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MUGABE'S REVENGE

Halting the Violence in Zimbabwe

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Zimbabwe is facing a deepening political crisis, marked by state-sponsored violence against opposition party supporters. Following the March 29 presidential and parliamentary elections, in which the opposition won control of parliament and won more votes in the presidential contest, the government unleashed a nationwide campaign of violence against opposition groups. At least 32 supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change, or MDC, have been killed, over 700 have sought medical treatment, over 6700 have been displaced, and over 1000 people have been arrested. All signs point to the situation worsening, with the government using violence and intimidation ahead of a runoff presidential election announced by the government.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has never been so close to losing power, and appears willing to use all means available to physically beat his opponents into submission. As the international community considers its response to the complex crisis in Zimbabwe, its first order of business must be to stop the violence. The United States must diplomatically engage with African leaders to discuss a common way forward and put pressure on the regime to end the violence.

The United Nations Security Council must send a monitoring team to investigate the violence and make recommendations to the Council. The Security Council should also refer the case of Zimbabwe to the International Criminal Court to investigate crimes against humanity. The international community should further Zimbabwe's diplomatic isolation through an arms ban and expanded targeted sanctions against top officials within the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, or ZANU-PF.

In order to prevent an escalation of the violence and degeneration into state-sponsored mass atrocities—as have been seen before under Mugabe's

direction—the international community must also act to ensure that a legitimate, democratic government is seated in Zimbabwe. U.S. diplomats should coordinate with African leaders to develop a plan of incentives pressuring Mugabe to leave, and an alternative plan should he defy the democratic will of Zimbabwe and remain in power.

THE MARCH 2008 ELECTION: PLANS GONE AWRY

ZANU-PF's losses in the March 29 elections were unexpected given that the ruling party's history of vote-rigging made an opposition victory unlikely. In January of this year, Mugabe backed out of South African-mediated talks with the MDC and announced plans for a snap election just two months away—indicating he was confident in the ruling party's chances. When elections were announced, the MDC was reeling from internal divisions that split the party and produced competing MDC candidates in many electoral districts.¹ After the MDC faction headed by Arthur Mutambara backed former ZANU-PF Finance Minister Simba Makoni for president, the opposition risked splitting the presidential vote as well. The government and the MDC also amended the Electoral Act ahead of the vote, which gave ZANU-PF huge advantages in electoral administration in exchange for what was then perceived as a relatively minor concession—announcing voting results at each poll site.

However, political violence, corruption, and gross mismanagement of the economy proved to be ZANU-PF's undoing. Over the last three years many Zimbabweans resorted to the barter system after six-digit inflation left the Zimbabwe Dollar nearly worthless. Starvation hit rural areas while fuel shortages and dwindling imports of spare parts brought transportation to a standstill. Unemployment was conservatively placed at 80 percent, and

¹ In November 2005 the MDC split into two factions—one headed by President Morgan Tsvangirai, and one led by Gibson Sibanda which eventually chose Arthur Mutambara as its president. The split was spurred by a disagreement over whether to contest the Senate elections of 2005, but had its roots in personal differences of opinion among top leaders and allegations of violence between party members. The Mutambara faction supported Makoni in the presidential election as he was seen as a reformer who would break with Mugabe's policies to restore the economy.

even office workers in the capital ate one meal a day and walked hours to their jobs because they could not afford transportation. Yet ZANU-PF was so convinced of the MDC's weakness that it called elections despite the crumbling state of affairs. This miscalculation was abundantly evident on polling day.

As election results were announced, an unexpected pattern became clear. ZANU-PF was not only losing in urban opposition strongholds, but was also trailing in rural areas, where it has traditionally drawn stronger support. Key party leaders lost their parliamentary seats. In a vote-rigging oversight, the periodic announcement of parliamentary results from local polling sites meant that ZANU-PF could not easily halt the vote count, nor could they manipulate the results from a central location. Before party leaders could control the situation, ZANU-PF lost Parliament by splitting the Senate and losing control of the House of Assembly. These losses were not only devastating because they signaled the weakness of the party; they also meant that ZANU-PF could no longer control a parliamentary election for a new president if Mugabe won but left office before the end of his term.

