

## **H. Res. 409**

### ***In the House of Representatives, U.S.,***

*December 16, 2005.*

Whereas on May 19, 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe launched “Operation Murambatsvina”, translated from the Shona language as “Operation Drive Out the Trash”, in major cities and suburbs throughout Zimbabwe in an effort that it characterized as an operation to “restore order” to the country;

Whereas hours after the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe called for an end to the parallel market, Operation Murambatsvina began in the city of Harare and subsequently in other urban areas, such as the city of Bulawayo, ostensibly to oust illegal vendors and eliminate illegal structures;

Whereas Operation Murambatsvina was carried out as an indiscriminate demolition of the homes and livelihood of thousands of Zimbabwean citizens already suffering from a protracted economic and political crisis brought on by poor policy directives by the Government of Zimbabwe that forced masses of rural dwellers to urban areas of the country for survival;

Whereas in some communities that were victimized by the forced demolitions, including Cheru Farm and Killarney Farm where more than 20,000 people lived, Zimbabweans had lived in residences for over 20 years

and had well-functioning schools, health and HIV/AIDS clinics, orphanages for AIDS-affected children, viable businesses, places of worship, and other amenities;

Whereas in 1993, the Government of Zimbabwe moved families from Cheru Farms to a new location, Porto Farm, which during Operation Murambatsvina was demolished by Zimbabwean Government forces;

Whereas government security forces carried out Operation Murambatsvina, and in doing so, beat residents and forced them to destroy their own homes and places of business, though many residents provided permits from municipal authorities granting permission to build their structures;

Whereas Operation Murambatsvina resulted in the demolition throughout the country of homes, businesses, and religious structures, including a mosque, and an AIDS orphanage and in the intimidation, harassment, and arrest of tens of thousands of people;

Whereas Operation Murambatsvina cut off many AIDS patients from anti-retroviral medicines which will likely lead to a reversal of their health, resistance to the drugs, and a more virulent form of AIDS in Zimbabwe with potential for spreading throughout the region and worldwide;

Whereas churches and private citizens sheltering the victims of Operation Murambatsvina were also intimidated, harassed, and arrested for their efforts to provide a safe haven for the victims during Zimbabwe's harsh winter;

Whereas armed soldiers and police forcibly removed hundreds of homeless people from churches in the city of Bulawayo and banned religious groups from providing humanitarian assistance to those seeking shelter at Hellensvale, a tran-

sit camp north of Zimbabwe's second city, and where police arrested and detained religious leaders;

Whereas a strongly worded statement issued by the Bulawayo clergy stated: "The removal of the poor, innocent, weak, voiceless and vulnerable members of society by riot police in the middle of the night was uncalled for and unnecessary. It is inhumane, brutal and insensitive, and in total disregard of human rights and dignity. These people are not criminals but bona fide citizens of this nation. It seems the crime they committed is that they are poor.";

Whereas the African Commission for Peoples' and Human Rights dispatched an African Union envoy, Bahame Tom Nyanduga, Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, and Asylum Seekers in Africa to investigate the ongoing demolitions;

Whereas the Government of Zimbabwe refused to allow the African Union envoy an opportunity to conduct his mission after being accused by the Government of Zimbabwe through its government-controlled media of "following the agenda of western countries";

Whereas the decision to block access to the African Union envoy is representative of a larger pattern of behavior, whereby the Government of Zimbabwe uses violence, intimidation, and demagoguery to subjugate its people, relies on scapegoats to justify the economic, political, and social crises in Zimbabwe, and detains and slanders United States diplomats who challenge the ruinous policies of that government;

Whereas in response to the crisis, the Secretary-General of the United Nations dispatched a special envoy, Ms. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Deputy Secretary General, United

Nations Human Settlements Program (UN–HABITAT), on a factfinding mission to assess the scope and impact of Operation Murambatsvina on the people of Zimbabwe and its consequences for the Zimbabwean Government;

Whereas the mission of the United Nations special envoy was undertaken between June 26 and July 8, 2005, where she visited the cities of Harare, Headlands, Rusape, Mutare, Gweru, Bulawayo, Hwange, and Victoria Falls and met with victims of Operation Murambatsvina, heard personal testimony from victims, and met with members of the diplomatic community, the Government of Zimbabwe, and international nongovernmental organizations;

Whereas the United Nations special envoy estimated that approximately 700,000 people in cities across the country have lost either their homes, their source of livelihood, or both, and that a total of 2.4 million people or 18 percent of the population was directly or indirectly affected by Operation Murambatsvina and that the operation would have considerable short-term and long-term impact on social and economic conditions in the country;

