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## **Zimbabwe: Put human rights at the top of the political agenda**

As the Zimbabwean political parties finalise the process of setting up a new government, Amnesty International challenges the new regime to demonstrate a commitment to human rights in its first 100 days in power.

Amnesty International has issued a five point human rights agenda for the new government to implement as its first steps to address Zimbabwe's legacy of impunity for human rights violations.

"For nearly a decade the people of Zimbabwe have endured immense suffering as a result of the government's policies against perceived opponents. It is against this background that we are calling on President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister-designate Morgan Tsvangirai to take concrete steps to demonstrate their government's commitment to internationally recognized human rights," said Simeon Mawanza Amnesty International's Zimbabwe expert.

"The deteriorating economic and social conditions must also be a priority for this government. The people of Zimbabwe urgently need food, housing, essential health care, safe drinking water, sanitation and education," said Simeon Mawanza. "If the government is unable to deliver these basic necessities, it will have to seek international cooperation and assistance and remove unnecessary restrictions."

Amnesty International also called for the immediate and unconditional release of Prisoners of Conscience, Jestina Mukoko, Broderick Takawira and Pascal Gonzo. These three human rights workers have been in custody since early December when they were abducted by state security agents. The organization also expressed concern over the continued ill-treatment of political detainees, like Fidelis Chiramba of the MDC, who is reported to be in urgent need of hospitalisation.

### Editors' notes

On 5 February the Parliament of Zimbabwe passed Amendment No. 19 to the Constitution which allows the setting up of an "Inclusive Government". According to a timeline agreed by both parties, Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC will be sworn in as the country's Prime Minister on 11 February together with two Deputy Prime Ministers. Other members of the cabinet and deputy ministers will be sworn in on 13 February.

At least 30 political detainees are known to be in custody at present. These include the director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, Jestina Mukoko, two members of her staff and more than two dozen MDC activists abducted between October and December 2008. The state has been accused of torture and has repeatedly frustrated efforts by the detainees to get access to much needed health care.