Independent estimates confirm that Tsvangirai defeated Mugabe in the presidential election by winning around 50 percent of the total vote count—the number above which a runoff election would be unnecessary.² The MDC will contest the runoff, though Tsvangirai maintains that the voters have spoken and he should be seated as president. The United States should work closely with the Southern African Development Community (the regional organization known as SADC) and mobilize international actors to verify the accuracy of the numbers, send in poll monitors, and ensure a free and fair runoff.

Prospects for a legitimate Mugabe victory in the runoff election are remote. Key factors on the voters' minds, including the economy and the political stalemate, cannot be addressed in the short period leading up to a runoff. Further, former presidential candidate Simba Makoni is expected to endorse Tsvangirai in a move that could influence moderates in ZANU-PF. The MDC has clear advantages, but Mugabe will not leave office without a fight.

ELECTION AFTERMATH: ZANU-PF CRACKS DOWN

Given the failure of more subtle tactics like vote-rigging, Mugabe has fallen back on his most favored repressive tactic: state organized violence. Before the March poll, ZANU-PF's plan was to control the airwaves, print media, and the executive branch; influence the Electoral Commission; manipulate the electoral process by decreasing the number of polling places in MDC strongholds and gerrymandering electoral districts; and split the MDC by infiltrating party structures and exacerbating differences among the leadership. These advantages were supposed to deliver a ZANU-PF victory, but ultimately Mugabe's regime could not defeat a desperate population. Now, Mugabe is turning to more extreme tactics. "The country ... is now caught in an avalanche of violence and a slow, systematic destruction of the structures and membership of the MDC," said MDC Secretary General Tendai Biti.³

Signs out of Harare portray a desperate government executing a campaign of violence to maintain its grip on power. At least 32 opposition supporters have been killed by government agents and supporters since the March elections with thousands hospitalized, displaced or arrested. These crimes

² The Zimbabwe Election Support Network, a civil society organization pressing for adherence to proper election standards, conducted an analysis of the election based on internationally-recognized criteria collected by accredited observers. The results showed that Morgan Tsvangirai received 49.4 percent of the vote with a 2.5 percent margin of error. See "ZESN Poll Projections on March 29 Presidential Elections," ZESN, March 31, 2008 available at http://www.zesn.org.zw/newsflash_view.cfm?nfid=29. The MDC cites figures stating that Tsvangirai won with 50.3 percent of the vote. These figures are the result of an analysis based on parallel vote tabulation. Election results were posted outside most voting stations by the Zimbabwe Election Commission soon after the March 29 vote. An analysis of the results of 209 constituencies revealed that Tsvangirai broke the 50 percent barrier. See <http://www.sokwanele.com/election2008>.

³ E-mail exchange with the author, April 19, 2008.

are part of a campaign the government is calling Operation Mavhoterapapi, or “Operation Who did you vote for?” The goals are retribution against MDC supporters seen to have betrayed Mugabe and ZANU-PF, and a runoff election victory by keeping MDC voters away from the polls.

The Operation is a highly organized campaign using uniformed state security forces and ZANU-PF militias. Country clubs, business centers, and schools have been turned into torture centers for use against MDC supporters. Perpetrators are alleged to have lists of local MDC leaders who are often kidnapped and taken to these torture centers for days at a time. Residents of parliamentary districts won by the MDC are beaten in their villages. Perpetrators are torching houses and killing livestock, sometimes burning them alive. In late April, 400 internally displaced victims who fled state-sponsored violence in rural areas were dragged out of MDC headquarters in Harare and arrested.

The so-called “War Veteran” militias have revived their farm invasions and attacked both commercial farm owners and poor farm workers alike.⁴ At least 130 commercial farms have been occupied by the militias, further exacerbating food shortages. Foreign journalists and international aid workers have been dragged out of hotels in the capital and imprisoned. The ZANU-PF propaganda machine has also revved up—telling residents in rural areas that the United Kingdom has troops massing on Zimbabwe’s borders in an effort to recolonize the country if the MDC wins.

FROM BAD TO WORSE?

