

Web Action WA 22/05; AI Index AFR 46/022/2005

Start date: 31/10/05

Break the silence: end the human rights violations in Zimbabwe

Break the silence about the rapidly deteriorating human rights and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. Write to the South African, Botswana and Nigerian Presidents to speak out and stop the unfolding catastrophe in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

Human rights violations and humanitarian needs are increasing in Zimbabwe while the world watches in silence.

In May 2005, the government of Zimbabwe initiated a campaign of mass evictions in the poor urban areas of Harare and other parts of the country. The campaign, Operation Murambatsvina, is widely translated as "Drive out the rubbish", but the police refer to it as "Operation Restore Order".

Victims of this military-style evictions campaign watched as soldiers and police destroyed their homes brick by brick, plank by plank. There are now approximately 700,000 people affected. Further, attempts to alleviate their suffering and restore their dignity are restricted in so-called "Transit Camps" where many have been herded.

Mass evictions are only one example of violations committed by a government. Amnesty International has long expressed concern that it systematically curtails human rights and democratic freedom.

Zimbabwe is a State party to international treaties, all of which oblige the government to respect and protect human rights.



[link to <http://news.amnesty.org/mavp/mediaclip.nsf/0/306F2EE60887486580257065006073B0>; or a different video on <http://news.amnesty.org/pages/zwe-avarchives-eng>]

[Read more](#)

Despite Zimbabwe's international obligations, the government is not meeting its responsibilities towards its people. African leaders have been silent over the unfolding crisis. This contributes to a culture of impunity.

It is time to break the silence.

Urge your government to take action against the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. Your action counts.

Your Excellency,

RE: Break the silence - end the human rights violations in Zimbabwe

I am writing to you as part of an Africa-wide appeal for African leaders to break the culture of silence on the deepening human rights and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe.

I have serious concerns about the Zimbabwean government's failure to acknowledge the human rights challenges facing the country and to implement recommendations by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe.

The recent mass evictions left hundreds of thousands displaced, homeless and in urgent need for humanitarian assistance. The government of Zimbabwe continues to restrict humanitarian access to UN agencies and NGOs, resulting in further violation of the rights of the internally displaced persons, including their right to food, shelter, water and health.

The mass evictions are only part of the broader human rights crisis in Zimbabwe which started in 2000.

I call on your government to:

- Publicly support the findings contained in the report by African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the other by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Human Settlement Issues in Zimbabwe
- Publicly urge the government of Zimbabwe to implement the recommendations contained in the two reports as a first step to resolve the human rights crisis
- Publicly ask the government of Zimbabwe to ensure that all those who are currently homeless as a result of the mass evictions have immediate access to emergency relief
- Publicly call on the government of Zimbabwe to respect the right to an effective remedy for all victims of human rights violations including access to justice, and appropriate reparations which can involve restitution, rehabilitation, compensation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.

Yours sincerely,

- [His Excellency the Hon. Olusegun Obasanjo](#)
AU Chairperson
President of Nigeria
The Presidency
Federal Secretariat Phase 2
Shehu Shagari Way
Abuja
Nigeria
Fax: +234 9 234 1010
Email: ssa@nopa.net

- His Excellency Festus Mogae,
SADC Chairperson
President of Botswana
Office of the President
P/Bag 001
Gaborone
Botswana
Fax: +267 3950888
- His Excellency Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki
President of the Republic of South Africa
Private Bag X1000
PRETORIA0001
The Republic of South Africa
Fax: +27 12 321 8870

Want to take another action? Write to another African government [\[this is a link to another page: see below\]](#)

- Sua Excelência Armando Emílio Guebuza
Presidente da República
Gabinete do Presidente da República
Avenida Julius Nyerere 1780
Maputo
República de Moçambique
Fax: +258 21 492 068
- His Excellency Levy P. Mwanawasa
Office of the President
State House
PO Box 30135
Lusaka
Zambia
Email: state@zamnet.zm
- His Excellency
Sir Aneerood Jugnauth
President
State House
Le Réduit
Mauritius
Fax: +230 464 5370
- His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa
The President of the United Republic of Tanzania
Office of the President
PO Box 2422
Zanzibar
Tanzania
Fax: +255 22 211 3425
- His Excellency President Hifikepunye Pohamba
Office of the President

State House
Private Bag 13339
Windhoek
Republic of Namibia
Fax: +264 61 221 780

- Son Excellence
Monsieur Abdoulaye Wade
Président de la République
La Présidence
Avenue Roume
BP 168
DAKAR
Sénégal
Fax: +221 821 86 60

Image caption and copyright information

Amnesty International actively monitors and campaigns on the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean government is failing to respect and protect the rights of its citizens enshrined in Zimbabwe's Constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and other international treaties to which Zimbabwe is a State party.

Many human rights violations are detailed in two reports produced by:

- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights [\[link to report\]](#)
- United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy on Human Settlements in Zimbabwe [\[link to report\]](#)

They contain vital recommendations as a first step to stop the situation from deteriorating.

The government of Zimbabwe refuses to acknowledge the human rights and humanitarian crisis and continues to adopt policies and practices that violate human rights and compound human suffering.

Latest AI News

[Zimbabwe: Amnesty International rejects AU claim that violations are 'internal' matter](#) (NEWS)

AFR 46/020/2005

[Zimbabwe: Food must not be used as a political tool](#) (NEWS)

AFR 46/014/2004

[Zimbabwe: Unlawful suppression of independent media](#) (NEWS)

AFR 46/001/2004

Latest AI Reports

[Zimbabwe: Human rights defenders under seige](#) (REPORTS)

AFR 46/001/2005

[Zimbabwe: An assessment of human rights violations in the run-up to the March 2005 parliamentary elections](#) (REPORTS)

AFR 46/003/2005

[Zimbabwe: Power and hunger - violations of the right to food](#) (REPORTS)

AFR 46/026/2004