

**SADC Must Focus** Dewa Mavhinga

The Zimbabwean 6 March 2012 With over three years of the inclusive government and little to show for it in terms of reforms to level the political field and prepare for democratic, non-violent elections, it appears that SADC and Zimbabwe's neighbours should now focus on prevention of violence. This is what United Nations calls the

**responsibility to protect**

citizens.

The

**responsibility to protect**

principally rests on three pillars (...)

Military intervention is considered the last resort. Instead of continued appeals to president Mugabe and Zanu (PF) to do the reasonable thing and institute meaningful electoral reforms, SADC, and particularly South Africa, should simply spell it out to Mugabe and his so-called hardliners that there is no running away from democratic reforms.

They need to reinforce that the regional bloc will not stand aside and watch Zimbabwe butcher its citizens again while going through the motions of a sham election. To insist on elections when the environment is not right would be a waste of time and resources because such a process will not bring legitimacy if it is not underwritten by SADC.

We, Zimbabwe civil society organizations under the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition banner, fully support the Southern African Development Community Mediator for Zimbabwe, President Jacob Zuma and the SADC organ Troika in their insistence on genuine preparations for democratic elections in Zimbabwe that are without violence or intimidation. We urge SADC leaders when they meet to discuss Zimbabwe on June 11 to present a clear roadmap to free and fair elections in Zimbabwe that SADC leaders can enforce to ensure full compliance. Implementation of agreed reforms under the roadmap should be in accordance with clear time limits.

In line with activating the

**responsibility to protect**

mechanism, SADC should directly engage with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to closely monitor events on the ground and stand ready to rally the international community to intervene.

We are aware of the slow, and often frustrating efforts to come up with a new constitution, of efforts by parliament to enact electoral reforms, legislation and the law to establish the Human Rights Commission.

However, key justice administration and security sector institutions remain entrenched and partisan towards Zanu (PF). Key mechanisms to prevent violence during elections will be in the form of a strong observation and monitoring presence from SADC, the AU and the UN. SADC should go a step further, once election dates are announced, to deploy a team of peace monitors to Zimbabwe.

(...)

With Zanu (PF)'s vocal supporter in the ANC, Julius Malema, now thrown out of the party, it is time for Zanu (PF) to acknowledge the party's policy-shift.

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**Dewa Mavhinga, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Coordinator**

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