

# **A CRIMINAL STATE**



**A Statement and a Brief Chronicle of Events in Zimbabwe**

**18 February – 22 March**

***SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST***

**JOHANNESBURG**

**24 MARCH 2007**

## THE SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST

The Solidarity Peace Trust is a non-governmental organisation, registered in South Africa. The Trustees of the Solidarity Peace Trust are church leaders of Southern Africa, who are all committed to human rights, freedom and democracy in their region.

*The co-chairpersons are:*

- Archbishop Pius A Ncube; Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
- Bishop Rubin Phillip; Anglican Bishop of KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

*The objectives of the Trust are:*

To assist individuals, organisations, churches and affiliated organisations in southern Africa, to build solidarity in the pursuit of justice, peace and social equality and equity in Zimbabwe. It shall be the special concern of the Trust to assist victims of human rights abuses in their efforts to correct and end their situation of oppression.

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*Cover photo: teargas in Highfield, 11 March 2007*

## **STATEMENT FROM SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST**

The Solidarity Peace Trust condemns the brutal assault on opposition forces and the arrests of more than 50 activists that took place on 11 March 2007, in the context of Zimbabwean police preventing a peaceful prayer meeting from being convened.

The Trust condemns the killing of activist Gift Tandare by the police on 11 March. There should be a full inquiry into this killing, with culprits brought to justice. We further condemn the shooting of two mourners at the funeral wake of Tandare, and the heartless kidnapping of the corpse by the State for hurried burial.

It is unacceptable that detainees were brutally tortured in police custody, and were denied access to lawyers and medical treatment for two days. The delayed access to medical care, even after a High Court Order demanded access, has exacerbated some of the injuries of those tortured.

Torture is never justified. The international prohibition on torture is absolute and even a State of Emergency would not justify it. Those responsible for acts of torture should be brought to justice by the authorities in Zimbabwe, or in the international community.

The existence of a three month ban on public meetings of any kind is an unacceptable infringement on the constitutional rights of all Zimbabweans to freedom of expression, association and movement. These rights should be respected.

It is with shock we note the statement of President Mugabe that “police have the right to bash them”. Police have no right to “bash” anyone under any law in Zimbabwe, or in terms of any international conventions we are signatory to. The Trust notes that the State culture of impunity, which emanates from the highest office in the land, is generating a more general culture of violence. When a government allows impunity to its uniformed forces – when police officers who torture and murder are not brought to justice, and are in fact told they have a right to do this - it is tragically predictable that people’s patience will run out and as anger and desperation rise, vigilante style violence will rise. Reprisals have already taken place, with a bus of mourners being vandalised, and three policewomen being tragically injured in their beds by petrol bombs. In Bulawayo an alleged attempt to derail a passenger train was thankfully unsuccessful. The situation is spiralling into worsening cycles of violence and repression. Innocent people are suffering in this cycle and will increasingly do so. This is to be deeply regretted.

The danger of escalating violence is a very deep concern to the Trust. We appeal to the government of Zimbabwe to end the impunity of its uniformed forces immediately, and to prosecute those who violate the rights of ordinary citizens. The government should allow the citizens of Zimbabwe to hold peaceful gatherings and should restore to them their constitutional rights to do so. The government should refrain from inciting its supporters to violence, as should all citizens of Zimbabwe.

Archbishop Pius Ncube

Chairperson

Board of Trustees

20 March 2007

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY**

Governments in the SADC region should build a consensus on Zimbabwe and what is to be done to stabilise the degenerating humanitarian and political situation. Policy makers in the region need to develop a more critical view and to push Zimbabwe into national dialogue. Recent critical statements from the African Union and the critical debates and comments emanating from some countries in Africa are a welcome development. This debate and the regional perception of Zimbabwe needs to develop a sharper focus.

At the forthcoming SADC meeting, Heads of State need to place Zimbabwe high on their agenda, and to develop a concrete proposal on how to promote dialogue between all parties in Zimbabwe. The purpose of this dialogue would be to develop a SADC road map for Zimbabwe, which deals with the following issues:

- A process for a new constitution
- A process to put in place new electoral and security laws
- The re-enfranchisement of the disenfranchised
- The mobilisation of international resources for economic recovery in Zimbabwe
- A retirement package for President Mugabe

There is a need for the United Nations Security Council to discuss the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe and SADC should promote this.

