

Accolades for Bishop Verryn & Elinor Sisulu

My dream is that somehow South Africans and Zimbabweans create relationships of such a nature that the Limpopo river is no longer a border but all it is, is a source of water and food,.” These were the words spoken by Bishop Paul Verryn as he received his award, a recognition for his work on Democracy and Human Rights in Zimbabwe presented to him by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) last Friday in the border town of Musina.

CiZC hosted the awards ceremony to honour and acknowledge human rights activists who have worked tirelessly to ensure that Zimbabweans in South Africa are given their dignity and their rights are respected. Bishop Verryn, who attended the colourful ceremony, received the award along with renowned author and activist, Elinor Sisulu. Since 2003 Elinor Sisulu has been advising on projects on democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe. She is a Zimbabwean-born writer, human rights activist and political analyst and was also pivotal in establishing the presence of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition in South Africa.

(please see the accompanying speech by the latter).

Bishop Verryn, in his acceptance speech, began by apologising for the criminalisation of Zimbabweans and the xenophobic attacks they have suffered at the hands of some South Africans. “I want to apologise for what [other] South Africans have done in criminalising Zimbabweans and further traumatising an already traumatised people,” he said remorsefully.

He stressed the need to continuously restore and reaffirm the dignity of people, especially the poor and the downtrodden in society, saying without that, we could never comprehend what it is like to be part of a nation or broader society.

At the Central Methodist Church, Bishop Paul Verryn has for years provided a haven for indigent and transient

Bishop Paul Verryn (left) receives his award from Dewa Mavhinga. Below is what the awards look like.



people of Zimbabwe. He has worked tirelessly to provide shelter for Zimbabweans living in South Africa and has

ryn and Sisulu.

Perhaps the most earnest statement of the night was uttered by the Bishop

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played a leading role in administering to the welfare and needs of desperate Zimbabwean and other refugees in the South African city of Johannesburg.

Various representatives from leading civil society organisations which work closely with CiZC and present at the awards ceremony made Bishop Verryn and Elinor Sisulu, gave moving testimonies of the work carried out by the two activists. And, although she did not speak officially, the mayor of Musina, Councillor Carol Phiri attended the event in support of the recognition of both Ver-

himself when he stated that he viewed his opening up of the Central Methodist Church as a privilege because he had been exposed to priceless human relationships with people who had walked through the doors of the church. He urged South Africans to open their eyes and accept the skills Zimbabweans have brought to the country. “One of the most profound ways of abusing human rights is not to expose the gifts that are in people,” he said.

The award ceremony kickstarted South Africa’s first-ever Zimbabwe Hu-



man Rights Arts Festival which sought to raise awareness of and highlight various issues affecting Zimbabweans migrants.

By Regina Pazvakavambwa, Media Assistant in the regional office. Additional reporting by Levi Kabwato.

The struggle for human rights continues: Sisulu

Iam honoured by the decision of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition to honour me as the regional office holds the first-ever Zimbabwe Human Rights Arts Festival from 9-11 September 2011 in Musina. It is gratifying to receive recognition for the work that has been such a central feature of my life for the better part of the last decade.

In the years working for the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, I learned at first hand, the cost that Africans, especially young people, pay to sustain the despotic dictatorships that are sadly such a dominant feature of the political landscape of our continent.



Elinor Sisulu

When I joined the Coalition, I imagined that it would be a temporary phase that would end with the end

of the dictatorship in Zimbabwe. I never imagined that in 2011 we would still be prey to ZANU PF hegemony and that millions of peace-loving and hard working Zimbabweans would still be forced to struggle for a livelihood far away from home. I have felt a deep sense of sadness about this, especially since we failed to mobilise resources for young refugees and migrants.

It is appropriate that the Human Rights Arts Festival is taking place in Musina, the scene of so much pain and despair for Zimbabwean migrants. As we learned during the anti-apartheid struggle, the role of artists and art in all its forms,

in mobilising as well as healing, cannot be overestimated.

I wish you every success with the festival and hope that it will provide inspiration to continue with the struggle for true democracy and respect for human rights not only in our beleaguered motherland but also throughout the region. This for me will be the greatest award that I can receive.

