

Ntando Ncube
30 January 2009

Prominent Human rights activist Graca Machel on Wednesday said Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and his administration had lost all authority.

Machel is the spouse of former President Nelson Mandela. She is also a member of The Global Elders, a group of world leaders who contribute their wisdom, leadership and integrity to tackle some of the world's toughest problems.

She blamed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for dragging its feet for too long in confronting Mugabe to solve the crisis in Zimbabwe. ()

Machel said this at the launch of a three month campaign of fasting and prayer for Zimbabwe held at the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg. She demanded the immediate release of Zimbabwe human rights leader Jestina Mukoko and other civic society and MDC activists abducted and incarcerated by the Zimbabwean government since November last year. Machel said regional leaders must not accept anymore arrests and abduction in Zimbabwe. She urged SADC to take responsibility over Zimbabwe .

I stand here today with a very, very heavy heart. My heart is bleeding because of what is happening in Zimbabwe , people are being brutalized because they voted against the regime. We are together and will not accept this anymore; we can no longer stand and wait. I want to add my voice to the women of Zimbabwe , those who have been abducted, raped and brutalized. Machel said.

We want Jestina Mukoko and all those who are in prison to be released now. If anyone .. succumbs in the jail the blame will be in the hands of Mugabe and his security forces. We trusted for too long, its time we tell our leaders we lay the lives of all those who passed on in their hands. I want to say to our leaders and SADC this is no longer a Zimbabwean issue, She said. The SADC leaders have the responsibility to solve this. They simply have to take responsibility. Their mandate is to stop the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe. They have this mandate from the millions of voters who voted them in this sub-region.

There is no difference from what is happening in Zimbabwe in terms of number of people dying to what happened in Rwanda and Darfur but we remain silent. Machel called the Mugabe administration to stop blaming Britain and the western governments and instead assume **responsibility to protect** the rights of its citizens.

I want to say to the leadership who are in government in Zimbabwe a government must protect its citizens. Those citizens who are being abducted and killed have nothing to do with its contradictions with the USA , Britain and the west. It is their duty to protect their citizens. It is how you treat your own citizens; that's where your legitimacy comes from.

Source : <http://www.thezimbabwetimes.com/?p=10245>