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL EVENTS IN ZIMBABWE: 18 FEBRUARY – 21 MARCH 2007

*The following summary is compiled from both independent and government newspapers as well as from statements released since the events of 11 March. It is a quick reference list and is given without comment or evaluation. It is intended to give space to the position of the government of Zimbabwe [Chronicle and Herald are State papers] as well as what could be called the “human rights” position.*

- **18 February: Highfields rally teargassed:** a rally applied for by the Tsvangirai MDC was banned by the police. However a High Court Order sanctioned the rally to go ahead. Nonetheless on the 18<sup>th</sup> the police are there in force with riot gear and tear gas. The police prevent people from entering the venue and when crowds try to defy the order, there are running battles, with police throwing teargas and beating people, and youth stoning the police. [*Zimbabwe Independent*, Feb 23] The state media later show photographs of a vehicle allegedly torched by MDC youth and other vandalised property. [*Sunday News*, 18 March]
- **19 February: EU targeted sanctions renewed:** 125 ZANU PF officials are excluded from travel to the EU and have had their international assets frozen once more.
- **20 February to 20 May: three month ban on all rallies, meetings and demonstrations:** the State announces that it is invoking the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) [chapter 11:17]. However, no law in Zimbabwe, including POSA, gives general authority to the Minister of Home Affairs to ban all forms of gathering in this way. POSA only entitles the regulating authority (i.e. the officer commanding a police district), if he believes on reasonable grounds that the normal powers vested in the police to regulate public gatherings will not be sufficient to prevent public disorder being occasioned by the holding of public demonstrations or any class of public demonstrations in the area under his command or any part of that area, he may issue an order prohibiting, for a period not exceeding three months, the holding of all public *demonstrations* or any class of public *demonstrations*. In other words, the authorities are only entitled, in very limited circumstances, to ban demonstrations. *There is no general power to ban meetings*. [Legal Resources Foundation press statement, 14 March 2007].
- **21 February: “poll harmonisation”:** Mugabe announces that his desire to “harmonise” the Presidential election scheduled for 2008 with the Parliamentary of 2010 has nothing to do with him trying to extend his time in office. “If I want to lengthen my term I can stand next year: what prevents me from standing... and then I can have another six years for that matter.” [*The Chronicle (Chr)*, Byo, 21 Feb]
- **21 February: MDC activists in court:** MDC MPs Tendai Biti and Paul Madzore are remanded out of custody with seven others. They are accused of holding an unsanctioned demonstration on 15 February. One of the accused is alleged to have assaulted a police officer with an iron bar. Their lawyer reports that many of the accused were tortured in custody, and held beyond the statutory 48 hours before being brought before the court. [*Chr*, 21 Feb]
- **21 February: President Mugabe turns 83 years old.** He hosts a massive birthday bash in Gweru, to which thousands of school children are bussed. However, Vice President Mujuru does not attend as tensions grow between her faction of ZANU PF and Mugabe: it has been her intention to run in the Presidential election to replace Mugabe. ZBC censor Mugabe’s traditional birthday interview, removing references to the succession issue.