By Elinor Sisulu, award recipient at the first-ever Zimbabwe Human Rights Arts Festival held in Musina, South Africa between 9-11 September 2011. This was her acceptance speech.

Open Letter to President Mugabe on Zimbabwe's Future

Coordinator's Note



dewaMAVHINGA

Your Excellency, I write to bring to your attention a number of concerns that I have, first and foremost as a young Zimbabwean desirous of a better future for Zimbabwe, but also as a human rights activist closely following political developments in our country. I believe, for reasons I will outline below, that it would be in the best interests of both Zimbabwe at large and your party ZANU-PF if you urgently lay out plans to renew leadership in your party and in government.

I have taken it upon myself to write this letter to you and to request a meeting in person, should you be willing and available, to be certain beyond doubt that these sentiments, which I believe are widely shared among ordinary Zimbabweans and even within ZANU-PF but which may not be reaching you for various reasons, will be conveyed to you through this open letter. It may be that those closest to you are, for their own selfish reasons, not telling you the truth about Zimbabwe's perilous situation that is heightened by the uncertainty of the future after your tenure. In fact, some maybe be deliberately misleading you to believe that the future of Zimbabwe and even of ZANU-PF is only assured with you at the helm. That view is clearly false and, as the wikileaks cables have revealed, there could be

several senior figures within your party who privately express contrary, but more accurate views that there is an urgent to plan for life after your tenure.

Well before the wikileaks revelations, one of your party politburo members, Jonathan Moyo, had already inti-

a clear succession plan presents the country with a risk of descending into anarchic chaos in the period following your tenure. The anarchy that is likely to ensure will not only be from ZANU-PF members jostling to take over, but also other quarters especially considering how the gov-

Zimbabwe fails to institute credible reforms to end all forms of violence, intimidation and hate speech while you are still around, then achieving those reforms without you will be much more difficult as the edifice created around you is likely to break into a thousand

lowing months should be devoted to a serious reflection on the future of the country and how best to pass on the button in a way that guarantees peace and stability within the country and in a way that gives your party a fighting chance to survive in the era after you. Although your party may have, at the last ZANU-PF congress, endorsed your candidature for president in the next elections, I strongly believe that the best course of action in the interests of the country would be to initiate a solid succession and leadership renewal plan.

Your Excellency, next February you will turn 88 – you have been blessed with a long life – and you deserve to spend time with your family too. Rather than presenting yourself again as presidential candidate, my view is that your greatest remaining contribution is to lead your party and government in putting in place the necessary electoral reforms to ensure that the next time we have elections, they will not be a mere ritual, but will be meaningful, where each vote counts and is given freely in the total absence of fear.

It will be a great achievement that all Zimbabweans will cherish that, as part of your legacy, you left behind a united, peaceful and prosperous nation occupying its rightful place in the family of nations.

- coordinator@crisiszimbabwe.org

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mated that you 'had become the embodiment of the institutionalized crisis [in Zimbabwe] such that your departure alone would be cathartic for the country.' Zimbabwe needs a fresh start; now is the time to create space for the younger generation, which Moyo has called the generation 40, to take over leadership at party and government level. Passing on the button to the younger leaders would help rescue your legacy and secure the future of the country and perhaps it will spur ZANU-PF to reform and survive under new leadership.

Your failure to have

ernance structure and culture created and nurtured over the last three decades revolves around your person.

Your centrality to Zimbabwe's governance infrastructure means that you are also central through the mechanism of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) to initiating and pushing through fundamental reforms that can usher a brighter future for Zimbabwe based on strong, democratic, truly Zimbabwean institutions that safeguard the best interests of all Zimbabweans, particularly the most vulnerable members of our society. If

pieces.

Your Excellency, the call for peace and harmonious co-existence by Zimbabweans from different political persuasions you made during the burial of general Solomon Mujuru last month is positive and most welcome. However, my view is that such a call needs to be backed by swift action to bring perpetrators of serious human rights abuses to book and by clear indications on your part regarding renewal of leadership within your party and in government.

I sincerely hope therefore, that the fol-

Ambassador Charles Ray meets President Mugabe



Ambassador Charles Ray (pictured above) met with President Robert

Mugabe at 2:00 p.m. today. During the meeting, Ambassador Ray stressed

that the United States would like to move the relationship with Zimbabwe forward in a positive manner and to engage in those areas in which cooperation and partnership will benefit the people of Zimbabwe.

