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() In light of the escalating violent repression of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change - and of those whose support apparently helped the MDC to prevail in the presidential election, the results of which have still not been announced after four weeks - an international arms embargo on Zimbabwe is urgently needed.

In addition, we call on the African Union, with the support of the United Nations, to send an investigative mission to Zimbabwe to determine what additional measures may be required to carry out the internationally accepted "**responsibility to protect**".

The concept of the "**responsibility to protect**" was adopted unanimously by the United Nations World Summit in 2005. Yet, it remains controversial because it is often assumed that it implies the use of military force for purposes of humanitarian intervention. We believe, as was recognised at the UN World Summit, that military force should only be a last resort when needed to prevent or halt large-scale loss of life. The first step is to gather reliable information so that it is possible to know what international measures are required to prevent a disaster.

() The constitutive act of the African Union provides in article 4:

"[The] right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity [as well as a serious threat to legitimate order]."

Here, too, however, actual military intervention should only be a last resort. In the case of Zimbabwe, for example, it is possible that sending in unarmed observers from other African countries would be sufficient. Their presence and ability to provide objective information might prevent continuation or further escalation of the violence of the last few weeks to the point where it would require military intervention. Unarmed observers could also help to ensure that emergency international food assistance, on which much of Zimbabwe's population now depends for survival, is distributed equitably, without regard to the political leanings of those requiring it.

() The African Union, with the support of the UN, should provide the leadership that would demonstrate that Africa has the capacity and the will to resolve a great crisis in a manner that mitigates the suffering of African people.

Source:

http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/desmond_tutu/2008/05/zimbabweans_need_au_help.html