

# Africa Democracy Forum

*Building Democracy for Peace, Development,  
and Human Rights in Africa*

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## **ADF STATEMENT ON POLITICAL CRISIS IN ZIMBABWE**

The Africa Democracy Forum, a network of over 430 democracy and human rights organizations throughout Africa, expresses its deep concern over the worsening political crisis and a large scale of violence against civilians in this pre-presidential runoff election period in Zimbabwe.

Recent reports from the ADF members working in and on Zimbabwe indicate the worsening situations in the country as the June 27 presidential run-off election gets closer. The opposition party's campaign has been systematically disrupted by the government, and voices of civil society calling for a free and fair election have been silenced. The ADF is increasingly alerted that an environment for a free and fair election has not been secured. For example, over the last two weeks, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), has been detained three times. He has also been denied often a permit to hold a rally for his campaign. Other MDC leaders have been arrested, tortured, or harassed as well.

The ADF is particularly concerned about the recent arrest of the MDC Secretary-General, Mr. Tendai Beti. On Thursday, June 12, 2008, he was arrested as he returned to Harare from South Africa and has been detained in an unknown location. The police has indicated that he would be charged for treason. If convicted, he would face a death penalty. Mr. Beti is the chief negotiator for MDC in the talks facilitated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). His detention and possible conviction might end the efforts for seeking possible negotiated options in to end the current political and humanitarian crises in Zimbabwe.

Moreover, the ADF strongly condemns the increasing threats against civil society groups in the country, which have been calling for a free and fair election and defending human rights. In recent weeks, the ADF has received reports that democracy and human rights activists have been beaten and arrested increasingly. 14 members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise, urging the Government to stop the electoral violence, were arrested on 28 May. On 3 June, a member of the non-government group, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), was allegedly beaten in Mt. Darwin East, Mutyaendaedza Village, by individuals known to be ZANU PF supporters. On 8 June, over a dozen of the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe staff members were also arrested for allegedly holding a public meeting without permit. On the same day, the Chairperson of the National Constitution Assembly (NCA) for Guruve Constituency, Mr. Biggie Bangira, was arrested on baseless grounds while the home of the NCA Information Secretary in Epworth, Mr Musa Mabika, was attacked by ZANU PF militia. Mr. Mabika's wife and sister were severely beaten. Many groups, such as Zimrights, the National Association of Non-Governmental Associations (NANGO), and Bulawyo Agenda, have also received various threats from militias supporting the governing party, ZANU-PF, and have been forced to close their offices. Many of those arrested were detained only briefly, however.

These cases mentioned above are only a handful of examples of the reported arrests and harassments of civil society groups. To respond to this increasingly threatening environment for civil society in Zimbabwe, the ADF urges the Government of Zimbabwe to maintain its constitutional and international legal engagements and to respect rights of civil society organizations, which are articulated in the recently published report on *Defending Civil Society* by the World Movement for Democracy.

The ADF also calls the African Union, SADC, the European Union, the United Nations, and other members of the international community, to take urgent actions to help provide a secured environment for a free and fair election and a peaceful democratic transition in Zimbabwe.

Finally, the ADF expresses its support for and solidarity with all Zimbabwean people who tirelessly continue working to bring a democratic society in their country despite of the severely repressive environment.

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Hannah Forster  
Chairperson  
African Democracy Forum