- **21 February: teachers go on strike:** teachers are demanding increases in salaries as teachers in Zimbabwe currently earn around Z\$100,000 per month – less than a quarter of the Z\$ 458,000 assessed to be the *Poverty Datum Line (PDL)*. [Chr, 22 Feb].
- **23 February: teachers end strike:** government has agreed to pay them salaries of between Z\$ 522,000 and Z\$888,000 to put them above the PDL.
- **23 February: ZCTU ultimatum to government passes:** the ZCTU had given government until this date to come up with a solution to the economic crisis and to agree to peg the lowest industrial wage to the PDL. The ZCTU is now mobilising for a two day stay away in April.
- **25 February: illegal curfew in Harare:** there is an unofficial curfew in Harare. Residents of Highfield, Kambuzuma, Kuwadzana, Mufakose, Glen View and Glen Norah say that they risk being beaten by police if they are on the streets at night.
- **25 February: rallies banned:** in the last week of February, rallies by Arthur Mutambara, Morgan Tsvangirai and the United Peoples Party are all banned and the police turn up in force to enforce the prohibitions. In both Harare and Bulawayo, supporters of the opposition are arrested and beaten. In Harare, 64 are arrested. Both MDC factions announce their intention to defy the ban and to continue to hold rallies and meetings. The NCA also says the ban will not prevent its activities.
- **1 March: suggestions of price freeze causes price hikes and currency collapse:** prices on basic commodities are reported to have escalated by 40% in a week, and the Z\$ has crashed in a matter of days on the black market. Last week, a South African Rand was worth ZS 600, this week it is worth Z\$ 1,200. [Chr, 1 March]
- **1 March: Trudy Stevenson ejected from Parliament:** MDC MP Stevenson is ejected from parliament after interjecting during the response of Minister of Information Bright Matonga to the question as to why the government was jamming Studio 7 and SWRadio Africa transmissions. Matonga responded: “We cannot allow foreigners to invade our airwaves without our authority. We will continue to do it. We need to protect our sovereignty. If you go to England you will not receive any foreign radio station.” Ms Stevenson was ejected for contradicting the Minister’s statement. [Chr, 1 March]
- **2 March: IMF to extend suspension of Zimbabwe:** Mugabe dismisses this from Namibia: “do we care? We don’t have to go to the IMF or European donors”. He advises the Namibians to learn from the successful Zimbabwe land reform programme: “They [former colonial powers] know now what the Africans can do.” [Chr, 2 March]
- **2 March: commuter omnibus fares up again:** in the third increase in two months, fares are up to \$ 2,000 per trip. This means monthly transport costs for a worker will be a minimum of Z\$90,000 per month. This does not take into account transport costs for children to get to school or any other travel. *The PDL is now standing at Z\$ 686,000 – up 50% in one month!* Minimum industrial wages are still at below Z\$ 100,000 per month. [Chr, 2 March] Teachers are once more mostly below the PDL: their salary increase granted two weeks ago is already negated by inflation.
- **4 March: purges of ZANU PF in the provinces:** it is announced that ZANU PF is demanding snap re-elections of structures in Bulawayo and Masvingo, where current provincial position holders are viewed as being opposed to Mugabe’s plans to run for office in 2008.
- **5 March: United States re-imposes targeted sanctions against ZANU PF leadership**

- **6 March: doctors end two month strike:** junior doctors had been earning Z\$56,000 per month – less than 10% of the PDL! The revised terms of service are not revealed. [*Chr*, 6 March].
- **7 March: Disaster areas:** the governors of Matabeleland North and South appeal to have their provinces declared a national disaster because of total crop failure. There is a further fear that lack of water and grazing will lead to livestock deaths this dry season. Crop failure also affects Masvingo, and parts of Manicaland and Midlands. At the same time, the Grain Marketing Board is reported to have run out of maize stocks. Millions of people will be hungry this winter. [*Chr*, 7 March]
- **7 March: crash kills 35:** thirty five are killed and 24 seriously injured when an overloaded commuter bus rammed a locomotive in Harare. Poor maintenance of signals is responsible. [*Chr*, 7 March] Three more die subsequently.
- **7 March: civil service salary top-ups:** the lowest paid civil servant will now receive Z\$215,000 – or 30% of the PDL of Z\$ 686,000! [*Chr*, 7 March]
- **18 March: transport up again:** transport fees go up to Z\$ 5,000. A worker now has to spend around Z\$ 400,000 on transport alone. Most workers earn around Z\$ 200,000. Some workers give up working: it costs less to stay at home earning nothing than to get to work.

### 11-13 March

- **11 March: Save Zimbabwe prayer meeting banned and over 50 arrested on their way to attend the service:** they are held in police stations across Harare. Those held in Machipisa Police Station are all brutally tortured.
- **Medical access and legal access denied:** those in custody are denied access to lawyers and health care professionals, in violation of their constitutional rights. The denial of access continues throughout Monday and it is only on Tuesday afternoon that medical access is granted, in spite of a High Court Order demanding immediate access on Monday night. The accused are brought before the court on Tuesday afternoon, and after several hours, are released into medical custody without charges having been laid. The lawyer for the State concedes that it is common cause that those in detention have been assaulted.
- **Tuesday evening:** the accused are released into medical custody on Tuesday night and told to return to court on Wednesday morning to be charged. However, in an act of sheer harassment, the police arrive at the hospital after dark and demand everyone is removed from their hospital beds and returned to the courts. The courts are locked up and there is no magistrate in sight. The detainees are eventually allowed to return to the Avenues Hospital.
- **Wednesday morning:** the lawyers and the accused are at the court at 9 am as requested, but the court is not open and the police are not present. This indicates that the State has no intention to lay charges and the lawyers inform their clients they are free to go. To date charges have not been laid.
- **Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights findings:** [extract from statement released 14 March]
  - Several of the persons detained were in a grave medical condition. Of the 64 persons attended to 20 are currently admitted to hospital for treatment.
  - The injuries documented were consistent with beatings with blunt objects heavy enough to cause the following:
    - \* Fractures to hands, arms and legs in 5 individuals including Lovemore Madhuku with a fractured ulna. 3 of these, Elton Mangoma, Sekai Holland and Morgan Tsvangirai sustained multiple fractures.
    - \* Severe, extensive and multiple soft tissue injuries to the backs, shoulders, arms, buttocks and thighs of 14 individuals.