As bad as these abuses are, the Zimbabwean government appears to be gearing up for a much bloodier phase of the campaign. After the election, a Chinese ship with arms bound for Zimbabwe attempted to

unload its cargo in South Africa for transport to Harare. The ship carried 1500 rocket propelled grenades, 3000 mortar rounds, and 3 million rounds of AK-47 ammunition. In a show of solidarity with the democracy movement in Zimbabwe, South African dock workers refused to offload the cargo, independent of any directive from the South African government. Accounts differ as to whether the ship unloaded elsewhere in southern Africa or returned to China. Regardless of the cargo’s fate, China has made no public pronouncements that it will cease arms shipments to Zimbabwe altogether and may simply deliver the arms by other means.

Worse still, Mugabe has mobilized numerous state organs capable of intensifying a massive wave of violence. Traditional state security services such as the army, police, and Central Intelligence Organization have always blurred the line between loyalty to country and loyalty to ZANU-PF. In addition, ZANU-PF has organized and supports youth militias, such as the Green Bombers, to fight on behalf of the party. These militias are housed and trained at facilities around the country and are being deployed to disrupt rallies and attack civilians in opposition strongholds.

Against this backdrop, the MDC and civil society organizations may be primed for a final showdown with ZANU-PF, heightening the risk of bloodshed. Although an MDC post-election call for a national strike was largely ignored (indicating how difficult strikes are to execute given the dire economic situation), the MDC has never been so close to having a presidential victory recognized. A blatantly stolen presidential election could be the spark that ignites street protests. Even if the MDC fails to organize demonstrations, the deteriorating economy and a complete lack of faith in the political system may spur unorganized protests and street confrontations similar to the food riots of 1998.⁵ Zimbabwe’s food shortages—stemming from drought and poor

⁴ See Appendix I for a background to the crisis.

⁵ In January 1998, food prices in Zimbabwe rose almost 40 percent, prompting riots in which eight people died and nearly 2000 were arrested. The food riots were notable for the brazen manner in which citizens expressed their displeasure with the government. To that point, the government was rarely confronted publicly. See “A Consolidated Report on the Food Riots 19-23 January, 1998,” The Amani Trust on behalf of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, available at http://www.hrforumzim.com/members_reports/foodriots98/food9801.htm.

agricultural policies—will likely be exacerbated by rising food prices on the world market, which could contribute to instability.

WHAT OPTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS?

Violence and the current political crisis must be dealt with on separate tracks. A political settlement will take time, while diplomatic intervention aimed at stopping the violence cannot wait. The priority for the United States and international actors is to end the wave of attacks against MDC members and create an environment where a political settlement is possible. To do this, the U.S. government should help build international consensus to condemn the Zimbabwean government for its campaign, and bring all possible pressure to restore peace.

The U.S. government can be the engine that drives a solution, but the details of such a solution should arise from partnerships with regional governments. In late April, former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan addressed reporters on the crisis and asked: “Where are the Africans? Where are their leaders and the countries in the region, what are they doing? It is a rather dangerous situation. It’s a serious crisis with impact beyond Zimbabwe.”⁶ This leadership void has been partially filled by African civil society, exemplified by the South African dock workers who sought to protect Zimbabwean citizens. Citizen outrage, as demonstrated by dock workers, trade unions, and church leaders throughout southern Africa, should be the model around which the United States and SADC countries determine their course of action.

1. Imposing a cost to stop the violence

The United States and other concerned nations must immediately establish a cost for violence organized and directed by Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

Absent strong measures to end impunity, Mugabe will calculate that he can stay in power through violently rigging the run-off election. First, U.S. diplomats should urge the U.N. Security Council to build off the briefing it received by MDC Secretary General Tendai Biti in late April and immediately send a team to investigate the violence and make recommendations to the Council. If Zimbabwean officials obstruct this mission, the Security Council should impose targeted sanctions.

Second, the United States should consult with its European allies on the U.N. Security Council and press for them to refer the case of Zimbabwe to the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court for investigation into crimes against humanity. Mugabe’s regime has been responsible for violence against its own citizens on several occasions since 2002, when the ICC’s jurisdiction began.⁷ These crimes should be investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted.

