



AIZ WIRE

May – June Newsletter

Amnesty International called for strengthening the voice of civil society which is critical to society. Amnesty International also called for the rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression to be guaranteed.

Ms Khan stated “No meaningful debate can take place without freeing the media. Both national and international media should be allowed to operate freely. This would require neither additional money nor new laws”

Amnesty International Secretary General visits Zimbabwe

In 2009 the AIZimbabwe was graced with a visit from a visit from the High Level Mission from Amnesty International which included the Secretary General of Amnesty International, Ms Irene Khan. Amnesty International secretary general was in Zimbabwe for a six day visit. During her first visit to Zimbabwe she held talks with Vice President Joice Mujuru, Minister of Defence Emmerson Mnangagwa, Minister of Education David Coltart, Minister of State in the President's Office Didymus Mutasa, Deputy Minister of Justice Jessie Majome, Co-Home Affairs Ministers Kembo Mohadi and Giles Mutsekwa, and Speaker of Parliament Lovemore Moyo. She also held meetings with the Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai in London.

It should be noted that Ministers Didymus Mutasa, Emmerson Mnangagwa and President Robert Mugabe were among the AI Prisoners of Conscience whose release was campaigned for by Amnesty International during their imprisonment by the Smith regime.



Ms Khan with AIZ Board and Staff

Amnesty International also called on the Zimbabwean government and the donor community to expand its humanitarian assistance and focus on primary education, saying the paying of primary school fees and levies must be abolished. The Secretary General noted that parents in Zimbabwe are being forced to make impossible choices such as feeding their children in comparison to educating them, between sending their son or their daughter to school.

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The High Level Mission also noted that the establishments of the Inclusive Government and the GPA have changed the political dynamic – and this is something that can and must be built upon both nationally and internationally. The new power-sharing government between the political leaders has established a national healing ministerial team that will address the violence that troubled the country especially in the run-up to last year's run off poll.

The High Level Mission also met with board and staff of AIZimbabwe. AIZimbabwe managed to showcase Human Rights Education on one of its campaigns, Stop Violence Against Women at Hopley Farm, 14km outside Harare. More than 1000 participants attended the meeting at Hopley Farm.



Cousin Zilala, AIZ Director addressing participants

The Secretary General Office in brief

Irene Khan is responsible for developing and co-ordinating strategies to promote and protect human rights. She builds and maintains high-level external relations, representing the movement and its concerns to governments, inter-governmental organizations, the world's media and the general public. She takes a leading role in decision-making in crisis situations. The Secretary General guides the work of worldwide sections and structures through international meetings, while co-ordinating the plans of the International Secretariat. She has overall responsibility - through senior managers - for implementing the IEC's strategies, work plans and budgets. She also participates in the movement's fundraising activities. Ms Khan remains the first ever female Secretary General of Amnesty International.



Part of the High Level Mission at Hopley Farm

This was the first-ever visit by an Amnesty International Secretary General to the Zimbabwe, though the organization has been monitoring human rights in the country since the 1960s.

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HOW DID AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BEGIN?

Amnesty International was founded on the belief in the power of ordinary people to make extraordinary change. More than four decades ago, the story of two Portuguese students sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for raising a toast to freedom horrified British lawyer Peter Benenson. He wrote to the British newspaper, The Observer, calling for an international campaign to bombard authorities around the world with protests about the "forgotten prisoners". On 28 May 1961 the newspaper launched his year-long campaign, Appeal for Amnesty 1961, calling on people everywhere to protest against the imprisonment of men and women for their political or religious beliefs – "prisoners of conscience".

Within a month, more than a thousand readers had sent letters of support, offers of practical help and details about many more prisoners of conscience. Within six months, a permanent international movement developed which led to the creation of the new organization, Amnesty International, within a year. It sent delegations to four countries to make representations on behalf of prisoners and took up 210 cases. Its members had organized national bodies in seven countries. In 1977, the movement's efforts were recognized through the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1978, it was honoured with a United Nations Human Rights Award.

Amnesty International (AI) works to improve human rights through the actions of ordinary people around the world. We have a record of real achievement. Prisoners of conscience are released. Death sentences are commuted. Torturers are brought to justice. Governments are persuaded to change their laws and practices. Sometimes our solidarity keeps hope alive. Hope is a precious weapon for prisoners battling to survive,

relatives trying to obtain justice or human rights defenders bravely continuing their work despite danger and isolation.

About Amnesty International Zimbabwe

Amnesty International Zimbabwe was established in 1992 but as an AI group. Formal structures were only set up in 2001 with the country being affiliated to a Partnership for Growth Status in 2006. AIZ fights for every person's right to basic human rights everywhere. AI Zimbabwe tries to pursue the state to take on its responsibility in the realm of protecting human rights as has been enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

We are an independent, non-partisan, autonomous human rights organization. We do not support or oppose any particular government, political system, religious creed or the views of those individuals or groups whose human rights we work to protect.

How AI Zimbabwe works

AI Zimbabwe is still a structure and has not yet achieved section status. AI Zimbabwe employs a variety of methods to carry forward the agenda of human rights promotion and protection. Prominent among them are:

Campaigns and Public Action : AI Zimbabwe has organized a number of campaigns on various themes such as Stop Violence Against Women and Demand Dignity campaign which convey the message of fostering human rights.

Urgent Actions : AIZ also participates in Urgent Actions. The purpose of **Urgent Actions** is to rapidly produce an internationally coordinated mass protest, to stop or prevent serious human rights violations.

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Participants thrilled with Stop Violence Against Women Performance

Human Rights Education, Training, and Capacity Building : AI Zimbabwe engages with local community through theatre in order to facilitate the spread of knowledge and information on the state of human rights in the country, as well as to strengthen their capacity to undertake the cause of human rights in a more resilient manner.

Advocacy and Information dissemination : AI Zimbabwe advocates its support for human rights through building alliances and networks with key stakeholders, working strategically with the communities in a manner

What Members Can do?

You can help the people for whom AIZ campaigns by writing appeals:

1. For their cases to be impartially investigated
2. For them to be given prompt reparations and rehabilitation from the state

3. For those responsible to be prosecuted and given a fair trial that excludes death penalty
Put your awareness and concern for human rights into action by actively participating in:

- ✓ Direct Appeals
- ✓ Campaigns
- ✓ Country Action Programs
- ✓ Human Rights Education



Feel free to contact AI Zimbabwe:

The Director
AI Zimbabwe
56 Midlothian Avenue
Eastlea
Harare
Email: czilala@amnesty.co.zw or
vchikwanda@amnesty.co.zw