\* Head injuries to 3 individuals, Nelson Chamisa, Morgan Tsvangirai and Lovemore Madhuku with the latter two sustaining deep lacerations to the scalp.

\* A possibly ruptured bowel in 1 individual due to severe blunt trauma to the abdomen.

\* A split right ear lobe sustained by Grace Kwinjeh.

- Prolonged detention without accessing medical treatment resulted in severe haemorrhage in Morgan Tsvangirai leading to severe anaemia which warranted a blood transfusion.
  - Injuries sustained by Sekai Holland were also worsened by denial of timely access to medical treatment which led to an infection of deep soft tissue in her left leg.
  - Denial of access to treatment in another individual suffering from hypertension lead to angina.
  - Further tests are currently being carried out to determine the fuller extent of injuries in several of those currently admitted. Some will require surgical procedures as part of their treatment. Sekai Holland has already undergone a surgical fixation of the fracture in her left ankle.
  - 2 of the individuals hospitalised were admitted due to conditions resulting from poor conditions of detention with severe diarrhoea in 1 individual and extensive and severe flea bites in 1 individual.
- **11 March: Gift Tandare shot dead:** he is an NCA activist who was among those who wished to attend the prayer service. He is unarmed and is shot dead with live ammunition, leaving a widow with three small children. In a normal society the police do not use live ammunition against citizens and residents exercising their democratic right to freedom of assembly and expression. [*Constitution of Zimbabwe, Article 21*][*LRF press release, 14 March*].
  - **11 March: MDC violence in Highfield:** in the wake of the arrests and when the police impose an unofficial curfew on Highfields, youth vandalise a ZUPCO bus filled with mourners, steal goods from passengers and induce a miscarriage in one woman. They set fire to a ZNA vehicle, and attack police at Gazaland police station, injuring three. A commuter omnibus is torched at the Kawudzana roundabout. [*Chr, 12 March*]
  - **11 March: weapons recovered from “DRCs”:** the police report having found dangerous weapons being distributed by “Democratic Resistance Committees” of the MDC. The police say these committees are behind violence in Harare over the previous weeks. [*Chr, 12 March*]
  - **12 March: Mugabe announces “I will stand if ZANU PF nominates me” in 2008 Presidential elections.** He announces that instead of harmonising elections in 2010, they should be harmonised in 2008, meaning that both parliamentary and presidential elections will be held next year.
  - **12 March: currency plummets again:** in the wake of the events of the weekend and after Mugabe’s announcement that he intends to stand for another five year term, the Z\$ reaches a dramatic new low. One South African Rand sells for Z\$2,000 and the USA\$ peaks at Z\$ 17,500. Officially, the US\$ is still worth Z\$ 250 to one!
  - **12 March: ambassadors visit police commissioner:** on Monday night it is reported that the ambassadors of Germany, Britain and Sweden go to Police General Police Headquarters and request to see Police Commissioner Chihuri. They are accused of violating protocol because they are not accompanied by a Foreign Affairs official and are turned away. [*Herald, 13 March*]
  - **12 March:** two activists are shot at the wake of murdered activist Gift Tandare. The two individuals sustained gunshot wounds to the left ankle and right arm respectively. One sustained a shattered left ankle from the gunshot wound and is likely to require amputation

from the left ankle downwards. The other individual primarily sustained shrapnel wounds early on Monday 12 March but however was *shot again in the same arm* on the evening of Monday 12 March upon his return to the funeral resulting in an open fracture to the arm, the severity of which may warrant amputation of that arm. [ZADHR, 14 March]

