



Illegal settlements, government urged to address housing shortages

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Illegal settlements, government urged to address housing shortages

the demolition of illegal urban settlements countrywide, and left thousands destitute during a cold winter season.

Harare – CIVIL society has called for a sustainable solution to the housing crisis in urban areas amid relentless post-election threats by the government to demolish the illegal housing settlements that mushroomed without the sanction of the relevant local governance authorities.

The exercise was condemned as a violation of human rights by the United Nations (UN) after it sent a special rapporteur Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka to assess the repercussions.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) Spokesperson Thabani Nyoni said demolitions would not solve the problem of illegal settlements because demolitions would not address the issue of urban housing shortages.



City of Harare has had many illegal settlements sprouting on its outskirts

After the Operation Murambatsvina, and its condemnation by the international community as an attack on the rights of the poor, government carried out a corrective exercise called Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle to resettle the displaced people.

“We need to understand that illegal settlements are a problem that is related to shortages of housing and increase in urban populations,” Nyoni said. “The problem is with policy not people.

“The problem is also related to lack of development and opportunities in rural areas which has caused unmitigated rural to urban migration.”

Some of the schemes have been beset with challenges, which show lack of planning like overcrowded houses and an encroaching cemetery at the Hopley Farm settlement, where graves have come into the shadows of houses on the outskirts of Harare.

Ironically inside Harare, the Joshua Nkomo Housing Scheme started under the same operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle was built on land not serviced by council, making it an illegal settlement.

In June 2005, the Zimbabwean government carried out a similar exercise called Operation Murambatsvina, which saw

Nyoni said the resurgent need to demolish illegal settlements was a sign of failure by the government of Zimbabwe to provide a sustainable solution after the last encounter with the problem about a decade ago.

“The government claimed they did Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle to settle people, and address housing shortages,” Nyoni said. “This plan is an admission that the government has failed to address the housing problem.”

“What is shocking though is that the government through demolishing illegal settlements will be actually rewarding those who failed to plan, and punishing the victims.”

“We call upon the government to accept responsibility for its failure and come up with a sustainable and humane framework of addressing illegal settlements and the housing problem.”

Simbarashe Moyo, the chairman of the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA), said the authorities that are planning the demolitions should have foresight about where the displaced people will go, and must be aware of the constitutional right of everyone, including the illegal settlers to shelter.

“As these policymakers make these proposals they have to be cognizant of the constitutional right to shelter that each citizen of this country enjoys by virtue of being a Zimbabwean,” Moyo said. “It does not matter whether one is residing in a structure deemed illegal.”

“Any plan to evict that person must also be able to consider where that person is supposed to go.”



Simbarashe Moyo

Moyo said illegal housing structures were a result of deeper issues and part of a bigger picture.

“Illegal structures do not suddenly crop up somewhere somehow, there is the corrupt hand of politicians and incompetence of policy makers,” Moyo said. “The emergence of illegal housing units is caused by many factors ranging from corruption, absence of proper planning and supply being overtaken by demand as well as political expedience.”

In the recent proliferation of illegal settlements, politicians have been accused of parcelling land to supporters without councils’ approval ahead of the harmonized elections held in July.

Undemocratic culture begins at party level - ERC report

Harare – “CHARITY begins at home.”

This adage could have been forgotten or overlooked by Zimbabwean political parties in as far as where democratic conduct should start if a recent report by the Election Resource Centre (ERC) is anything to do by.

The report claims that parties in Zimbabwe have little regard for democracy in their internal processes such as in-house elections and this problem contributes to undemocratic conduct at a national scale.

“Zimbabwe’s political parties internal processes have triggered widespread disillusionment about the role of internal party democracy in advancing and building a mature democracy in Zimbabwe,” the report notes.

“The situation is less celebratory and uncertain because the electoral processes that underline internal party elections across all political parties, is fraught with reports of manipulation, imposition of candidates and all sorts of electoral mal-practices.

“These inordinate practices reinforce the pattern of weak institutions for democracy in Zimbabwe, and should be reigned in. . .”



File Photo: ZANU PF President RG Mugabe and the party Vice President J. Mujuru

The report titled, *Intra-party democracy a prerequisite for democratic culture*, and dated November 5, 2013, argues that stronger intra-party democracy will aid the improvement of Zimbabwe’s democratic culture on a national scale.

The report argues that one of the major signposts for internal party democracy is the conduct of primary and any form of internal elections within political parties, arguing that such processes set an example.

“Failure to adopt internal party democratic practices means that the goal of a broader democratic culture will remain elusive and a pipe-dream,” the report reads.

The report coincides with the provincial elections being conducted by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF), which have been marred by allegations of rigging and manipulations, and it makes references to them.

The ERC points to the allegations by disgruntled Zanu-Pf members, Monica Mutsvangwa and Larry Mavhima, who claim the party’s provision elections, were manipulated against them in Manicaland and Midlands provinces respectively, which the ERC says could be a sign of what obtains on a national scale.

The ERC compares the outcries by the Zanu-PF members to similar complaints by the opposition parties and civil society about the non-transparent conduct of the July 31 harmonised elections in this year.

“If anything, the complaints by Monica Mutsvangwa over irregularities in Manicaland during the provincial elections mirror what other political parties and civil society organisations have said about the electoral system in Zimbabwe,” the report reads.

