



**The State of Human Security in Africa-Zimbabwe  
Africa Human Security Initiative (AHSI) Public Seminar Report  
10<sup>th</sup> June, Grand Regency Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya**

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**Background**

In addition to complementing the work of the Africa Peer Review process, AHSI also runs a fortnightly seminar series that is aimed at raising awareness of human security issues on the continent. Organized jointly with the Africa Peace Forum (APFO), this latest seminar was aimed at drawing attention to the deteriorating human security situation in Zimbabwe. By focusing on the current hyper inflationary trends in the country, the socio-political forces behind this situation shed light on the governance problems on the continent in general.

The seminar was attended by 160 participants from different organizations in Kenya. A few attendants were from the embassies.

**Proceedings:**

Dr. Wilson Kipkore, the Environment Programme Head at the ISS in Nairobi, chaired the seminar and in his welcome remarks, he underscored the importance of the lessons from the Zimbabwe situation and how relevant these were for Kenya if it was to stay on the democratic course. Citing the fast tracked land reforms in the country and their contribution to the collapsed economy, he emphasized that most conflicts on the continent were indeed related to environmental issues.

**Opening Remarks: Ambassador Ochieng Adala**

A career diplomat and the deputy director of APFO, Ambassador Adala pointed out that the issue of human security in Africa was not a new concept as it has been discussed widely at the African Union. Generally the Doctrine of sovereignty prevents African countries from intervening in internal disputes even though they can only do so when there is gross violation of human rights. Despite this provision, interpretation of the terminology tends to take a long time hence the international community takes a long time to act and this slows down intervention expeditions. The ambassador also pointed out that Kenya and Zimbabwe were worlds apart save for the disputed election results. He thus

urged participants to identify lessons from the two countries' experiences and propose a way forward that would help in tackling such crises in the future.

### **Presentations and Discussions**

#### **The State of Human Security in Africa-Zimbabwe- Dr. Daniel Ndhlela**

Dr. Ndhlela, an economist with Zimconsult who has vast experience with international organizations such as the World Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa, explained that the current economic crisis in Zimbabwe dates back to the 1995-1996 period when the government began to severely constrict political space for civil society and workers' unions. The country's economic problems were worsened by the unbudgeted for payouts of 50 000Z\$ gratuities to ex-combatants who had fought in the liberation war against the settler regime. Though the gratuity payments were a noble idea, the problem was in using unbudgeted for funds and this also contributed to a rise in those living below the poverty datum line- there was a sharp rise that saw 72% slide below the line then. These payments consumed over 5% of the GDP and immediately triggered a massive devaluation of the currency. Prior to this, Zimbabwe's GDP had registered a positive growth rate but after 1997, there was a clear swing in the opposite direction and this led to serious situations of human insecurity.

Again, between 1981 and 1982, Zimbabwe experienced tremendous economic growth. However, the country lacked institutional frameworks that could sustain this growth. The government also used the opportunity to distribute resources haphazardly and the net result was economic decline. And this downward trend is still being experienced now. For the country to reverse this negative growth, more attention has to be focused on productivity issues. The leadership cannot change the current economic crisis unless the state is democratized. Hyperinflation is usually a strong indicator of a failed state and cannot be reversed by the same state.

According to Dr. Ndhlela, Africa has never experienced hyper inflation apart from states that were in war or where there are no government structures as in Somalia. Since October 2007, Zimbabwe is thus the first country to experience hyperinflation outside of a warring zone. The hyper-inflationary trends continue to grow at an alarming rate and this has forced the state to use discretionary power, selective application of the law and the presidential powers act over rule based systems to conduct business. This approach has led to the entrenchment of a politically connected elite that openly engages in rent-seeking behaviour, ignores the exchange rate, distorts prices, massively strips assets in industries and exacerbates corruption in public enterprises. All these issues worsen the security situation of the already vulnerable and the poor.