Ambassador Ray highlighted U.S. support for agricultural livelihood programs for rural families. He also noted that the United States is focusing renewed attention on tourism and trade; two areas with great

potential for growth between the two nations and that will also grow the Zimbabwean economy and generate more jobs.

The Ambassador informed the President about U.S. Embassy support for a delegation of Zimbabwean business leaders to attend the Corporate Council on Africa's U.S.-Africa Business Summit in Washington, DC. The Summit will include a half day seminar on October 5 on 'Doing Business in

Zimbabwe' to highlight trade and business opportunities. Ambassador Ray further noted that the United States has consistently maintained its support for, and partnership with, Zimbabwe's healthcare sector, working across a broad range of key areas including HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, healthcare systems strengthening, and a new malaria prevention initiative.

The Ambassador concluded by expressing

his appreciation for the meeting and emphasizing the need to turn a new page in relations with the U.S. through more regular and direct interactions to restore mutual understanding and advance our common objectives.

Issued by the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section. Contact: Sharon Hudson-Dean, Counselor for Public Affairs, hararepas@state.gov Tel. +263 475800/1, Fax: +2634758802. Url: http://harare.usembassy.gov

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

> United Nations Human Rights Council session & Zimbabwe UPR; Geneva, Switzerland (15 September - 20 October)

PICTORIAL FOCUS: Zim Human Rights Arts Festival



1 & 2- Mus' Town, a Musina-based drama group, showcase their talent through a play highlighting the challenges faced by migrants in South Africa

3 & 5- Jonah Moyo and the Devera Ngwenja Jazz Band perform music and dance at the festival



4- Dewa Mavhinga shares a word with colleague, Munjodzi Mutandiri of the NCA.
6- Urban Grooves star, Madiz squares off on stage with a fan while the rest of his team looks on.
7- Part of the crowd that gathered at the Musina Showgrounds snacks while being entertained.



Human Rights Festival a success

The Musina showgrounds were filled with joy and fun as various Zimbabweans and South Africans came together to celebrate the first-ever Zimbabwe Human Rights Arts Festival held in the border town last weekend. The festival was organised by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. “Choosing to host the festival in Musina was not by accident but it was because Musina is the first port of call for Zimbabweans coming to South Africa therefore it made sense to spread information on organisations that can better assist Zimbabweans with various issues pertaining to access to education, health and legal services,” said Dewa Mavhinga, Regional Coordinator of the Coalition.

Zimbabwean artists such as Madiz, Jonah Moyo and the Devera Ngwenja Jazz Band entertained the gathered crowds with music and dance. Madiz was the pick of the crowd, performing his hit song commonly known as Amina. Although the festival was addressing critical issues of human rights and human dignity it was also the perfect platform to have migrant Zimbabweans forget about all the challenges bedeviling them and enjoy life for a while. Through entertainment, however, these critical issues were raised through drama mostly. Mus' Town, a local drama group of young South Africans, performed one such drama, acting out the experiences most Zimbabweans crossing the Limpopo encounter. Such experiences range from sexual abuse of

young girls, xenophobia attacks, child labour and the challenge of accessing education services by young migrants. Mrs Sithole from El Shaddai Church Shelter were some Zimbabwean immigrants stay while looking for employment or in transit to other South African cities highlighted the desperate lack of resources suffered by her shelter in Musina, noting especially the failure to provide a safe and secure environment from Zimbabweans. The use of art, according to Sharon Gwati, the festival coordinator can help to generate dialogue which will help in moving forward as well as improving the standards of living for the immigrants. Mavhinga, also highlighted the importance of civil society organisations to come together and work for the common

good of promoting human rights and dignity. Nora Tapiwa from Global Zimbabwe forum expressed her concerns at the high number of unaccompanied Zimbabwe minors found in Musina. There is an alarming number of minors that cross the Limpopo and set base in Musina, but most alarming exchange of food and other necessities for sexual favours that is rampant in the border town. The festival ended on a high note and opened up numerous possibilities for various organisations to work in Musina as well as for next edition.

By Regina Pazvakavambwa, Media Assistant in the Regional Office.