Published on *Treatment Action Campaign* (http://tac.org.za/community)

March to end human rights abuses in Zimbabwe

By *moderator*
Created *2007/03/16 - 12:00am*
16 March, 2007 - 00:00 ? moderator

Contents

- Call to march by the Save Zimbabwe Campaign Coalition
- Letter by Achmat and Geffen on Zimbabwe

Call to march by the Save Zimbabwe Campaign Coalition

Support the Save Zimbabwe Campaign Coalition on Friday 16th & Saturday 17th March 2006 in protest over the flagrant abuse of human rights in Zimbabwe. This protest coincides with the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank Conference to be held in South Africa at the Cape Town Parliament from the 15th -18th of March 2007.

Marches will be held

Date 16TH March 2007
Meeting Point: Grand Parade
Time: 2pm.
We will March around the city centre From Plein Street through Victoria Road, Adderley Street, Queen Victoria Street and back to Parliament

Date 17TH March 2007
Meeting Point: Grand Parade
Time: 10am
We will March around the city centre From Plein Street through Victoria Road, Adderley Street, Queen Victoria Street and back to Parliament

For more details contact organisers on 0832752184, 0783595601, 07661233652

[END OF SAVE ZIMBABWE CAMPAIGN COALITION CALL]

Civil society must help stop Zimbabwe?s tyranny

Published as a letter in the Cape Times, 15 March 2007

By Zackie Achmat and Nathan Geffen

As we write this Morgan Tsvangirai, Arthur Mutambara, Lovemore Maduku and most of the legitimate Zimbabwean

leadership are detained in prison. Tsvangirai has been assaulted in custody. Apparently so was Madhuku. There are allegations that Nelson Chamisa, Mike Davies and Elton Mangom have been tortured and other leaders have been reported missing.

The brutality of Zanu PF this week against high profile people offers us a view of how it has employed torture to destroy the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans. We all know of the hyperinflation, land invasions and laws to crush political dissent. But the understandable fear of ordinary Zimbabweans and SABC's poor coverage of the state?s terror means that we seldom hear the stories of daily suffering.

Gabriel Shumba is a human rights lawyer. His testimony to the United States House Committee on International Relations is bleak. He has been arrested, assaulted or tortured 14 times by Mugabe's government. His testimony describes how police arrested him while he was taking a brief from a Member of Parliament in hiding. They assaulted Shumba and threatened him with dogs. He and his fellow arrestees were held in separate prisons, a tactic ?designed to prevent their relatives or lawyers access to them when they are tortured in torture chambers scattered all over the country.?

Shumba describes his prison conditions, ?I was only booked into the cells at around 3:00am. I was denied blankets and had to sleep on a concrete floor. The cell that was about 3m x 4m housed over 20 inmates. I had to spend the whole night squatting in a pool of urine and human waste. This revolting mixture had maggots and worms that irritated or bit at me the whole night. As if this was not enough, I had to endure the torment of other denizens of the cell, which included lice and bed bugs.?

He was later kicked by about 15 interrogators who told him either to tell the truth or die a slow and painful death. He was hung upside down on planks and assaulted on the feet with truncheons.

A leading Zimbabwean AIDS activist wrote to the Treatment Action Campaign during Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, Mugabe's notorious ?Clean up Rubbish? campaign, ?I visited a widow who is running a widows and orphanage trust. It took me four hours to travel nine kilometres ... Displaced people have gathered at her house for shelter and food. I can't describe the desperation of people with HIV there. ... We are just dying one-by-one. No one seems to have the courage to tell people in authority that they need to think humanely.?

Why does the South African government not have the courage to tell the Zanu PF government to act humanely? Why is it that Shumba's testimony was given in front of a US senate committee and not the South African or African Union Parliaments? Our government has correctly condemned the war-waging of the US government, even though we have little influence on US policy. But we remain almost silent on the gross abuses of a government which we have more power to influence than almost any other in the world.

But South African civil society, including our organisation, has also done too little. We (government and civil society) are all responsible for the human rights abuses, hunger and tyranny over our neighbours. We treat Zimbabwean and other refugees deplorably.

COSATU has been the leading critical voice here against Mugabe's abuses but now all civil society organisations must help strengthen COSATU's campaign and make it sustainable. Predicting events in Zimbabwe is precarious, but it appears we are at a critical juncture. The Zimbabwean opposition has begun uniting and mobilising again. Also, reports of Mugabe's hold on power weakening mean that the Zanu PF thugs who wish to replace him might believe now is the opportune time to destroy the MDC leadership. South African civil society must act now with sustained conviction, or risk silent complicity in allowing the situation to deteriorate further.

We have to hold vigils outside Parliament,interfaith services and march on the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria. We must support demonstrations being organised by Zimbabwean activists. We must compel our government to do its duty and condemn human rights abuses and terror. It must consult legitimate Zimbabwean leaders and civil society on action against the torturers and their political bosses. But South African civil society must consider going

further. Civil disobedience against the Zimbabwean government has become necessary. We must blockade the Zimbabwean embassy calling for an end to torture, the end of media restrictions and free and fair elections monitored and run by the United Nations.

Achmat is the TAC's chairperson. Geffen is the TAC's policy co-ordinator ? they write in their personal capacities.

[END OF LETTER]

- Zimbabwe Government
- Zimbabwe Government

Source URL (retrieved on *2017/02/20 - 1:41pm*): http://tac.org.za/community/node/2164