Whereas 40,800 families directly affected by Operation Murambatsvina were headed by women, and 83,530 children under the age of four and 26,600 people age 60 and older were directly affected;

Whereas President Robert Mugabe described this sudden and extensive operation against thousands of families and business persons in the dead of winter as necessary “to eliminate hideouts of crime and grime”;

Whereas the United Nations special envoy is quoted as saying “the poor are not criminals . . . [t]hey work hard to ob-

tain the little which they have and they should not thus be treated like criminals”;

Whereas the United Nations special envoy assessed the negative impact of Operation Murambatsvina on shelter, water and sanitation, food and nutrition, basic health services, HIV/AIDS, education, women and girls, refugees and other vulnerable groups;

Whereas the special envoy concluded that Operation Murambatsvina “has rendered people homeless and economically destitute on an unprecedented scale; most of the victims were already among the most economically disadvantaged groups in society; and they have now been pushed deeper into poverty and have become even more vulnerable; and the scale of suffering is immense, particularly among widows, single mothers, children, orphans, the elderly and the disabled persons”;

Whereas at the time of independence, President Robert Mugabe was hailed as a liberator and Zimbabwe showed bright prospects for democracy, economic development, domestic reconciliation, and prosperity;

Whereas President Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party in recent years have turned away from the promises of liberation and become a party that uses state power to deny the people of Zimbabwe the freedoms and prosperity for which they fought and deserve;

Whereas the rise of urbanization and the informal sector in Zimbabwe has been the direct result of failed economic policies, a bitterly disputed fast track land reform program, unplanned cash handouts to appease war veterans, the costly military intervention in Congo, and persistent drought;

Whereas before Operation Murambatsvina, unemployment in Zimbabwe was between 70 and 80 percent, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate was 24 percent, and the inflation rate was 164.4 percent (but was as high as 522.8 percent), and currently Zimbabwe has the world's fastest shrinking economy, there is an ongoing fuel crisis in the country, and the Zimbabwean economy had contracted 7 percent; and

Whereas the staggering suffering brought on by Operation Murambatsvina has been added to the already large-scale humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That—

(1) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(A) through Operation Murambatsvina, the Government of Zimbabwe has created a humanitarian disaster that has compounded the already existing humanitarian food and economic crises in the country, and the Government of Zimbabwe has insufficient resources to address such crises;

(B) the Government of Zimbabwe has a duty to protect the economic, social, and political rights of its citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; and

(C) the Government of Zimbabwe also is subject to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Zimbabwe is a

party, which states in part that “forced evictions are prima facie incompatible with the provisions of the Covenant and can only be carried out under specific circumstances”; and

(2) the House of Representatives—

(A) condemns Operation Murambatsvina as a major humanitarian catastrophe caused by the Government of Zimbabwe’s callousness toward its own people, disregard for the rule of law, and lack of planning to move families and businesses to more desirable locations;

(B) calls on the United Nations, the African Commission for Peoples’ and Human Rights, and the African Union to continue efforts to investigate the impact of the demolitions of housing structures and premises from which informal businesses operated and to provide the international community with a viable strategy to address the problems;

(C) calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to allow international humanitarian organizations access to those affected by the operation who are in need of food, medicine, shelter, sanitation, and water;

(D) calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to hold accountable those responsible for this egregious

injury to the Zimbabwean people, both the decision-makers of the operation and those who carried out the operation;

(E) calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to immediately and aggressively implement policies to promote the private sector and create jobs and build housing to accommodate those displaced by the operation;

(F) calls on the United Nations and the international community to stand by the people of Zimbabwe who have been victimized by their government in this operation and to help them with relief and reconstruction of their lives;

(G) calls on the Secretary of the Treasury to instruct the United States Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States to continue to advocate for further action at the IMF should the Government of Zimbabwe continue to fail to meet its obligations to the IMF;

(H) condemns President Mugabe's harassment of the United States Ambassador to Zimbabwe, including by threatening the Ambassador's expulsion from the country and asserting that he could "go to Hell"; and



(I) calls on President Mugabe to recognize that absent meaningful corrective actions on his part, President Mugabe's legacy will be defined by his responsibility for the ruinous policies and draconian laws that brought untold suffering of his people and the near collapse of Zimbabwe as a nation.

Attest:

*Clerk.*