Third, the United States should press all international actors to cease selling weapons to Zimbabwe to reduce Mugabe’s capacity for attacks against the unarmed MDC. U.S. diplomats should consult with SADC, and expand their focus on other traditional allies of Mugabe such as Libya, Malaysia, and China. If arms shipments reach Harare, violence could spike to horrifying levels.

2. Preventing future violence through a negotiated settlement

Continued diplomatic engagement focused on seating a legitimate government in Zimbabwe is the only avenue available to prevent further bloodshed. Absent this, only two things are certain: 1) any vestiges of stability will be destroyed under the weight of a regime without authority to rule, leading to more violence, and 2) if healthy, Mugabe could stay in power for another six years,

⁶ “Zimbabwe Recount Deepens Crisis,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 21, 2008, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0421/p07s02-woaf.html>.

⁷ In 2005 the Zimbabwean Government launched Operation Murambatsvina, or Operation Drive out the Trash, in which poor Zimbabweans in urban areas had their homes destroyed in a purported effort to clear slums. Over 300,000 people were displaced without alternate accommodations being provided, forcing them to abandon cities and return to families in rural areas, where there were no jobs. The Operation focused almost exclusively on areas that were MDC strongholds, thus diluting MDC urban support when displaced persons fled to their rural home areas.

causing what is left of the Zimbabwean state to collapse. To prevent the nightmare scenario from unfolding, the international community must press simultaneously for a negotiated settlement to the political impasse and establish a set of incentives and pressures to change the calculations of Mugabe and ZANU-PF hardliners who reject political compromise.

A Kenya-style power-sharing deal that incorporates both participants in the presidential election won't work in Zimbabwe. Any deal that gives the MDC, for example, a vice presidency or a newly-created prime ministerial position in exchange for Mugabe's continuation in power runs the risk of leading to further bloodshed. Mugabe will undoubtedly seek to undermine the agreement once international monitors have left; he is the primary cause of the current crisis and must be removed from the equation.

In the absence of a process to seat the legitimate winner, which is the best course of action, international actors should assist with negotiating a transitional authority that would oversee the development of a popularly supported constitution, paving the way for free and fair elections. A transitional arrangement, headed by officials who are acceptable to both ZANU-PF and the MDC, and are not eligible for post-transition elections, could rectify the anti-democratic tactics of the Mugabe regime. Yet any such arrangement is predicated on Mugabe's exit, making a deal for his retirement of paramount concern. The United States should take the lead in coordinating this deal with SADC, African leaders, and the United Kingdom.

3. Carrots and sticks to achieve a deal

The United States should coordinate with international actors including SADC nations, other African leaders, and the United Kingdom to develop and present a proposal for a settlement to the Zimbabwean government that includes immediate

financial and reconstruction assistance in exchange for Mugabe's exit and a transition to a democratic government. Concurrently, a plan for international prosecution, further sanctions, and isolation should be presented in the event Mugabe attempts to stay in power at all costs.

Carrots: incentive package for a democratic transition. An incentive package for Zimbabwe must address Mugabe's personal security, post-conflict transitional justice plans for militia and security service members, and Zimbabwe's dire economic crisis.

- Mugabe's personal deal will have to likely include impunity for him and either retirement or transfer to a neutral country, preferably outside of SADC.⁸ If the United Nations refers the case of Zimbabwe to the ICC and Mugabe is indicted, international mediators should approach countries to accept him that have relationships with both Mugabe and the West, and are not signatories to the ICC. Malaysia or Libya may be acceptable destinations for all parties. If no indictment is forthcoming, Mugabe will likely require a commitment from western powers and the MDC that they will not seek charges against him domestically or internationally in exchange for retirement or exile and non-interference in Zimbabwean politics.
- Officials, security service members and militia members should have their fate addressed as part of a deal with the government. A complete disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, or DDR, plan will be necessary to convince militia members to disband as part of a democratic transition. The MDC could go far to disrupt militias if they announce plans to try high officials while incorporating low-level members into a DDR program. Additionally, some officials of the current regime could have sanctions against them lifted in exchange for the seating of a democratic government, further undermining Mugabe's support base.

