Zimbabwe have also reported retaliatory attacks by the MDC.

The Zimbabwe Defence Forces and the Zimbabwe Republic Police are failing in their constitutional duty to protect the rights of all, including the right to life and freedom from torture and other forms of ill-treatment. They have chosen to operate in a partisan manner allowing impunity for human rights violations and abuses to thrive.

Amnesty International is therefore calling on SADC to:

- convene an emergency summit of SADC heads of state and government to discuss the deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe;
- support the deployment of AU or UN human rights monitors to investigate alleged human rights violations and support the full implementation of their recommendations;
- urge the government of Zimbabwe to take immediate steps to guarantee the right to life, freedom from torture and other ill-treatment and freedom of expression and assembly for all. The government should publicly denounce all acts of violence by ZANU-PF supporters, "war veterans" and soldiers, as well as by any other parties, and work with the MDC and civil society to end political violence immediately. It should also immediately withdraw soldiers, who have been deployed in rural and urban areas, who appear to be instigating attacks against people perceived to have voted for the MDC;
- use the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation within SADC to immediately set up an independent and impartial body to investigate all acts of political violence. The investigation's findings and recommendations should be made public.

Yours sincerely

Irene Khan
Secretary General