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Fear for safety /Abduction/

28 March 2002

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ZIMBABWE Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters, perceived supporters
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Dozens of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters and perceived supporters, have been abducted and sometimes "disappeared" in what appears to be a systematic campaign of intimidation against government opponents. MDC polling agents and other members of the party structure remain at high risk of attack from state-sponsored militia, which include veterans of the liberation war that led to independence in 1980.

Zimbabwean election regulations required that the names and addresses of MDC polling agents and other members of the party structure had to be printed in newspapers, and reports confirm that the militia are using these lists to target their attacks and abductions.

Many of the "disappeared" are reportedly being taken to torture camps set up in the run up to the Presidential elections held on 9, 10 and 11 March. Released victims or those who have escaped from these camps have reported how they were subjected to systematic beatings and other forms of torture by war veterans and the state sponsored militia they lead.

In the run-up to the Presidential election political violence escalated at an alarming rate, and continues now after the election. Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) supporters in militia groups sponsored by the state continue to carry out serious human rights violations including abductions, torture and political killings. Since the beginning of the year 26 people have reportedly "disappeared". During the first two weeks of March 2002, human rights groups report that 46 people were reportedly unlawfully detained, bringing the total since the beginning of the year to about 72. Most of those detained were also reportedly tortured. In provinces seen as ZANU-PF strongholds -- Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central and parts of Manicaland -- hundreds of people who supported the opposition are reported to have fled their homes for fear of reprisals by militias composed of ZANU-PF supporters and led by war veterans.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since January 2002 political violence has intensified as the government has given military training to over 1,000 National Youth Service members, who then joined or formed militias. Many of them have reportedly beaten and tortured those perceived to be supporters of the MDC. These acts continue to occur with the apparent complicity of the police. In an incident reported on 28 March, an MDC polling agent arrested on 7 March was allegedly beaten so severely by police and soldiers at Ruda police station, Manicaland province, that he later died as a result of his injuries.

The Presidential elections were characterized by state sponsored or condoned intimidation and by ruling ZANU - PF party attempts to prevent proper monitoring of the election process. In the early hours of 8 March, militias across the country set up illegal roadblocks to prevent the deployment of MDC polling agents, in a coordinated campaign. Provincial governors were appointed by President Mugabe and are in the ranks of senior party officials in each region, and therefore in a position to moderate ZANU-PF attacks.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing serious concern over the continuing grave human rights situation in Zimbabwe;
- asking provincial governors to publicly condemn human rights violations in their province and commit themselves to respecting human rights;
- asking provincial governors to request full police investigations into all allegations of abduction and forced "disappearance" in their province;
- calling for all those who have been abducted and "disappeared" to be immediately released;
- asking provincial governors to use their position and influence within the ruling ZANU-PF to promote respect for human rights by party members;
- asking the provincial governors to call for and support active measures to disband militia groups led by war veterans in their province.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of Mashonaland West
Hon Peter Chanetsa

Chinhoyi
Mashonaland West
Zimbabwe

Telegrams:Governor of Mashonaland West, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe
Fax:+ 263 67 25430
Salutation:Dear Governor

Governor of Mashonaland Central
Hon Elliot T Manyika

Bindura
Mashonaland Central
Zimbabwe

Telegrams:Governor of Mashonaland Central, Bindura, Zimbabwe
Fax:+ 263 71 6200
Salutation:Dear Governor

Governor of Mashonaland East
Hon David Karimanzira

Marondera
Mashonaland East
Zimbabwe

Telegrams:Governor of Mashonaland East, Marondera, Zimbabwe
Fax:+ 263 79 23627
Salutation:Dear Governor

PO Box 535
Mutare
Manicaland
Zimbabwe

Telegrams: Governor of Manicaland, Mutare, Zimbabwe

Fax:+ 263 20 64528/61388

Salutation:Dear Governor,

COPIES TO:

ZANU-PF Secretary for National Security

Mr Nicholas Goche

ZANU PF Head Quarters

Corner Rotten Row/Samora Machel Ave

PO BOX 4530

Harare

Zimbabwe

Fax:+ 263 4 708820/708557

Email: zanupf@africaonline.co.zw

Salutation: Dear Mr Goche

Zimbabwe War Veterans Association

7 Downie Avenue

Belgravia

Harare

Zimbabwe

Salutation:Dear Sir

and to diplomatic representatives of Zimbabwe accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 May 2002.