

Shelter needed for Zimbabweans

At first glance Musina is just another border town in the Limpopo province of South Africa, but if you look closely you will see young adults roaming the street in search of employment and unaccompanied minors begging for food. They live a life of begging - scrounging for food, clothes and the simple basic necessities that you would normally take for granted. The minors had to grow up before their time, robbed of their innocence because of the dire economic and political situation in Zimbabwe. They cross the Zimbabwean border into Musina in the hopes of finding a better life but to no avail.

El Shaddai men's shelter in Musina - as the name suggests - has opened its doors for young Zimbabwean men to have a place to rest their heads and fill their stomach. The shelter is run by Pastor Sithole and his wife, Mrs Sithole, who in the spirit of ubuntu started the shelter in order to give the young men who come to Musina in search of jobs and a way to earn a living, shelter.

Although this is an improvement from living in the street, the shelter is just a ground with a tent and it's not conducive for human habitation. Mrs Sithole begged the civil society organisations that were gathered in Musina as part of the Zimbabwe Human Arts Festival to help with a fence. Because the shelter is an open space, Mrs Sithole fears for the men's lives and the few blankets that they have are continually being stolen. A fence is not the only thing that's needed at the El Shaddai shelter, with the rain season approaching the old tent that they use as a cover from elements won't be



The shelter that currently houses Zimbabweans who have just crossed the Limpopo.

of much use because of its dilapidated condition.

These young men sleep grouped together, share blankets which are not regularly washed and because of this, diseases are more rampant. The word shelter in the case of the El Shaddai men's shelter is an exaggeration; it is little more than a ground where they lay their heads after a long day of job search and begging. There is a constant movement of Zimbabwean men to the shelter and the shelter does not have

the resources that can sustain the mass movement of the people.

The El Shaddai shelter is in need of more than a fence, it needs a building that will shelter these young refugees from the elements and help them feel more secure. The Sitholes' can only do so much, to feed, shelter a growing number of people require money and resources that they do not have.

Musina, because of its location from Zimbabwe has become a refuge for many Zimbabweans, men, women

and children alike who flee poverty and political persecution. Although they are those like the Sitholes who try to help, they do not have enough resources to sustain the forever growing number of Zimbabwean refugees found in Musina and all they need is for people to come together and land a helping hand.

By Regina Pazvakavambwa, Media Assistant in the regional office.

CiZC holds community meeting in Marondera & Karoi

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition held community meetings in Yellow City, Marondera, Mashonaland East province on the 15th of September 2011 which attended by 65 people (41 men, 34 women) and at Christ Church in Karoi, Mashonaland west attended by 84 people (45 men and 39 females). The objective of the meetings was to mobilize citizens to actively participate in the referendum and future elections.

The meetings also aimed at providing a platform for civic input into the Electoral Amendment Bill ahead of the Parliament led public hearings scheduled to begin end of September in all 10 administrative provinces.

The Coalition team also took the opportunity to update participants on the



constitutional reform process with participants urging the Coalition, other civic groups and political parties to denounce violence and call for peace ahead of elections.

The following issues emerged at the meetings

1. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) should be independent and should compile a new voters' roll with the exclusion of the deceased and an addition of new voters through a flexible registration mechanism.

2. International monitors and observers should be in Zimbabwe six months before and six months after elections.

3. Security forces including the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) should not be directly involved in conduct-

ing of elections and should abide by their core mandate of protecting citizens.

4. Soldiers deployed across the country should be recalled and confined to the barracks during elections.

5. The inclusive government should create a conducive environment for participating of women in national processes such as elections and should ensure 50% representation of women in all decision making positions at both local and national levels.

Participants also urged each other to register ahead of any electoral process and to vote during the referendum or elections.

- Information Desk, Head Office.

