



Attention: The SADC Chairperson, H.E Dr Hage G. Geingob

CC. All SADC Heads of State and Government, SADC Secretariat

17 January 2019

RE: CALL FOR INTERVENTION ON THE DEEPENING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISES IN ZIMBABWE

We, the Civil Society Organisations and Social Movements under the banner of Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) do hereby plead with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to call for an Extraordinary Summit to resolve the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe. Beyond the Extraordinary Summit, we call upon SADC to facilitate an all-inclusive dialogue to bridge the gap between the government and citizens continuously widening due to tension sweeping across the country.

During the SADC People Summit (a people's process which is held parallel to the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit) held in Windhoek in August 2018, as you assumed Office, we handed over to you a Communiqué on the 17th of August 2018 at Safari Hotel with our requests to your Office as the SADC Chairperson to address the crises in Zimbabwe and we hold you accountable on your commitment to continue engaging with those who would seek engagement with you during your tenure of office.

True to your word, on 30 October 2018 you had a meeting with the Zimbabwean Civil Society at State House in Windhoek, Namibia, to bring to your attention the situation prevailing in Zimbabwe with reference to the issues raised in the communiqué which included the following under the democracy and human rights cluster;

- Ensure that all countries demilitarize the civilian space and governments and return to civilian rule and uphold the rule of law
- SADC should put time bound reform programme for Lesotho to commence reforms in earnest failing to which the regional body should withdraw their support.
- Strengthening of independent institutions that support democracy in the region
- Upgrade the SADC Principles and Guidelines on Democratic Elections to a protocol so that they are enforceable with clear sanctions for non-compliance by member states.
- Revive the SADC Tribunal with its original form and powers as before its disbandment.
- Demand an inquest into the murders of civilians in Zimbabwe in August 2018

- SADC and AU must develop action plans and implement initiatives that strengthen democracy before, during and after elections as well as ensure that election observer missions move from election observation to election monitoring.

Post these two engagements with you, Zimbabwe has seen implementation of an inquest into the murders of Civilians in Zimbabwe in August 2018 through the Monthlante Commission of Enquiry during the 4th quarter of 2018. As much as Zimbabweans thought this was a positive step, regrettably a repetition of the same events occurred with the situation in Zimbabwe now becoming dire politically and economically. The state's heavy handedness on civilians and the clamp down on human rights defenders is creating a huge threat to civil liberties and freedoms in a democracy and we are calling upon SADC to intervene and implore Harare to stop these human rights abuses and assist Zimbabweans in building a true democracy going forward.

SAPSN appreciates the role of SADC in promoting economic development, peace and security, alleviating poverty and enhancing the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa through regional integration. Therefore we once again plead with you to expeditiously intervene in the Zimbabwean situation, noting the issues outlined hereunder;

We are Concerned by:

- Continuous economic decay characterised by high unemployment rate, skyrocketing prices of basic commodities and the overall high cost of living;
- Deteriorating social services including health and education;
- Currency crisis following the introduction of a surrogate currency (Bond Note) by the government in 2016. Since its inception, the government insisted on the 1:1 parity between the Bond Note and the United States Dollar. However, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies by the current regime distorted the 1:1 exchange rate between Bond Note and USD giving birth to the multitier pricing system. . As of now the government is showing no political will to resolve the currency crisis which has seen inflation rising to above 200%.
- The fuel crisis in Zimbabwe which loomed from the final quarter of 2018 exacerbated by lack of foreign currency in the country. In response to the acute fuel shortages, worsened by the unrealistic price structure and festering arbitrage opportunities, the government hiked fuel prices by over 200% making it the most expensive in the world.
- Violent clashes between protesters and security forces following fuel price increase leading to deaths and injuries;
- Violation of human rights;
- Heavy presence of military and security forces in the streets;
- Shrinking of civic and political space demonstrated by interception of communication and the general infringement of citizenry freedoms and liberties;
- Government crackdown on human rights defenders and civic leaders.

We are Worried that:

- The unfolding events in Zimbabwe might escalate into a regional threat as refugees flee from the political and economic crises to neighbouring countries.
- The continuous political tension might escalate into a civil war as the government is placing blame of the current turmoil on the opposition political parties and civilians.

- The situation is getting out of hand as people in civilian clothing armed with firearms were identified during the protests.

We now therefore call upon and plead with SADC to;

- Call for an Extraordinary Summit to look into the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe;
- Assist by facilitating an all-inclusive dialogue (including government, all political parties and civil society) on the current crisis;
- Call for the demilitarisation of state and restoration of true civilian rule in Zimbabwe;
- Reinforce Zimbabwe's commitment to **SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP)** in maintaining good political, economic and corporate governance entrenched in the culture of democracy, full participation by civil society, transparency and respect for the rule of law;
- Enforce Zimbabwe's commitment in fostering fundamental human rights and freedoms as enshrined in Section 11 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013.

For more information on the unfolding situation do not hesitate to contact:

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