- **13 March: assaulted cops recovering:** the State media portrays the arrests and beatings as the legitimate consequence of MDC sponsored violence, funded by the international community. They highlight the attacks on two policemen injured by youths in Highfields on Sunday. Police declare “zero tolerance to political violence”. Minister Mohadi insists the prayer gathering was in fact a political rally pretending to be a church event. [*Herald*, Harare, 13 March]
- **13 March: police ban on meetings lifted in Masvingo:** Officer Commanding in Masvingo announces that the ban on rallies effected two weeks ago has been lifted following an improvement in the law and order situation. Prior to the ban, he reports, MDC youth were barricading the roads in Masvingo in the early hours of the morning. They burnt a vehicle in the middle of the road and chopped down huge gum trees blocking traffic.
- **13 March: inflation now runs at 1,730%**
- **13 March: two police stations petrol bombed:** a police station in Marimba, Harare and one in Gweru, 300 km away, are almost simultaneously petrol bombed soon after midnight, allegedly by MDC activists. Three policewomen are seriously burnt in their beds in Marimba, and most of their property is damaged or destroyed. The police arrest five in Gweru in connection with the attack. [*Herald*, Harare, 15 March]

### Events since 13 March

- **15 March: West accused of backing MDC violence:** Minister of Information and Publicity Sikhanyiso Ndlovu says Zimbabwe is a sovereign state and will brook no interference from any quarter in its internal affairs. The government notes with dismay the “unconditional statements of support to the violent MDC by a number of western governments ... which reinforces already available evidence of support and funding by these foreign governments” aimed at bringing about regime change. He claims “Those who incite violence or actually cause and participate in unleashing it are set to pay a very heavy price, regardless of who they are.” Western media is also accused of being one sided. [*Chr*, 15 March]
- **15 March: attempt to derail train:** it is alleged that in the early hours of the morning MDC youths barricade two different roads in the suburbs of Bulawayo and place burning tyres and other obstructions on the railway line in an attempt to derail the early morning commuter train. Two suspects are arrested. Later, another five are arrested in connection with this attack. MP Lovemore Moyo and Sam Nkomo both of the Tsvangirai MDC are also arrested and held for several days in Bulawayo, allegedly for plotting the disturbances. The lawyer representing the arrested youth claims they have been severely beaten in custody.
- **16 March: “You can go hang”:** President Mugabe has a meeting with President of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete. The content of their meeting is not made public, but sources say that Kikwete expressed SADC’s disapproval of recent events and may also have expressed the desire of the region for Mugabe not to stand again for the office of President. Mugabe, at the press conference after this meeting, tells the West to “go hang” for daring to criticise his government for their dealings with the violent MDC. [*Zimbabwe Independent*, 16 March]
- **16 March: separate briefing for SADC diplomats:** Foreign Affairs Minister Mumbengegwi tells ambassadors of SADC and NAM nations that the MDC is intending to create mayhem and render the country ungovernable. The Ambassador of Canada arrives to attend this press briefing and is told she cannot do so, as Western diplomats are going to

have a separate briefing. The SADC and NAM diplomats are told “You are our closest allies.” The West is accused of having a morbid interest in people being brought to court within 48 hours. [In fact the Zimbabwean High Court ruled on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March that the police were in contempt of Zimbabwean law if people were held more than 48 hours]. The Chinese and the Russians, who have veto powers on the UN Security Council, are given separate briefings. The events of Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> are referred to as “a scuffle” of no international significance. [*Chr*, 17 March].