Reforms must inform timing of next elections

Coordinator's Note



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Voting lines such as these were a common feature across Zimbabwe on March 29, 2008 as Zimbabweans put their faith in the ballot.-www.zimbabwepictures.com

The next elections in Zimbabwe can only take place when the necessary conditions to create an environment conducive to the holding of free and fair elections have been established. President Mugabe's call for elections by March 2012 should therefore be dismissed on the basis that conditions for free and fair elections do not yet exist in Zimbabwe and there are no guarantees or mechanism to prevent the electoral violence of a magnitude witnessed between April and June 2008 during the presidential run-off campaign period.

It is strange that people continue to call for elections when it is clear that Zimbabwe is not ready for elections as it lacks the capacity and political will to deliver a genuinely free and fair election. There is widespread state-sponsored violence, partisan application of the law, continued deployment of soldiers across the country and key state institutions remain unreformed and extremely partisan and politicized. Talk of elections still evokes feelings of fear

in the hearts of many.

Perhaps it would make sense for president Mugabe to go for elections sooner rather than later for personal reasons such as the need to present himself yet again as candidate and the need to act quickly before murmurings about leadership change within his party translate to open revolt, but the truth of the matter is that pushing for elections in the absence of credible reforms is a futile exercise and a waste of resources.

Chances are that the MDC formations led by prime minister Tsvangirai and professor Welshman Ncube will refuse to take part in elections held for their own sake but denying citizens a real chance to freely choose their preferred leaders. Without the participation of the MDC formations who command a significant following, the election will not produce a legitimate government.

Another factor that those calling for early elections must carefully consider is that SADC will have to certify that conditions are right to hold elections, otherwise to go for elections

in the absence of SADC endorsement would lead to the rejection of the process by the regional grouping. SADC has categorically stated that Zimbabwe cannot have the next elections under conditions of 2008, conditions of violence and intimidation, but that elections should only come after a comprehensive implementation of the Global Political Agreement.

Instead of prematurely calling for elections, all political parties including ZANU-PF should focus on supporting the SADC-brokered elections roadmap to implement meaningful reforms that inspire confidence in the people of Zimbabwe, and in SADC. Such reforms will obviously include a new constitution and critical electoral reforms such as an updated and accurate voters' roll and guarantees for media freedoms and gender equality. Also, all soldiers currently deployed across the country must be returned and confined to their barracks and all service chiefs must restrict their activities to their constitutional mandate and totally separate themselves from politics

and from interference in political and electoral affairs.

However, caution must be exercised on reading the significance of a new constitution as the embodiment of electoral reforms. Put simply, a new constitution is likely to be negotiated among political parties before being taken to referendum and therefore, having a new constitution does not in any way mean that the environment is conducive for free and fair elections. The inclusive government must do much more than a new constitution in their quest to dismantle structures of violence and to build strong democratic and independent institutions with the capacity to deliver credible elections.

For instance, beyond a new constitution, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and its secretariat, charged with elections management, must be completely demilitarized, independent, professional and adequately resourced to enable it to impartially discharge its mandate. The inclusive government must end polarization and ensure that and

election is not a contestation for power between the state and the people, but one between political parties with the state institutions remaining neutral.

Ahead of the next elections, political leaders must agree on the deployment by SADC and the African Union to Zimbabwe of peace-keeping monitors at least three months ahead of elections to prevent state-sponsored violence and intimidation and to guarantee peaceful transfer of power to the eventual winner of the elections. The peace-keeping monitors should remain on the ground a further three months after elections have been held.

Politicians should desist from grandstanding about the date for elections and focus on delivering the preconditions for free and fair elections. Elections can be held anytime, as long as the necessary reforms have been undertaken to guarantee free political activity and to eliminate the terror and fear factor from the equation.

feedback:
coordinator@crisiszimbabwe.org

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

- > United Nations Human Rights Council session & Zimbabwe UPR; Geneva, Switzerland (15 September - 20 October)
- > SEMINAR: Managing Transition in Zimbabwe; 27 September, Jo'burg. Contact Sipho Theys: sipho@asc.org.za

