

URGENT ACTION

THOUSANDS SPARED EVICTION IN ZIMBABWE

Thousands of people in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, are no longer facing eviction from their market stalls and homes. Amnesty International has recently received formal notification that the threat of forced evictions had been withdrawn.

In July 2009 the Deputy Mayor of the Harare City Council stated that the city authorities were considering evicting people from "illegal settlements and market places to restore order." The Deputy Mayor claimed that the targeted people were posing a health hazard and violating city by-laws. An estimated 200 people from an informal settlement in the suburb of Gunhill and thousands of informal traders across Harare in Zimbabwe faced being forcibly evicted without being given adequate notice or any consultation or due process. Most of the people at risk were victims of Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order), a programme of mass forced evictions implemented by the Zimbabwean authorities in 2005 which left 700,000 people without homes and livelihoods.

After Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action, the Mayor of Harare met with Amnesty International representatives, and a coalition of stakeholders including the Combined Harare Residents' Association (CHRA), whose Chair acted as a spokesperson for the coalition; the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR).

On 30 December 2009 the Mayor of Harare sent a letter to Amnesty International, in which he acknowledged receiving petitions and letters from Amnesty International members and supporters, outlining concerns about the threatened forced evictions. In his letter, the Mayor stated that "due to the concerns expressed by some stakeholders, your members included, the intended exercise is being revisited with a view to constructing more markets...In the case of informal settlements, no effort will be spared in looking for alternative shelter for those affected before they are removed. Every effort will be undertaken to undertake the whole effort as humanely as possible.'

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is required on this case. Amnesty International will continue to monitor and lobby the authorities in Zimbabwe.

This is the first update of UA 196/09 (AFR 46/021/2009). Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR46/021/2009/en>

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