- **16 March: Save Zimbabwe press briefing:** the leaders of the Save Zimbabwe campaign address press and diplomats and state that they are unbowed by their ordeal and will continue to campaign peacefully for the restoration of law and order in Zimbabwe. Arthur Mutambara refers to Zimbabwe as a “criminal state”. Those present vow to be unified in their objectives.
- **16 March: MDC violence:** *The Herald* provides a list of incidents of violence perpetrated by MDC this year. The incidents involve vandalising of cars, shops and houses, as well as assaults on people, all in Harare. It is claimed that the US Ambassador has instigated this policy and gave money to both MDCs at a meeting at the Bronte Hotel in February. The Ambassador was in Bulawayo on holiday on the day of this supposed Harare meeting. That such a meeting took place is denied by all parties.
- **MDC violence:** some of the instances of opposition youth vandalism are independently confirmed by the authors during interviews with Harare residents. It appears that in many suburbs of Harare, youth are now constructing barricades in the small hours of the morning and are targeting houses and property of perceived sell outs.
- **17 March: South Africa refuses to refer Zimbabwe to the UN Security Council:** South Africa, which has assumed the rotating Presidency of the UN Security Council, states that Zimbabwe is not a threat to international peace and security.
- **17 March: “the police have the right to bash them”:** the MDC is warned by Mugabe that if they are violent “they will get arrested and will get bashed by the police.” He announces that police must be well armed in future. It is stated that plain clothes police in particular must have pistols in future, to protect themselves. [*Chr*, 17 March]
- **17 March: diplomats threatened with expulsion:** Mugabe says diplomats “must behave or else we kick them out of our country.” [*Chr*, 17 March]
- **17 March: the youth league is a big fist:** Mugabe tells the youth league that they are the fist of ZANU PF - “ZANU PF has a big, hard-knuckled fist which it can summon effectively, once challenged.” The youth are urged to organise and defend the revolution. He warns the West he wants “no monkey business” and tells them to “check our record when we are challenged”. The youth state that they are fully behind President Mugabe and are confident he will win next year’s Presidential election. [*Chr*, 17 March]
- **17 March: international press condemned:** CNN is accused of being arrogant and of being an MDC electronic manifesto. International media are warned to comply with Zimbabwe’s media laws and to desist from opposition politics. [*Chr*, 17 March]
- **17 March: tortured activists prevented from leaving country:** Sekai Holland and Grace Kinjeh, both of whom have severe injuries as a result of their assaults and need specialist attention, are prevented from flying to South Africa for medical assistance. They are accused of not having followed procedures. [*The Standard*, 18 March]
- **17 March: Mutambara detained:** Arthur Mutambara, President of an MDC faction, is arrested and taken into custody when he goes to the Harare airport intending to fly to Johannesburg to see his family. He is told he is still in his lawyer’s custody and has no right to leave the country, a position challenged by his lawyer who points out that he has never been charged with an offence. [Lawyers’ letter]

- **17 March: CIO agents seize Gift Tandare's corpse:** the family of murdered activist Gift has been under siege all week: police have shot two mourners, one of them twice, have stolen possessions from other mourners, and have refused to return the corpse. On Saturday, the corpse is signed for at the funeral home and is taken under armed guard to the family rural home in Mount Darwin, without the permission of his wife or family in Harare. He is hurriedly buried there, to avoid a large public funeral in Harare. [*The Standard*, 18 March]
- **17 March: Botswana MPs want embassy closed:** MPs call in parliament for the temporary closure of their embassy in Harare to send a strong signal of disapproval. [*The Standard*, 18 March]
- **18 March: Nelson Chamisa brutally attacked:** MDC MP Chamisa is attacked by six men, one with an iron bar, when he is dropped off at Harare airport. He is intending to fly to the ACP-EU meeting, but ends up in hospital with a fractured skull.
- **18 March: mischief makers given too much room: President Mugabe.** "We have given too much room to mischief makers and shameless stooges of the West. Let them and their masters know that we shall brook none of their lawless behaviour." [*Chr*, 18 March]
- **18 March: we will fight:** Sikhanyiso Ndlovu says Zimbabwe won its independence through the barrel of a gun and will fight for it until the bitter end. "We cannot let our country go down the drain because of the fear of being accused of violating human rights and not upholding democratic principles". [Chr 18 March]
- **19 March: diplomats are "read the riot act":** Western diplomats are told by Minister of Foreign Affairs that they are stretching Zimbabwe's tolerance to its limits. They are accused of violating the Vienna Convention by going directly to police stations and demanding the release of detainees instead of directing requests via the Department of Foreign Affairs. The diplomats are condemned as one sided, for not condemning the MDC attacks on police and others, and had not been to visit policemen and women who were victims of MDC violence, yet had been to see MDC activists in hospital. Nor did any of the diplomats bother to visit the survivors of the train crash in hospital. The diplomats are threatened with deportation if they do not respect the sovereignty of Zimbabwe as a nation. [*Chr*, 20 March]