



Statement

"Rise Above Rhetoric: South Africa, Light the Way for Human Rights in the SADC Region!"

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On South Africa's Human Rights Day 21 March 2024 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As South Africa marks its Human Rights Day this 21 March 2024, it is time to reflect on the country's 30 years of democracy. As the country looks back on this pivotal moment in our history, we are reminded of the fundamental connection between democracy and human rights. This is the bond that lies at the heart of our collective aspirations for a just and equitable society. South Africa has been a beacon of hope both politically and economically.

Emphasizing the inseparable connection between democracy and human rights, we, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, reaffirm our steadfast stance on this critical issue. As advocates for democracy, human rights, and good governance, we recognize that the flourishing of one is inseparable from the flourishing of the other.

Democracy provides the framework for upholding and protecting fundamental human rights, while human rights serve as the bedrock upon which democracy thrives. It is within this symbiotic relationship that we find the essence of our mission, to advance the principles of democracy, uphold human rights, and foster good governance in Zimbabwe and beyond.

The ongoing challenges observed in Zimbabwe and other hotspots across the region such as the shrinking democratic space and violations of human rights underscore the urgent need for a regional dialogue aimed at addressing democracy deficits in the region marked by repressive laws and bills. As a regional leader, South Africa holds a pivotal role in advocating for democratic norms and values among its neighboring countries. It is imperative that South Africa leverages its influence to facilitate meaningful discussions and initiatives geared towards promoting democracy and upholding human rights standards throughout the region.

The impact of shrinking democratic space and human rights violations in Zimbabwe, and Eswatini, as well as the ongoing conflicts in Mozambique and the DRC, cannot be overlooked, as they significantly impact the stability of the region. These challenges have also contributed to the issue of migration, with individuals forced to flee their homes in search of safety and stability. Addressing these root causes is crucial for fostering peace and security in the region, as well as mitigating the humanitarian consequences of displacement.

As South Africa commemorates Human Rights Day, let us intensify our efforts for advocating for respect and promotion of human rights in the region. We need to hold those who violate human rights accountable, ensuring justice prevails for those who suffer at the hands of these regimes.

We urge SADC to exercise its powers and authority to address human rights abuses in the region. We still hold in faith that SADC has the potential to leverage its collective influence to foster a culture of accountability and respect for human rights, thereby contributing to the advancement of peace, stability, and prosperity across Southern Africa.

**Issued by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
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