Peace and Democracy: Make Your Voice Heard

**“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”
(UNESCO Constitution, 1945)**

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition joins the rest of the world in commemorating The International Day of Peace and Democracy. The day comes at a time when the world is facing challenges of dramatic proportions characterised by civil unrest, politically motivated violence, civil wars and strife. The cry for peace seems to be drowned by the noises of dictators refusing to leave power and virtual monarchs oppressing their own people. In the midst of such challenges, this year’s theme, “Peace and Democracy: Make Your Voice Heard,” indicates that there is a causal relationship between sustainable peace and the people’s ability to be able to vent, and cry wolf when the situation demands it. The theme allows for a reflection on the Zimbabwean situation, as it makes it clear that the artificial peace enjoyed in the country, which is not predicated on sound institutions and people’s ability to exercise their freedoms, and enjoy their rights, is nothing, if not fragile.

The fact that the day coincides with the 3rd Anniversary of the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), puts the Zimbabwean situation in sharp contrast to the aspirations and spirit of the day. The harassment, intimidation and muzzling of citizens is on the upsurge, with continued infringements and interference by the state in church and religious matters. These attacks on the “Peace makers” flies in the spirit and aspirations for peace, and is aided in its assault on the need for peace by the constant hounding and harassment of journalists, physical and psychological victimisation of ordinary citizens, and the continued use of prosecution for purposes of persecuting perceived opponents of ZANU PF.

The Coalition contends, on this day, that Zimbabwe’s aspirations for lasting peace should be complemented by substantial promotion of the culture of peace, professionalism and restraint on the part of uniformed forces, as well as the reform of laws and institutions which are anathema to peace. The Coalition calls upon Zimbabweans to observe and celebrate this day through increased calls for the respect of the rule of law, and reforms to laws, institutions and attitudes that by their nature fight against the promotion of peace, tolerance, the respect for human rights and democracy, in our country.

The Coalition cautions the Inclusive government from continuing to engage in actions that spit in the faces of Zimbabwe’s suffering masses, as exemplified by the recent lavish spending of government on luxury vehicles. This is taking place in a country where the government is said to be broke, delivery of essential social services is poor and where civil servants cannot even afford bus fares. Such actions are infuriating, and can be a threat to peace.

As the world celebrates the International Day of Peace, it is important to keep in mind that Democracy is an objective, Democratization is a process and lastly that Democratization serves the cause of peace, justice and progressive change without force. Let us continue to strive together for a more inclusive, democratic, and peaceful future for us all.

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Contact Persons:

1. Phillip Pasirayi, Spokesperson, Mobile: +263 772697782
 2. Jonah Gokova, Chairperson, Mobile: +263 772214757
 3. McDonald Lewanika, Director, and Mobile: +263 772127398
- Email: info@crisis.co.zw , media@crisiszimbabwe.org
Website: www.crisiszimbabwe.org

CiZC congratulates The Book Café

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition wishes to congratulate Pamberi Trust for scooping the coveted Prince Claus award for 2011, for promoting cultural and social development through free speech and artistic expression.

The Book Café was awarded the prize for its role in culture and development, built and focused on a platform of freedom of expression across music, poetry and theatre with public discussion, film and multi-disciplinary arts.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition commends the incredible work Pamberi Trust has been undertaking since 1997 in creating an unrivalled platform for the development of arts in Zimbabwe.

The trust also operating as The Book Café has been a vibrant platform for free cul-

tural expression in a country suffering decades of political and economical upheavals, repression, censorship and a lack of cultural infrastructure.

The Book Café has always been a platform for civil society organisations to discuss and debates and report launches.

Forexample,the Coalition launched its hard hitting report “Cries from Goromonzi”,which is an expose of perpetrators of violence in Zimbabwe.

The award which Pamberi Trust received is well deserved as it is a reflection of hard work, perseverance and sacrifice

under difficult circumstances.

The prince Claus Awards are presented annually to individuals, groups and organisations in Africa, Asia,

Latin America and the Caribbean for outstanding achievement in culture and positive effect of their work on the wider cultural or social field.