⁸ A discussion of the pros and cons of impunity for Mugabe is discussed in the next section.

IMPUNITY FOR MUGABE?

The Peace vs. Justice Debate

If an exit package is offered, Zimbabwe will have to make hard concessions related to concepts of justice and the rule of law. Undoubtedly, Mugabe deserves to be tried for his crimes. He is accused of masterminding the killing of 20,000 people during the Gukuruhundi campaign in the 1980s, and should be tried for the state-sponsored political violence of the last eight years. Yet given that Mugabe must agree to an exit package, any attempt to achieve an agreement without impunity will fail. He will continue to take Zimbabwe down with him if his own security is threatened.

Ultimately, what Zimbabwe needs most is institutional reform which will not happen if Mugabe remains in power. Such reform is more likely if he accepts an impunity package and exits, rather than stays in power to avoid prosecution. Zimbabweans have watched the politicization of the judiciary during Mugabe's reign and have lost confidence in the courts. The security sector has also been politicized to the point that MDC supporters cannot report violence committed against them for fear of retribution. Overhauling the judicial and security sectors is impossible with Mugabe in

power. Releasing him from liability is a large price to pay, but worth the effort if Zimbabweans can have responsive, non-politicized state institutions.

Justice should not be swept under the rug entirely. Given the thousands of officials and militia members who have committed crimes during Mugabe's rule, a transitional justice system could be implemented to address the sins of the past. Two potential models emerge from Africa that combine accountability with incentives to transition to a post-conflict society. Zimbabwe could adopt a South African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission that absolves those who confess to their crimes and express remorse, but tries those who do not. Alternatively, Zimbabwe could look to Rwanda's Gacaca Courts and establish local tribunals throughout the country to develop a community response to administering justice. Such tribunals could mandate harsh sentences for top officials, or refer them to a national court as in Rwanda, but allow foot soldiers to explain their activities and perform public service or other acts rather than serve jail time.

- The international community could offer assistance if a deal leads to a democratic government, including immediate donations of petrol and spare vehicle parts, assistance with a sound land reform program developed by a democratic government, and assistance with repairing relations with multilateral financial institutions. This support can be temporary, but eligible for renewal based on a legitimate government meeting democratic benchmarks.

Sticks: punitive economic and legal action. If Mugabe fails to leave and no agreement is reached for the seating of a democratically elected government, the United States should coordinate with the United Kingdom, SADC, and African leaders to impose an alternative package of pressures against the Zimbabwean government. This plan should aim to investigate high officials with an eye toward prosecution, expand personal sanctions against key government leaders, suspend Zimbabwe from mul-

tilateral institutions, and further isolate Zimbabwe diplomatically.

As noted above, the United States should begin by pressing European allies in the United Nations to refer the case of Zimbabwe to the ICC for investigation. The main argument against investigating Mugabe and ZANU-PF officials through the ICC is that the process may derail negotiations. If Mugabe holds onto power at all costs, there's no reason to withhold pressure in the hopes of a settlement. Simply presenting a plan to prosecute high officials alongside an incentive plan to involve them in a transitional justice program may weaken Mugabe and weaken the campaign of violence. Members of the security service need to see that they have a better deal on the table if they withhold support for Mugabe.

Targeted personal sanctions implemented by the United States and the EU could be widened and deepened, with resources provided for enforce-

ment, as part of a pressure package. Contrary to government propaganda, targeted sanctions pose little threat to the national economy, but encourage splits within ZANU-PF by impacting the personal finances of high officials. If Mugabe holds onto power, his top lieutenants should know they will have limited access to foreign funds.

Finally, the United States should lead efforts to isolate Zimbabwe further. Talks with SADC nations should focus on Zimbabwe's suspension from that organization, based on violations of the SADC Charter. The United States should make the Zimbabwean crisis a centerpiece of any bilateral talks with African nations, and nations contributing to the regime, such as China.

A NEW WESTERN-AFRICAN ALLIANCE

The United States should take the lead in coordinating these packages, but should work to develop an alliance of democracies in the region to address the crisis. Mugabe has made a career out of playing Western and African actors against each other. This practice cannot be allowed to continue. Washington needs partners in the region to help develop and ultimately present an incentive package to Mugabe. Post-election talks between British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and South African President Thabo Mbeki were a positive example, but faith in South Africa as a mediator is misplaced.

