

ZIMBABWE HUNGER AS A POLITICAL TOOL

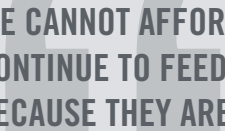
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



'I CANNOT BUY GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED MAIZE BECAUSE [TRADITIONAL LEADERS] SUSPECT I SUPPORT THE MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE. WHEN I REPORTED THIS TO THE POLICE THEY REFUSED TO INTERVENE. THE VILLAGE HEAD SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY ZANU-PF OFFICIALS NOT TO ALLOW OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS TO BUY GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED MAIZE.'

Thami, Matabeleland Province, February 2007

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**WE CANNOT AFFORD TO
CONTINUE TO FEED THE ENEMY
BECAUSE THEY ARE SELL OUTS.**

Chief Fortune Charumbira, President of the
Zimbabwe Council of Chiefs, January 2007

Food insecurity in Zimbabwe has reached unprecedented levels. According to the World Food Programme, more than two million people were in need of food aid by September 2008 and this number was set to more than double by December.

Thousands of rural farmers who were victims of state-sponsored violence during the 2008 elections had their harvest destroyed, livestock killed and granaries burned as punishment for not supporting President Robert Mugabe's party, ZANU-PF. Many were injured and can

no longer work in the fields. Hyperinflation has also eroded the capacity of most urban families to access what little food is available.

During the 2008 elections, food insecurity increased as a result of the government's 12-week suspension of field operations of humanitarian organizations. Millions of people lost their access to food aid.

The government has used food as a tool to demand loyalty in rural areas. It has employed traditional leaders and local ZANU-PF activists to deny suspected opponents of the party access to cheap or relief maize, as part of its strategy to retain ZANU-PF's rural support base. The government uses its control over traditional leaders, who control the development processes in rural communities, to influence the delivery of humanitarian operations. In this way, opponents of ZANU-PF are excluded from food distribution.

Children collect maize fallen from a truck in Matabeleland South, 2008



ACT NOW

CALL ON THE ZIMBABWEAN AMBASSADOR IN YOUR COUNTRY. URGE THE AMBASSADOR TO ENSURE THAT:

- the free and unimpeded passage of aid is guaranteed by the Zimbabwean authorities;
- allegations of discriminatory food distribution are investigated and accountability mechanisms, including an ombudsman on food, are set up to ensure that government-subsidized food and food aid are distributed in a non-partisan manner.

WRITE TO:

Please write to the Zimbabwean Ambassador at the Zimbabwean Embassy in your country. If you would like help finding the contact details of the Ambassador please contact aagnew@amnesty.org.

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