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## **Zimbabwe: Sharp crackdown on political opponents**

Amnesty International today condemned the detention of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai, saying that his detention was part of a sudden, sharp and dangerous crackdown on political opposition in the run-up to the elections.

“Morgan Tsvangirai should be released immediately – or charged with a recognizable criminal offense,” said Amnesty International.

According to reports, Morgan Tsvangirai was arrested at a roadblock north of Bulawayo and is being held at a police charge office in Lupane. It is not clear what the charges are against him.

In March 2007, Tsvangirai, along with other MDC and other civil society activists, was severely beaten while in police custody and had to be hospitalised.

His arrest comes the day after the publication by Amnesty International of a damning report highlighting the extensive human rights violations that have taken place since parliamentary and presidential elections were held in March 2008. These include unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, beatings, and the harassment and intimidation of mainly MDC supporters and human rights defenders in Zimbabwe.

The organization revealed that a witness to the abduction of an MDC senatorial candidate Shepherd Jani by suspected Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) agents has gone into hiding after he and his family received threatening phone calls from men believed to be state agents, who told him to hand himself in at Harare Central Police station. Amnesty International says his life is at risk and his family has also been threatened.

Kumbirai Masimo witnessed the abduction on 21 May of Shepherd Jani, senatorial candidate for Murewa North. Jani was abducted by suspected CIO operatives and his body was found days later.

“The government of Zimbabwe must ensure the safety and security of Morgan Tsvangirai, Kurmirai Masimo and all others at risk during this dangerous crackdown on those deemed to be a political threat to the ruling government,” said Amnesty International.

The organization said that the bulk of the human rights violations are being perpetrated by supporters of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party and members of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWA) -- generally known as “war veterans”.

State security organisations, in particular the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) have been unwilling to act against these perpetrators – allowing them to kill, torture, assault and burn homes and businesses of

suspected MDC supporters with impunity. In fact, in some cases authorities have instigated or even directed attacks by these groups.

The Zimbabwean government is also severely tightening restrictions on international aid agencies operating in Zimbabwe.

“By introducing restrictions against aid workers in Zimbabwe, including CARE International, which was recently forced to suspend all of its field operations in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean government is attempting to hide the worst of the state-sponsored violence from the eyes of the world,” said Amnesty International. Millions of people in Zimbabwe will be affected by the aid restrictions, which are likely to worsen significantly Zimbabwe’s food security problems.

To see a copy of the report *Zimbabwe: A trail of violence after the ballot*, please click [here](#).