Past regional efforts have presumed that South Africa would take the lead in negotiations with Zimbabwe due to the close relationship of the two countries and Pretoria's reputation as an economic and political powerhouse on the continent. President Mbeki has implemented a "quiet diplomacy"

strategy toward Zimbabwe for several years with little success.⁹ However, Mbeki has consistently refused to back up his efforts with threats of action such as sanctions, suspension from SADC, or stronger condemnation.

Meanwhile, South Africa is experiencing economic difficulties due to millions of Zimbabwean refugees, and South African civil society organizations are condemning the brutal tactics of the Mugabe regime. Mbeki's African National Congress rival and likely 2009 presidential candidate Jacob Zuma went beyond Mbeki to express frustration with Mugabe's refusal to release the vote count. South African trade unions, supporters of Zuma and the MDC in Zimbabwe, provide a domestic source of pressure on Mbeki to get tougher, but to no avail. Mbeki shows no signs of altering his policy.

The United States should side-step South Africa and conduct continued high-level consultations with other key SADC members, specifically Zambia and Botswana, to settle on a common approach to the crisis. Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa is the current Chairman of SADC and should be recognized as a major player in regional efforts to resolve the crisis.¹⁰ These leaders could convince SADC to put pressure on Mugabe to accept a deal. The process will be incredibly difficult as the time has come for regional leaders to sit across the table from Mugabe and personally convince him to accept an exit package. Even if some SADC countries refuse to participate, demonstrating division in the region's attitude toward the crisis will only add pressure on Mugabe to quit.

SADC has a dubious record when it comes to Zimbabwe, so outside pressure from the African Union and United Nations should continue.¹¹ An emer-

9 The goal of this policy was to engage directly with Mugabe, mediate talks with the MDC, and achieve a political settlement to the crisis.

10 Mwanawasa expressed frustration with Mugabe's tactics in the past, and may not be easily convinced to back down from his stance this time. In March, 2007 he described Zimbabwe as a "sinking titanic" before backing off such harsh criticism following a closed-door meeting with other SADC leaders. Seretse Ian Khama, the new President of Botswana, has expressed a commitment to democracy and hosted MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai after the March elections.

11 Since the inception of the crisis in 1999, SADC has been reluctant to apply heavy pressure on Zimbabwe despite repeated violations of the SADC treaty based on Harare's poor human rights and electoral record. Many SADC leaders resisted aligning themselves with western powers against a fellow regional leader. Additionally, they give more weight to Zimbabwe's past than its present by revering Mugabe as an anti-colonialist liberation hero of nearly 30 years ago. South Africa took the lead in blunting harsh criticism of the Mugabe regime. Many regional leaders have expressed some degree of frustration toward Harare, but have so far been unwilling to take strong measures such as sanctions or public calls for Mugabe to resign.

agency SADC meeting called by Mwanawasa on April 12 did produce calls for a democratic vote count and secure runoff election if necessary, but much more is needed. If SADC fails to move, the United Nations should appoint a Special Representative for Zimbabwe, or back diplomatic intervention by an African dignitary such as former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. Under AU rules, if Mugabe remains in power absent a popular mandate Zimbabwe should be expelled from the body as happened to Mauritania following its coup in 2005.

THE RISING COST OF A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Massive diplomatic intervention represents the last, best hope for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Zimbabwe. The alternatives—either a bloody power struggle or another Mugabe term—are almost too horrible to contemplate. Both would lead to further violence in a nation long past the point of economic collapse and on the verge of state failure.

If no agreement on Mugabe's exit can be reached, the prospects for an internally driven end to the crisis are slim. When Constitutional Amendment No. 18 was approved in October, 2007, allowing Parliament to elect a successor in the event of the president's death, incapacitation, or retirement, many analysts predicted Mugabe would transfer power and use a ZANU-PF-dominated parliament to rubber-stamp his choice. Now that ZANU-PF has lost control of parliament, Mugabe cannot hand pick his successor. This increases the chance that he will choose to serve out his six-year term if he can utilize the current campaign of violence to successfully manipulate the presidential election outcome.