“There is therefore a strong likelihood and correlation between nature of internal party processes and what unfolds on the national stage.

“For instance, institutions charged with the management of elections have long been accused of partisanship, and that they work to give and maintain advantage to one political party.

“Opposition political parties have always likened national elections in Zimbabwe to a football match in which one team sets the rules of the game, and appoints itself as the referee of the match.



MDC-T Giles Mutsekwa (left) and Arnold Tsunga (right)

“Monica Mutsvangwa raised the same allegations in the ZANU PF’s provincial elections, that one of the candidates, in this case Mvundura, was ‘superintending an election in which he is also a candidate’.”

The ERC says the problem cuts across the political divide as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by former Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai experienced the same allegations of undemocratic internal elections ahead of its elective 2011 Bulawayo Congress.

“Manipulation of the process is usually manifested through candidate imposition by the over-dominating elites,” the report reads. “The processes are largely self-serving and designed to aid power retention.

“The selection methods promote nepotism, sycophancy, promotion of mediocrity, suppression of di-

verse points of view, unilateralism, idolization and veneration of leaders beyond what is considered respectable and reasonable.”

The ERC pinpoints as examples of undemocratic processes, the Zanu-PF case of Munyaradzi-Kereke versus Elias Musakwa in the Bikita West Constituency; the MDC-T case of Arnold Tsunga versus Giles Mutsekwa in Dangamvura-Chikanga internal primary elections; as well as the imposition of Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga in Matabeleland South by the MDC led by Professor Welshman Ncube.

The report further says that internal democracy goes beyond elections to include general participation of members in their political party’s processes such as policy conferences.

The report says internal democracy can help attract new members and ideas into political parties as well as form the foundation of national democratic culture.

As a recommendation, after noting that in some countries such as Ghana since 2000 internal party elections are run by the national election management body, the ERC says the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) could come to the rescue by supervising intra-party elections.

“There is therefore a need to legislate and enforce through an external watchdog like the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC), tenets of internal party democracy because chances of the parties enforcing it voluntarily are slim,” the ERC says, but admits that there are concerns about the ZEC itself.

“Of course, this is only possible if ZEC itself assumes credibility across all political stakeholders in Zimbabwe.”

The ERC proposes another option where external agents such as Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) can be called to conduct intra-party elections as done by political parties in neighboring South Africa.

Demolition of houses a THREAT to Humanity.....

Operation Restore Order, while purporting to target illegal dwellings and structures and to clamp down on alleged illicit activities, was carried out in an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering, and, in repeated cases, with disregard to several provisions of national and international legal frameworks. Immediate measures need to be taken to bring those responsible to account, and for reparations to be made to those who have lost property and livelihoods.... part of the report by Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka UN Special Envoy on Human Settlement Issues after the infamous Operation Murambatsvina in 2005.

Heal Zimbabwe notes with great concern the recent announcements by the Government of Zimbabwe to demolish tens of thousands of houses in Harare and Chitungwiza. The organization castigates in the strongest of terms the abrupt manner in which the process intends to proceed with no clear alternative plan. While Heal Zimbabwe is cognisant of the legalities of the move, it is the inhuman comportment in which the demolitions are supposed to be conducted. While it remains the prerogative of the concerned parties to find an amicable solution to the issue, Heal Zimbabwe reiterates that any attempts to remove people without putting a clear mechanism in place will not only expose these people to a number of challenges but flies in the face of the residents' rights to decent housing and shelter as espoused by the new constitution, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the UN Charter.

The Ministry of Local Government headed by Dr Ignatius Chombo is spearheading the call to ensure that all structures including houses and tuckshops are demolished, the directive reminds Zimbabweans and the world at large, of the infamous Operation Murambatsvina that took place in 2005 at the instigation of the Government. The inconsistencies between the Central and the local Government is worrying. Lessons should have been drawn from the adverse effects of the 2005 operation. It is important to point out that the same Minister today who is spearheading this is the very same Minister who was in charge in 2005. The demolition of structures such as informal business which have become a source of income for many goes against the empowerment drive which the same Government talks about. Heal Zimbabwe further highlights that for all intents and purpose, it remains the duty and responsibility of the Government of the day to provide basic services to its population. It is everyone's expectation that the Government should be at the forefront of providing such basic services to its people than wait for them to devise their means of survival only to turn against them and claim that they are staying in undesignated areas.

Heal Zimbabwe wishes to highlight that any approach to this problem without bringing in a holistic approach to solving the challenge at hand will not be acceptable. If the demolitions are to go on, thousands of households are going to be affected, and hundreds of thousands of people will be left stranded, without anywhere to sleep, any food to eat and prone to a number of diseases and even death especially as we head towards the rainy season. The Government should have learnt from the previous operation Murambatsvina that they should put in place mitigatory measures at hand before this indiscriminate operation. Has the Government taken its time to look at the amount of resources that people have invested in the building of these homes, the income level of resources that will be lost when these houses are demolished and not forgetting the number of children that will be out of school.

We therefore call upon the Government, the residents, the church and all interested parties to come together and find means of resolving this conflict.



Statement by

Bishop A. Magaya

Heal Zimbabwe Spokesperson.