



Office of Council Member
Max Anderson, District 3

CONSENT CALENDAR
June 24, 2008

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Council Member Max Anderson
Subject: Letter in Support of Election Justice in Zimbabwe

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Berkeley City Council approve a motion expressing its support for a fair and democratic election in Zimbabwe.

Council calls upon all national governments, both individually through their national structures and their representatives in international organizations, to demand an end to election related violence in Zimbabwe by government forces and, to ensure by diplomacy and other non-military means, a safe environment for both the presidential runoff campaign and election day.

Council further calls upon all governments to come together to impress upon the Zimbabwean government to allow the free will of the Zimbabwean people to be expressed through free and fair elections monitored by internationally accredited independent observers.

The letter should be sent to: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, South African President Thabo Mbeki, African Union Chairperson Jakaya Kikwete, Zimbabwe President Robert G. Mugabe, Movement for Democratic Change President Morgan Tsvangirai, and the Southern African Development Community Chairperson Levy Patrick Mwanasasa.

BACKGROUND:

On March 29, 2008, an election was held in Zimbabwe with current President Robert Mugabe running against Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai and Independent candidates Simba Makoni and Langton Towungana. Although the election itself was relatively free of violence, the results of the presidential election were delayed for five weeks. After results were released, they were contested by the MDC party claiming it had won a majority of the votes. Since that time, a climate of terror has been created by elements within Zimbabwe loyal to President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF.

To date, 50 MDC party members have been killed and hundreds of supporters beaten for offenses such as participation in MDC activities, driving MDC supporters to the polls, and failure to promote the ruling party. In addition, thousands of MDC supporters have had their homes burned and forced to flee their homes, thus rendering them unable to vote in the election run-off currently scheduled for June 27, 2008.

In addition, the opposition party has been banned from holding political rallies. Church meetings have been forcibly dispersed by government forces. According to the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, the current climate of fear and intimidation is not conducive to a free and fair election.

The African Union (AU) is an intergovernmental organization consisting of 53 African nations. The AU is the successor to the Organization of African Unity. Among the objectives of the AU are to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, to promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its people, to achieve peace and security in Africa, and to promote democratic institutions, good governance and human rights.

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) is a regional organization of governments in southern Africa. The Member States are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Currently, the conditions for a fair and democratic election do not exist in Zimbabwe. While direct intervention by any foreign power is not recommended, international attention is being requested toward the nations of southern Africa and their ability to influence the Mugabe government to respect the rule of law and the right of the people to participate freely in the democratic process.

By directing an appeal to the African Union and to the Southern Africa Development Community, our community can support the people of Zimbabwe and affirm the principle of regional empowerment to directly engage the Mugabe government in talks aimed at quelling the violence, to provide election monitors and a process for investigating election irregularities.

Without expressing support for any political party, our city can add its support to the growing number of governments, organizations and individuals around the globe who are calling for freedom in Zimbabwe. The "Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition" is made up of 350 civil society organizations inside Zimbabwe calling for fair elections and an end to the violence. Also, various well-known political and religious figures have added their voices to those calling for free elections including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela and the Rev. Allen Boesak.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION:

None.

CONTACT:

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Council District 3

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