

17 November 2008

President Robert Mugabe
Office of the President
Munhumutapa Building
Cnr Samora Machel Ave/Sam Nujoma Street
Harare, Zimbabwe

RE: Call for Respect of International Human Rights Norms in Zimbabwe

Dear President Mugabe,

We, the undersigned representatives of civil rights, human rights, and advocacy organizations, write to call for an end to the violent crackdown on activists engaging in peaceful demonstrations, including illegal detentions and charges in breach of international human rights law currently occurring in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Zimbabwe is a party, provide for freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. However, peaceful demonstrators are frequently held to be in violation of the Public Order and Security Act, with excessive force utilized by arresting police officers when disbanding gatherings.

The continuing pattern of harassment of human rights defenders in Zimbabwe is exemplified in the frequent arrests and beatings of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) members, in particular co-founders Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu. The women were arrested on 16 October in Bulawayo while holding a peaceful demonstration demanding governmental distribution of food aid. They were detained for their efforts to highlight the plight of Zimbabwe's citizens. Ms. Williams and Ms. Mahlangu were granted bail on 5 November, after being imprisoned for 21 days in conditions that do not meet with international standards.

We urge your government to respect all human rights defenders in Zimbabwe, who continue to call for adherence to international human rights standards and better living standards. We ask that you use your good offices to bring about an end to the harassment of these committed citizens, struggling to protect the rights of all Zimbabweans.

Thank you very much for your prompt consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Larry Cox, Executive Director, Amnesty International USA
Nicole Lee, Executive Director, TransAfrica Forum
Georgette Gagnon, Director of the Africa Division, Human Rights Watch
Elisa Massimino, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Human Rights First
Gerald LeMelle, Executive Director, Africa Action

Kim Gandy, President, National Organization for Women
James E. Winkler, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church
Mary E. McClymont, Interim Executive Director, Global Rights
A. Frank Donaghue, Chief Executive Officer, Physicians for Human Rights
Rocco Puopolo, Executive Director, Africa Faith and Justice Network
Kristin Peterson, Coordinator, Association of Concerned Africa Scholars
Emira Woods, Editor, Foreign Policy in Focus, Institute for Policy Studies
Melvin Foote, Executive Director, The Constituency for Africa
David Hartsough, Executive Director, PEACEWORKERS, San Francisco, CA
Wanjiru Kamau, President & CEO, African Immigrant & Refugee Foundation
Monica Brown, Foundation for Democracy in Africa

Individuals:

Jennifer Davis, Executive Director Emeritus, American Committee on Africa
Margaret J. Welke, Madison, Wisconsin
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Rev. Susan Leo, Portland, Oregon
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