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[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here



[Home](#)

Cover Story
Solidarity with the People of Zimbabwe
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Daily accounts from Zimbabwe for the last few weeks have been increasingly alarming. From news sources, teleconferences and the Zimbabwean diaspora in the U.S. we hear of violence directed at opposition members who threaten President Mugabe and the current leadership of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). The details are horrific, not just in the 86 or so people that have been killed thus far connected to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) but the thousands who have been beaten severely, some almost to death. Even more are in jail, or arrested and detained on a daily basis. The intimidation is directed at those who are active in the political process as a clear message to stop and let the status quo prevail.

I'm sure none of what I'm saying here comes as news to any of you who follow the news from Zimbabwe closely. What has happened yesterday however, with the leader of MDC stepping out of the run-off election process underway may bring on new developments in the country that will turn things for the worst.

When a democratic space such as this (with all its shortcomings) has been closed for the millions of Zimbabweans who had eagerly been awaiting for a change in regime, the frustration and anger may be manifested in street violence - as was the case in Kenya. It is possible (in fact many analysts predict) that there will be no such violent

eruptions. If violence from the people were to take place, we would have seen the escalation in retaliation by Zimbabwean populations by now. I hope their optimism is the reality that is yet to unfold.

As I continue to engage in analysis and reflection with colleagues and read the latest news, I feel a sense of discontent as we sit here, unable to do anything to contribute in some meaningful way to bring about positive change to the hundreds of civilians in Zimbabwe who are suffering, not only from the violence perpetuated against them by ZANU-PF, but also from the pain of hunger and displacement from their homes as they flee into neighboring countries.

But, what can we do, those of us in the US? If SADC has been unable and ineffective, what can we out here do? If the words expressed yesterday by the head of SADC, Zambia's President, or the President of Mozambique and other African leaders have not been able to turn the tide of violence and repression, what can we do? There are those who say that small as it may be, we need to at least issue a statement from our organizations that make clear our opposition to the current state of repressive regime and our solidarity with the peace loving people of Zimbabwe. That would make many of us, as individuals and members or organizations feel good, ease our consciences and enable us to state unequivocally that we were made the right choice in a historic moment. But really, do these statements make a difference to the people who continue to be beaten, imprisoned and harassed because of their political views and actions? Sadly, no. Much as I like to say it does, appreciated as it may be by our partners on the ground, it makes little difference in the life of even a singer person.

Here is one way that I find helps. [Contributions to the Zimbabwe Solidarity Fund](#).

The Fund was organized by civil society organizations in the US who are directly linked to civil society groups on the ground - not political opposition groups as such, but organizations that are involved in increasing participation of the grassroots in the democratic process through elections.

The contributions are from individuals in the US who send in what they can, even as small as \$5 and \$10 are encouraged - to ensure that those who are imprisoned are provided legal assistance to secure their release, to ensure that while they are detained, they are treated fairly, that they are fed and receive immediate medical attention from the beatings they've endured. That is what the funds will be used for.

As I write this, I'm sitting in my office surrounded by images of posters from people's protests from Soweto which just celebrated its 22nd anniversary. The South African protests were captured by the images of children killed and running, crying. They were the beginning of the downfall of the apartheid period that was long overdue. I reflect on the images and wonder if this too is a moment similar to Soweto in 1976 that we should recognize?


I hope it will not take another decade or more for the Mugabe regime to end, the people in Zimbabwe are exhausted. Their every move to bring about peaceful change in their government has been frustrated with the cunning political manipulations of President Mugabe. But enough is enough and justice must prevail. While we await the "end" to come, in whatever form it will take, those of us who are powerless and frustrated can do at least one thing, make a contribution to the Zimbabwe Solidarity Fund as a measure of support and standing with the people in the time of their need.


BlackCommentator.com Guest Columnist, Nunu Kidane is an activist from Eritrea, East Africa. She is currently the Network Coordinator with [Priority Africa Network](#)

(PAN), a coalition of 26 (Oakland, CA) Bay Area organizations that promote Africa through education and advocacy. She has a B.A. from UC Berkeley and has worked for over fifteen years in program and policy development in Eastern and Southern Africa. She has written and spoken on topics such as HIV/AIDS, debt cancellation, migration, resource extraction and human rights in Africa and is an advocate on racial justice globally. She is a member of the Coordinating Committee of Jubilee USA Network, a Board Member of Casa Segura, and a member of The League of the Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research Action (TIGRA), Advisor for Women of Africa (WAFRICA) and a member of the Africa Committee with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Kidane.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)
Click Here

[Home](#)

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