

OPEN LETTER TO SADC LEADERS FROM ZIMBABWE YOUTH MOVEMENT

This letter comes from the children of a small nation called Zimbabwe. We are not as old as you are nor are we as wise as you are. We are only children, poor children for that matter. This we say because we believe we do not have the right to be addressing you, rather it would be more than a privilege if this letter passes through your hands, let alone enter your incoming-mail baskets.

Honourable elders, we write to invoke your memories, conscience and probably sympathy. Most of us as you might remember were born in the numerous refugee camps that were scattered throughout the region in the 70's. We are Zimbabweans by citizenship but most of us have their umbilical cords interred in the soils of your countries; Chifombo in Zambia, Chimoio in Mozambique, even as far as Mgagao in Tanzania. We cherish the courtesy of life that you bestowed unto us. We salute Nyerere, Kaunda, Khama and Machel.

We thank you rather belatedly for the lorries and aeroplanes that ferried us back to Zimbabwe in 1980. It was indeed a touching moment to see Comrade Machel on the podium together with our very own Robert Gabriel Mugabe- the fresh from the bush Mugabe. How did you leaders of Africa feel when we got our independence?

Except for you Mr Thabo Mbeki, we can definitely answer for all the others: there was general happiness and relief. As for you Mr Mbeki we do not know where you were but even if Nelson Mandela was not allowed newspapers at Robben Island we believe he got the message as soon as it happened and definitely he was at the most happy and at the least envious of the new state!

It is twenty-seven years since the then energetic and fifty-six year old Mugabe took power; we still listen to Bob Marley's Africa Liberate Zimbabwe. Do you remember the song Mr Mwanawasa?

Obviously you remember that one Your Excellence, but do you also remember the Dare reChimurenga meeting at Mulungushi Rock Hotel and the Kafue forests in 1970 and 1971. May you please ask Kenneth Kaunda why we had those meetings in Zambia and not in Rhodesia? If he refuses to tell you then you might as well take it that it was maybe because Rugare Gumbo had been expelled from Zimuto High school and detained at Whawha prison, or maybe Emmerson Munangagwa had been sentenced to death, or maybe Mugabe and other nationalists had been abducted and unlawfully detained since 1966, or maybe the Smith regime had killed protesters against his proclamation of Rhodesia as a republic on 2 March 1970?

So Mr Mwanawasa; Hentchel Mavuma, Collen Chibango, Sendisa Ndhlovu, Maddock Chivasa, Wellington Mahohoma and many others were expelled from the University of Zimbabwe, Batanai Hadzizi, Lameck Chemvura and more recently Gift Tandare were killed by the Zimbabwean authorities. Right now many opposition activists including MDC's Ian Makone and Dennis Murira are detained illegally by the Zimbabwean Police. Isn't this a scenario typical of the 1970 situation? Don't you think it is time that we also have meetings in Kabwe, Gaborone, Arusha, Chimoio and Musina forests?

Mr Thabo Mbeki, when you said AIDS is caused by poverty, the whole world doubted your scientific aptitude but we never doubted your intelligence. When your vice took a bath to protect himself from HIV we did not doubt your government's wisdom either. When you came out of that meeting in Tanzania and you declared yourself mediator between Mugabe and Tsvangirai we thought you were running out of intelligence and wisdom; but you are our elder -just like Mugabe - we cannot disrespect you. We would however like to know if corruption, inflation, unemployment and general economic decline are caused by a power struggle between Mugabe and Tsvangirai?

Mr Mbeki, the crisis is not about Tsvangirai being beaten in elections or on the head. It is between

the people of Zimbabwe and the Government of Zimbabwe. It is between the peace-loving people of Zimbabwe and their blood-thirsty, insensitive, arrogant and gun-totting government. We have a junta in power, a warlord is ruling us. He does not respect our lives; if he slaughtered 20 000 people in 1982 what can stop him from killing ten?

In short, Mr Mbeki we do not need any mediation. What we dream for is an accountable, transparent and responsible government. What we want as of now Mr Mbeki is your protection from this gun-totter. If you cannot rebuke him then give us the chance to rebuke him. You cannot invade Zimbabwe but you can influence the course of change in our country. You have a moral obligation to welcome us in the forests of Musina, equip us and be quiet as we redefine the course of our revolution, that way Quiet Diplomacy would work!

Finally, we would want to ask you why the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland went ahead in 1955 despite the massive African resistance led by Nkomo, Kaunda and Kamuzu Banda? African had no guns but white had. Why did the white engineered Zimbabwe-Rhodesia coalition failed; Africans had guns!

So leaders of Africa wake up to the call for international duty!

We mean every word we say!

Tomorrow is Today. Ramangwana ndinhasi. Ukusasa ukunamhla!

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