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Pray for Zimbabweans. Their economy, shrinking for a decade, is suffering hyperinflation of more than 230 million percent. The government, which has no money to keep most primary and secondary schools open, has even closed down several hospitals during a cholera epidemic. The disease has left nearly 1,200 people dead and more than 23,000 others infected, according to the United Nations. ()

Given the depths of Zimbabwe's catastrophe, however, such actions seem insufficient. Not surprisingly, more robust solutions are now being proffered to dislodge Mugabe, including the threat of military force, invoking the U.N. principle of "**responsibility to protect**," and charging Mugabe with crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court for mass atrocities. While theoretically legitimate, all three options demonstrate an idealistic approach to international affairs that is ill-suited to Zimbabwe. ()

Start with the ICC. Though very few individuals are more deserving of being brought before it than Mugabe, the court has no army or police force to arrest suspects. Charges would likely strengthen the will of Mugabe and his compatriots to cling even more stubbornly to power, relying on allies such as China for their bankroll. Threatening force, meanwhile, requires military capacity and political will. But which country, if any, will supply the troops to level the threat? As for the extreme edge of the **responsibility to protect**, an actual military intervention would require approval from the U.N. Security Council or from the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, according to the International Crisis Group, a conflict-prevention organization. Neither option is likely because of China and Russia's veto at the Security Council, and the respect Mugabe commands from his neighbors for having liberated Zimbabwe from colonial rule.

Negotiation, as tepid it has been, may be the most viable option. The International Crisis Group proposed the establishment of an 18-month "transitional administration, run by non-partisan experts, in which neither Mugabe nor Tsvangirai would have any position." The government should be led by a Chief Administrator who would be banned from running for office or serving as prime minister. Its chief tasks would be to implement economic and political reforms, and to prepare new presidential elections. In exchange for Mugabe leaving the presidency, he would receive guarantees of immunity from domestic prosecution and extradition, along with security for his family. This amnesty would also apply to senior military commanders who accepted retirement and did not threaten Zimbabwe's stability.

That final plank horrified AIDS-Free World, a U.S.-based advocacy group that focuses on HIV/AIDS. "Amnesty is deeply offensive to anyone who has even an inkling of the devastation this man has wrought," it said in a press release. "The idea that if the top ranks of ZANU-PF retire quietly, the rest will stop the carnage and blithely rebuild their country while the world watches in approval, is ludicrous."

AIDS-Free World has instead called on southern African countries to "end . . . Africa's failure to solve Africa's problem" by pressuring Mugabe to step down. () Sadly, the best option for Zimbabwe requires swallowing the poison pill of granting immunity to Mugabe. But that is relative and offers little reason to expect the situation to improve. No wonder hope is in dreadfully short supply.

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