

Please do Somethingut What?

The Economist

11 December 2008

THE Zimbabwe crisis has reached a new level that is both hideous and, paradoxically, hopeful. The hideous part is that people are dyingindeed, Zimbabwe as a country is dyingt an even faster rate than before, as cholera sweeps across the country. ( )

The hopeful angle in this horror is that cracks are widening both in Mr Mugabes regime and among his backers elsewhere in Africa. Riots by unpaid junior soldiers have yet to spread to the middle ranks but may do so. South Africa and the Southern African Development Community, the 15-country regional club, continue to wobble and waffle, with South Africas ousted president, Thabo Mbeki, as feeble as ever in his mandated role as mediator. But the spread of cholera across the Limpopo river into South Africa has intensified the debate there. Talk in high places about removing Mr Mugabe, perhaps even by force, is no longer deemed outlandish. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, an icon of the anti-apartheid movement, has called for just that. Voices elsewhere in Africa, such as those of Botswanas president, Ian Khama, and Kenyas prime minister, Raila Odinga, have become louder in calling for Mr Mugabes demise.

Botswanas foreign minister wants sanctions against Zimbabwe to include stopping oil supplies. In July a UN Security Council resolution to impose targeted sanctions (travel bans and asset freezes) against Mr Mugabe and his acolytes was blocked by China and Russia, with South Africa also dissenting, on the ground that Zimbabwe posed no threat to international stability. The blocking duo can hardly still argue that case with a straight face. Moreover, Zimbabwe is close to meeting the criteria for invoking the declaration endorsed at the UN in 2005 that there is an international **responsibility to protect** people facing, among other things, crimes against humanity. ( )

Calling for military intervention before wider sanctions have been applied is premature, even though it may come to force in the end. And economic sanctions are themselves a blunt instrument that sometimes harm the people more than the rulers. Stopping oil supplies may have just that effect. But UN sanctions focused tightly on Mr Mugabe and his coterie, and supported by South Africa, could have a big impact. The leader of South Africas ruling party, Jacob Zuma, likely to be the countrys president next year, must surely respond to the crescendo of outrage. The power-sharing deal is being overtaken by events. Mr Tsvangirai is right to reject the one-sided conditions under which Mr Mugabe says he will implement it. As cholera and refugees threaten to destabilise South Africa itself, its rulers must start to consider drastic measures to rescue the benighted country that Zimbabwe has now become.

Source: [http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=12773105](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12773105)