To enable the Zimbabwean economy to recover, Dr. Ndhlela made a number of suggestions:

- A dissolution of state capture of the public and private sector through price, forex and labour controls
- Remove domination of the state by predatory interest groups and lessen the cooptation of businessmen, farmers, industrialists, miners etc
- Minimize trampling on economic decisions by the Executive Restore autonomy of technocracy and rule based systems i.e. treasury rules governing the budgets
- Restore checks and balances and parliamentary oversight by portfolio committees

## **Discussion**

*Question: Are imperialists pushing the agenda in the country?*

Dr. Ndhlela emphasized the importance of Africans taking responsibility for their actions and pointed out that there is no imperialism in the country. The fact was that there is a severe food shortage due to the increase in prices.

*Question: What rules govern the reserve bank in the country?*

Currently there are no rules governing the central bank. The country runs its budgets under the quasi physical rational logic. However the environment is quite illogical and does not respond to these 'rules'.

*Question: What is the impact of sanctions on the country?*

Sanctions are when a state is unable to service debts and therefore cannot borrow money. Zimbabwe has not reached this stage because of the tobacco exports and other mining products which generate money used to service loans from institutions such as the African Development Bank. Currently there are targeted sanctions- only individuals are targeted. The country can still trade with other countries.

*Question: And the Land crisis?*

The Lancaster House Constitution prohibited the new government from addressing the land issue for the first 10 years of independence. But after 1998, a land conference discussed the issue and soon after, landless squatters were settled onto some of the idle land. But because the poor new settlers lacked input support, they failed to cultivate the land and it was later taken up by the elites and this partly contributed to the land crisis.

*Question: How are people surviving now?*

Zimbabweans have become very innovative, they now convert their local currency into foreign currency [the rand and the us dollar] and they use that to trade.

*Question: Why do we just hear of one man Tsvangirai, where is the civil society?*

Despite a strong civil society, the government has always been stronger and ruthless. Still, civil society managed to trigger the debate on the constitution but

as in many other African countries, civil society members face torture and other forms of victimization.

### **A comparative discussion on the state of Human security in Kenya**

#### **Dr. Mutuma Ruteere**

Dr. Ruteere began by underscoring the importance of human security saying the theoretical debate on this subject had become topical issues especially to most scholars. He explained that human security encompassed economic, social, human rights, crime and violence indicators. He went on to highlight issues that led to the violence outbreak in Kenya as:

- a) Land
- b) Contested citizenship
- c) Insecurity
- d) Weak institutions of justice
- e) Demographic shifts – unemployed youths
- f) Poverty and
- g) Corruption

In conclusion, Dr. Ruteere said for all these underlying violence triggers to be fixed, the government must ensure it 'fixes' national politics. And this will in turn contribute to a flourishing economy.

#### **Emerging issues from plenary discussions**

- Issues of inequality have been aggravated by politicians. These issues and land problems should be handled separately.
- African Nations need to support and defend each other.
- The issue of amnesty should be separated from politics. But if there is any amnesty to be given to anyone following the post election violence, the recommendations by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights should be the guiding light. Any petty offenders can be released but those who murdered or committed any crimes against humanity should be subjected to the rule of law
- There is need to reform Kenya's institutions of justice to restore public confidence in the rule of law.
- There is a growing danger of losing the credibility of the election process

#### **Closing Remarks**

Closing remarks were made by Ambassador Adala who was optimistic that each and every participant had identified and conceptualized issues that would add value to the perception on human security related issues. Ambassador Adala challenged youths to take up the challenge of devising programs that could inculcate leadership values in them. He summarized issues emerging from the plenary discussion and posed questions that require further research:

- a) Governance – How can up- coming leaders look inwards and focus on values that would change Africa both politically and socio-economical

- b) Weak institutional structures contribution to increased human insecurity – Are these institutions weak because we have made them weak or is it the institutional framework to blame? And can we allow leaders to trample over institutions arbitrarily?
- c) Youths involvement in economic development – How can we get the youths to be integrated and what roles can they play in the economic and political development of a country?
- d) Youth's initiative toward a country's economic development – What are the youths doing to take up the challenge of being future leaders?

Ambassador Adala concluded his remarks by noting that human security issues are very wide concepts that require elaborate discussions and a lot of time.