Alternatively, Mugabe could choose to throw Zimbabwe into greater chaos by seeking to utilize presidential emergency powers to dissolve parliament and hold new elections in an effort to secure

ZANU-PF dominance. Given the MDC's strength in the March elections, such a move would throw Zimbabwe into greater chaos. In fact, Mugabe could only rig ZANU-PF dominance in parliament by waging another campaign of massive violence.

Meanwhile, the economy will continue to implode. Economic progress is predicated on Mugabe's removal and the return of democratic institutions to Zimbabwe. Foreign investment will not return until investors see political stability and more favorable economic policies. Mugabe has proven unwilling to reverse policies that scare investors, such as nationalizing private industries, or implement policies which may increase exports, such as amending the disastrous land reform program which gave prime arable land to party loyalists incapable of operating commercial farms. The number of hectares yielding Zimbabwe's main export crop, tobacco, has declined by 66 percent since 1999.¹² As a result, the United Nations estimates that 4.1 million Zimbabweans will face food shortages this year. Zimbabwe cannot afford a continued humanitarian crisis alongside a political crisis.

CONCLUSION

It's zero hour in Zimbabwe—a period that will be spoken of for generations as either a time when the region united to support the will of the people, or a missed opportunity that led to thousands of deaths and a failed state. The road ahead is difficult, but extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. Regional leaders must publicly recognize gross abuses of law by ZANU-PF, and develop an African solution to an African problem by applying focused pressure on Mugabe to leave, side by side with meaningful incentives for a solution. The West should provide support for this effort, but be prepared to take strong action should that pressure fail to materialize.

¹² Zimbabwe's staple grain, maize, was planted on 850,000 hectares in 1999, but only 500,000 today.

APPENDIX I: History of the Zimbabwean Political Crisis

Zimbabwe's precipitous decline began in 1999 when the once prosperous southern African nation entered a political stalemate. President Mugabe held a referendum on a constitutional amendment which would have greatly expanded his powers. Mugabe and his ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front, or ZANU-PF, party had never lost an election before, but the referendum was defeated by a new opposition party formed from the labor union movement, the MDC, and its leader Morgan Tsvangirai.

Months after the defeat of the referendum, the MDC ran a candidate in every parliamentary district in the country and emerged with nearly half of the directly elected seats in Parliament. ZANU-PF responded by beginning a campaign of political violence to intimidate the MDC. Simultaneously, the government politicized the long unresolved issue of landownership by empowering so-called War Veteran militias¹³ to invade and occupy commercial farms mostly owned by white farmers. A plan was then instituted calling for commercial farmland to be given to landless black Zimbabweans. In reality, farms went to government officials unable or unwilling to operate them properly.

As a result of the land reform program, Zimbabwe's agricultural sector—at one time the envy of many African nations—plummeted and now produces

50 percent of the pre-2000 output. Shortages of food and fuel became commonplace and inflation increased to the highest rate in the world, over 165,000 percent by April 2008. Foreign investors backed out of Zimbabwe due to political instability and threats of nationalization of industries.

The MDC built support on a platform of ending political violence and improving the economy. In response, the government cracked down even harder on civil liberties. A new media law was passed which led to the closing of all major independent newspapers. The government already had a monopoly on broadcast media. All journalists, including foreign correspondents, were required to register with the government. New public order laws prevented public assembly absent police approval, severely limiting the MDC's ability to campaign.

ZANU-PF used violence and intimidation to win a widely condemned presidential election in 2002, and used more violence plus the new anti-democratic laws to win another condemned election in 2004. Since that time political stalemate has continued and the economy has driven Zimbabwe to the bottom of nearly every major economic indicator. Meanwhile, the MDC focused on unified elections for president and Parliament in 2008. ZANU-PF's tactics of violence, intimidation, and anti-democratic practices were expected. Its losses were not.

¹³ Many members of War Veteran militias are far too young to have served in the Liberation War against Rhodesian forces which ended in 1980. In fact, they are ZANU-PF youth operating under the direction of war veteran leaders but loyal to the party.



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