

STATEMENT ON ZIMBABWE
U.S. Ambassador Warren W. Tichenor
March 28, 2007

We noted our deep concerns regarding the situation in Zimbabwe during the interactive dialogue. The United States is pleased to associate itself with the statement of the European Union condemning appalling recent developments in Zimbabwe. Harassment continues unabated as evidenced by the raid on the headquarters of a political party, the re-arrest and release of Morgan Tsvangirai and a number of other opposition leaders on March 28. This came after the Government's violent suppression on March 11 of a peaceful prayer meeting led by clergy and attended by opposition parties and civil society. Security personnel killed Gift Tandare, an opposition activist, and detained more than 50 others. Many of those arrested were severely beaten by police, and one, Itai Manyeruki, died a day later from his injuries. Two of the protestors who needed advanced medical treatment in South Africa were cruelly and unlawfully detained and denied the right to travel for several days until court action finally forced their release from custody and the return of their passports. The brutality continued on March 18 when unknown assailants attacked and beat MDC spokesperson and parliamentarian Nelson Chamisa as he attempted to board a flight for Brussels where he was to have been a delegate to the EU-ACP parliamentary conference. I've spoken with the U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe who tells me that while the events reported by the press are horrific in and of themselves, the human rights situation in the country is sadly even worse than reported.

In particular, the United States notes its serious disappointment that the statement by the European Union and associated states was the strongest action possible at this Council in response to events in Zimbabwe, which unfolded even as this Council was in session. In resolution 60/251, the General Assembly created this Human Rights Council, and gave it the mandate of addressing "situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and mak[ing] recommendations thereon." It is the view of the Government of the United States that the recent events in Zimbabwe are exactly the sort of situation referenced by the General Assembly. Indeed, the Government of the United States believes that the members of the Human Rights Council could have more effectively addressed those events through a formal resolution.

The United States continues to support the concept of a primary UN human rights body that can address country situations in which human rights are seriously threatened, and that can also help people on the ground to enjoy better human rights protection. It is the fervent hope of the Government of the United States that this Council will be able to fulfill that mandate some day. In order to achieve that

objective, the United States calls on all current and soon-to-be elected members of this body to take firm positions in defense of human rights and fundamental freedoms.