

8 September 2006

## **Operation Murambatsvina Violated Human Rights**

By Staff Reporter

Zimbabwe's housing operation which was supposed to help those whose homes were demolished in Operation Murambatsvina is a failure, said Amnesty International (AI) today.

"Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle (Better Life) is a total failure as a remedy," said Amnesty International's Africa programme director, Kolawole Olaniyan, in a statement.

"Moreover, in its execution it has resulted not in remedies but in further violations of human rights."

He said "hundreds of thousands" of people evicted during Operation Murambatsvina, a programme of mass forced evictions, were left to find their own shelter. Operation Garikai, launched in June 2005, was the Zimbabwean government's programme to address this.

"Very few houses have been constructed. The majority of those designated as 'built' are incomplete — lacking doors, windows, floors and even roofs. They also do not have access to adequate water or sanitation facilities," said Olaniyan.

"Many of the few houses that have been built are not only uninhabited, but uninhabitable."

AI visited Zimbabwe a year after the Murambatsvina evictions to find out what the Zimbabwean government had done to help the homeless and if Garikai was working. Its findings are contained in two reports released today.

"Contrary to government statements almost none of the victims of Operation Murambatsvina have benefited from the rebuilding, with only some 3,325 houses constructed — compared to the 92,460 homes destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina — and construction has ground to a halt in many areas," said AI.

It said many people were allocated small bare plots of land — at a price and often without water or sanitation — and got no further help.

"In addition, government officials have made it clear that at least 20% of the housing will go to civil servants, police officers and soldiers — rather than those whose homes were demolished in Operation Murambatsvina."

AI said thousands, mainly poor women, lost their homes and livelihoods as informal traders in the evictions.

"The victims of Operation Murambatsvina were amongst the poorest people in Zimbabwe. The evictions and demolition of their homes drove them into even deeper poverty... Now the Zimbabwean government is unabashedly asking them to pay for incomplete and sub-standard structures — or for the stands on which to build a home — at prices that would have been well beyond their reach even before their homes and livelihoods were destroyed last year," said Olaniyan.

AI wants Garikai to be reviewed urgently and called on Zimbabwe to ask for international help with urgent housing and humanitarian needs.

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