



Press Release

For Immediate Release – 27 May 2007

Freedom of Expression Required for Valid Run-off in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe plans a run-off election on 27 June 2008 to decide the Presidency. The choice will be between the long-ruling ZANU-PF's Robert Mugabe and the Movement for Democratic Change, MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai, who has recently returned home after a period of exile in South Africa.

ARTICLE 19 is concerned about the prevailing atmosphere in which this run-off election is to take place. *"The burden is on the ruling party to guarantee freedom of expression for all sides in this important process,"* says Dr. Agnes Callamard, the Executive Director of ARTICLE19.

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's delayed release of the March 2008 general election results put the country on the brink of implosion. Zimbabwe's leaders as well as supporters of the political parties should respect the rule of law and exercise tolerance. *"For this election to be free and fair there must be a cessation of the deadly violence that have been reported across Zimbabwe and especially targeted at the supporters of MDC,"* Dr. Callamard added.

ARTICLE 19 calls on the government of Zimbabwe to take as a matter of urgency the following steps if the run-off election is to be taken seriously and the result recognised as fair. In particular:

- The right to freedom of expression, including access to information must be fully respected and protected
- Government authorities should make special efforts to investigate all acts of violence, intimidation or harassment directed against supporters of the political parties, including the MDC, and bring to justice those responsible
- Government authorities should make special efforts to investigate all acts of violence, intimidation or harassment directed against media personnel or the property or premises of media organizations and to bring to justice those responsible

- Demonstrate implementation of proper electoral procedures endorsed by regional and international observers and election commissions
- ARTICLE 19 also calls on all broadcasters, but particularly state-owned or state-funded media to be scrupulous in providing fair, impartial and balanced news coverage.
- All sides to the Presidential vote should be granted equal time in the media
- Neither the authorities nor the media should censor election programmes in any way
- The Media should inform the public about matters relevant to the elections
- Parties or candidates have a right to airtime for direct access programmes on a fair and non-discriminatory basis and to ensure voters understand how to exercise their vote.

Notes to Editors:

- For further information, please contact Cece Fadope, at: +44-207278-9292 or cece@article19.org
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organization that works globally to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.

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