

Morgan Tsvangirai:
BRIEFING TO THE HARARE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY

March 28 2003

Your Excellencies, I have kindly requested your presence here today in order to brief you on recent developments in Zimbabwe.

As you are aware, the people embarked on a mass stay away on March 18 and 19 2003 to protest against the Mugabe illegitimate regime's programme of violent misrule and the corrupt management of the economy. The Zimbabwean people were and are still demanding that the rogue regime accounts for its actions.

On numerous occasions in the past, I have informed the international community that it was going to be difficult for us in the MDC to continue counselling patience indefinitely on a restive population. We have now reached the stage where people's impatience, anger, and their desire for qualitative change in their lives cannot be contained.

The mass stay away, which was premised strictly on peaceful or non-violent modes of protest, was a resounding success. It was a clear demonstration of the people's determination to chart the path of their own destiny and to re-affirm the supremacy of their sovereign will, even in the face of self-evident danger from a regime that has no scruples in its pursuit of maintaining absolute illegitimate power.

There can be no doubt now that the mass stay away was a clear demonstration of who holds legitimate political power and authority in our country. Zimbabweans heeded the MDC's call and voluntarily participated in the peaceful mass stay away and they became targets of state terror and violence. The Mugabe regime was thus, clearly exposed as the ruthless usurper, with no legitimate authority or mass support and clinging to power through the naked and brute force of arms.

There can be absolutely no doubt that the people's overwhelming response to the MDC's call for a peaceful mass action was once again a re-endorsement that we are the legitimate political authority in Zimbabwe, representing the freely expressed sovereign will of the people.

We alone represent the wishes of the majority of Zimbabweans. We alone speak for the majority of Zimbabweans.

March 18 and 19 was, therefore, the people of Zimbabwe's Rubicon. There is now no turning back from their quest to be free regardless of how many people the regime chooses to brutalize and slaughter.

Not even the sound of gunfire or the chilling smell of cordite can derail the people's quest for freedom. There is now a singular determination and

conviction among Zimbabweans that no price is too high to pay for freedom.

Above all, Your Excellencies, the mass stay away had a sharp message for those who used to equivocate about the root cause of the Zimbabwe crisis. The MDC has always maintained that the Zimbabwe crisis was a crisis of governance in which the land issue was a symptom used as an alibi to mask the real nature of that crisis. The recent mass stay away has vindicated and validated the accuracy and honesty of our diagnosis.

Well after the Mugabe had announced the end of the chaotic and violent land reform and is carrying out the so-called audit, largely to establish the extent of benefits to cronies, the people of Zimbabwe rose up to protest against the systematic violations of human rights, denial of democratic rights and democratic governance, violence, murder, torture, rape and other crimes against humanity. These are the root cause of the Zimbabwe crisis of governance. Zimbabweans did not rise up in celebration of the end of the violent land grab.

Your Excellencies, it is quite revealing that only recently, Mr. Thabo Mbeki of South Africa has finally and grudgingly accepted that the rogue regime's proclaimed end of agrarian violence has not resolved the basic crisis of governance in Zimbabwe. We are indeed encouraged by this new re-evaluation and correct interpretation of the Zimbabwe crisis from a key and influential country in the region.

Land has never been and is not the central issue in the resolution of the Zimbabwe crisis.

The Mugabe regime's violent transgressions and dictatorial rule, not land reform and distribution, define the root cause of the Zimbabwe crisis. The Zimbabwe crisis can only be resolved through a systematic dismantling of the Mugabe dictatorship.

By his own public admission, Mugabe has announced that he is the moral and practical equivalent of Adolf Hitler. The international community must not take this announcement lightly as the musings of a geriatric. This was in fact an announcement of the new forms of repression, the new fascism that Mugabe is bent on implementing as the hallmark of his illegitimate rule. This new era of repression which by Mugabe's own admission is inspired by the atrocities and Nazi ideology of Adolf Hitler is already upon us.

As you are well aware, Your Excellencies, through the notorious Public Order and Security Act (POSA) it is a criminal offence in Zimbabwe to demand government accountability. The response of the Mugabe regime to the peaceful stay away was as swift as it was predictable. The entire state machinery of repression was unleashed on a defenceless population, peacefully protesting in their neighbourhoods.

