

The Situation of peace and security in Zimbabwe

Introduction.

Zimbabwe is a country which is not necessarily in conflict but has a crisis of governance. The country has been running without a government for almost 11 months since the 2008 March Harmonised elections. The crisis in Zimbabwe has virtually affected all the sectors in the country that is the economic, social and political sectors.

The Political Crisis - The political landscape has not only been favourable to political parties in the country, but also to civil society and the citizens as a whole. There has been an increase in political violence and human rights abuses for almost a decade now with 2008 having recorded the worst levels of political violence since 2000. People were killed, tortured, injured and displaced before and after the March 2008 harmonised elections. The perpetrators have not been brought to justice and the authorities are reluctant to do so.

Economic Crisis - Currently Zimbabwe has the highest inflation rate in the world. The national currency is worthless. The authorities continue to print more money to buy the favours of small group Corruption and poor governance has worsened the situation. The economy has collapsed and there is no production currently going on in the country. The economic problems are compounding by each day.

Social Crisis - The collapse in the social services has also added another burden to an already crumbling economy. Currently there are no social services to talk about in the country. The health and education sectors have collapsed. Most hospitals are currently operating below capacity as doctors and nurses have left citing poor remunerations and poor working conditions. With the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the recent cholera outbreak, millions of

people have lost their lives from ailments that could have been avoided if proper measures were to be put in place.

The humanitarian - situation in the country is also pathetic. The economic, political and social crisis has left three quarters of the people in need of food aid and medical aid and shelter. People are no longer able to sustain themselves. 80% of the adults are not employed and there is no other source of income available to them. The authorities in Zimbabwe continue to politicise the distribution of food aid and put barriers on the work of humanitarian organisations.

Further the human rights situation continues to deteriorate.

The signing of the Global Political agreement between the three major political parties in Zimbabwe, that is the two Movement for Democratic Change Formations led by Mr Morgan Tsvangirai and Mr Arthur Mutambara and ZANU PF led by Mr Robert Mugabe on the 15th of September 2008 brought optimism of an end to political intolerance, human rights violations and the humanitarian crisis; however this optimism has since been shattered by the ongoing impasse among the parties to the agreement. Instead the crisis has increased since efforts to forge a power sharing agreement.

As the human rights and humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate, more voices of dissent are coming up to demand an end to the political impasse by the main political parties. Civic groups are taking to the streets to express their discontent. Medical professionals also added their voices to demand reforms in the health sector.

It is appalling to note that the authorities continue to use excessive force against those who want to stand against the repression, a trend that has become increasingly worrying and has left many peaceful protestors severely injured and imprisoned. The authorities continue to target human rights activists for arrest, detention and abductions. Intolerance and harassment of perceived opposition supporters by youth's militia, war veterans, CIO

operatives, army and the police continue. The recent case of a human rights activist and the Director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project Jestina Mukoko, is worth noting. Jestina was abducted from her home by 15 armed men in unmarked vehicles on the 3rd of December 2008. Her whereabouts remained a mystery for 3 weeks. The police and the authorities refused any knowledge about her whereabouts until she was brought before the court facing charges of overthrowing the government. She is not only the recent victim of abduction. Two other members of her organisation were also abducted and so have 14 members of the Movement for Democratic Change, including a two year old child.

The problems bedevilling Zimbabwe have not also spared the security services. There is great discontent among the army and the police. The level of discontent was displayed towards the end of last year when army officers took to the streets demanding reasonable wages and that they be allowed access to their monies in the banks.

After noting some of these challenges facing Zimbabwe, I would conclude that there is a real crisis in Zimbabwe and the authorities have failed in their responsibilities to protect its citizens. The growing discontent among the citizens increases the risk for instability to peace and security.

With an appalling economic situation in a deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe, the questions I would bring to the fore are;

- a) What does the future hold for Zimbabwe, especially when the hopes for a new government are shuttered;
- b) What actions should be taken by regional and international Bodies like the SADC,AU,UN and EU;
- c)What would they do to salvage Zimbabwe that is already on the brink of economic and political collapse?

I would like to agree with Binneh S Minteh, when he says thus; ‘ Although the principle of sovereignty must be fully upheld by member states of the International Community, it is the responsibility to protect that makes the crisis

in Zimbabwe a moral obligation upon the International Community' (Analysis : Crisis in Zimbabwe a threat to world peace and Security www.allgambian.net).

The responsibility to protect citizens is an international commitment of Governments across the world to prevent and react to grave crisis wherever they may occur. The primary responsibility to protect citizens lies upon governments but the International Community has the responsibility to act when these governments fail to protect its citizens. One fundamental responsibility to protect is the responsibility to prevent, address the root cause and direct causes of internal crisis and other man made crisis putting citizens at risk.

I would submit that the on going crisis in Zimbabwe is not an exception to these International principles. The authorities in Zimbabwe have failed in its responsibility to protect its own population, against forced abductions, against police brutality, against neglect and misinformation. The international community in particular the AU must therefore take its responsibility to protect the people of Zimbabwe. It is with this in mind that we call upon the AU to;

- a. Intervene and push for a resolution calling for an end to the current political impasse which has led to the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation
- b. To take measures ensuring immediate and unconditional resumption of humanitarian assistance, in particular, for the authorities in Zimbabwe to refrain from hindering the operations of relief aid agencies;
- c. Condemn the on going violence, torture and abductions taking place in Zimbabwe, and call for the immediate release of Jestina Mukoko and the other activists;
- d. Intervene and protect the people of Zimbabwe from all forms of politically motivated violence and make the realization of all human rights for all Zimbabweans a reality, viz. the right to food, basic education, health and sanitation, freedom of expression and movement;

