

Zimbabwe: UN Urged to Refer Mugabe to International Criminal Court
BY Alex Bell
13 August 2013

The United Nations (UN) is once again facing pressure to take the lead in confronting Robert Mugabe and the crimes against humanity he is responsible for, by referring the matter to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

New York based advocacy group AIDS-Free World this week called on the UN Security Council to step in, warning that if there is no international intervention in Zimbabwe, more violence and human rights abuses could be seen there.

The warning comes two weeks after the highly disputed elections that saw Mugabe re-elected as President. The opposition MDC-T is challenging this outcome, saying the electoral process was clearly rigged and manipulated in ZANU PF's favour.

AIDS-Free World co-director, Stephen Lewis, said Tuesday that this election outcome means Mugabe and his ZANU PF party has resumed "absolute control" of Zimbabwe.

"What has happened is that because ZANU PF now has an absolute majority which allows them to revise the constitution, and Mugabe has erected around him an impenetrable wall of impunity, and one never knows what he will unleash over the coming weeks, we felt the time has come for the international community to intervene. And there's only one way to do that and that is through the International Criminal Court," Lewis told SW Radio Africa.

He said there is deep concern of a return to violence in the coming weeks, with the election outcome being challenged.

"The challenge from Morgan Tsvangirai is strong, and Mugabe feels like such a victor in this manipulated election that he may well unleash something pretty horrific," Lewis warned.

He said that such a return to violence would not be unprecedented, explaining that the same man and his party has unleashed horrific violence repeatedly in the past. He referred to the Gukurahundi genocide in the 1980s, the Murambatsvina 'cleansing' operation in 2005, and the rape campaign that followed Zimbabwe last elections in 2008.

"This all amounts to crimes against humanity," Lewis emphasised

In 2009 AIDS-Free World released a shock report detailing the horrific rape campaign against Zimbabwe's women, as part of ZANU PF's violent strategy to hold on to power. The report, 'Electing to Rape: Sexual Terror in Mugabe's Zimbabwe', documents 380 rapes committed by 241 perpetrators, who all identified themselves to their victims as ZANU PF members. The report also detailed that the figures are just the tip of the iceberg, as many other rape victims are too fearful to come forward. Any kind of justice for the crimes has been nonexistent, and there has been no condemnation or action from either the African Union or the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The report states that the ZANU PF government was well aware of the rape campaign that, along with the election violence, was masterminded by the Joint Operations Command (JOC). The report goes on to detail Mugabe's own complicity in the rapes, explaining how he not only knew about the campaign, but also refused to prevent it or punish those responsible.

The report has formed the basis of an investigation set to be undertaken by the South African police, where AIDS-Free World was forced to turn for justice for the rape victims because justice in Zimbabwe

was not possible. Lewis explained that every other avenue, apart from action from the UN Security Council, could be a dead end.

"Everything about the reign of Mugabe and ZANU PF has been extreme, authoritarian and episodically deranged. And it demands international notice," Lewis said.

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