These pogroms are continuing. Innocent Zimbabweans are being hunted down in their homes and places of entertainment and are routinely arrested for no reason, brutalized and tortured.

As I speak to you now, hundreds of innocent Zimbabweans are being held as political prisoners by the Mugabe regime under the most appalling

conditions. They are being tortured and brutalised for expressing their democratic right to demand that the Mugabe regime be accountable for its sustained programme of misrule. These reprisals are a clear demonstration of the regime's determination to crush all democratic dissent in a Nazi style.

We remain unshaken by these brutalities. We have given Mugabe 15 demands that he must address by the 31st March 2003. These are demands, which constitute the minimum conditions that are required as the launching pad for the process to return the country to the rule of law, democracy and legitimacy.

On our part there can be no going back. Mugabe has to fulfil these 15 demands or contend with the consequences of people's anger. These 15 demands are not Mugabe's gift to the people of Zimbabwe. They are part and parcel of the people's inalienable rights and Mugabe must fulfil them. On this score there can be no compromise or surrender. Mugabe must unconditionally yield or face decisive mass action from the people. We will employ methods of peaceful mass action that will render useless the ferociousness of his apparatus of repression and in the end the sovereignty of the people will triumph.

It no longer matters how much Nazi style repression he unleashes in denial of people's fundamental rights. The people of Zimbabwe are no longer prepared to live under his murderous dictatorial rule.

We are well aware that it is the Zimbabwean people who must end the tyrannical rule that has cost them so much. However we are not blind to the critical and much appreciated support that we have received from friends and well-wishers throughout the international community.

We are aware and much appreciate the gallant stance taken by some countries in the region, in Africa and the Third World, in support of and solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe during our darkest hour. We shall never forget.

The EU has remained principled and steadfast in the face of the machinations some countries that have now earned themselves the unenviable title of natural and historical allies of dictatorial regimes in Zimbabwe. We are indeed truly grateful.

The recent decision by the Commonwealth to maintain the suspension of the illegitimate Mugabe regime from the Councils of the Commonwealth has been a welcome boost to the struggling people of Zimbabwe. It has renewed our faith in the moral strength of that splendid collection of nations freely bound together by the universal values of democracy, human rights and good governance. It was a clear demonstration that the infiltration of the double standards and dishonesty of Mugabe's fellow travellers will never be tolerated or allowed to defile the noble values that bind the Commonwealth.

Mugabe expected the war in Iraq to deflect international attention away from his violent dictatorship in Zimbabwe. It is encouraging to note that on the contrary the war in Iraq is serving to permanently maintain Mugabe's violent illegitimate regime sharply on the radar of international attention.

Your Excellencies, the doctrine of national sovereignty has undergone

several internationally accepted and valid modifications in the past fifty years. The international community now firmly rejects recourse to bogus notions of sovereignty, which serve as a smokescreen behind which rogue regimes routinely commit crimes against innocent citizens. Like other dictatorial regimes elsewhere in the world the international community must reject Mugabe's periodic invocation of a hollow sovereignty as an alibi for the crimes against humanity that his regime perpetrates daily against the people of Zimbabwe.

In this regard we are grateful to the persistent concern expressed by the Government of the USA on violent excesses of the Mugabe dictatorship. Contrary to Mugabe's expectations problems in other parts of the world have not neutralized the attention on the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe. We say to the people and Government of the USA, walk with us the last mile towards our freedom and together lets lay down the future foundation of fruitful understanding, cooperation and progress.

Our suggestion for the way forward has been a matter of public record for some time now. We believe that there is no other viable avenue of resolving the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe outside a serious process of dialogue designed to return the country to legitimacy and democracy. We in the MDC remain ready for such a process provided it is based on integrity and principle rather than sheer political expediency.

As Your Excellencies are no doubt aware, the agenda for such a process is in place and already agreed to by both parties. It is the Mugabe regime, which scuttled the talks citing our legal challenge to the clearly fraudulent March 2002 presidential poll. It is therefore entirely up to Mugabe and his associates to come back to the negotiating table. On our part we have never cited the fate of the on-going treason trial as a condition for dialogue.

We are ready to engage in a purposeful process of dialogue even as the treason trial and our presidential election challenge proceed in the courts of law.