

**[Harare,] 3 February 2005**

**MDC to participate in 2005 elections**

**The National Council of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) met this morning of the 3rd of February 2005 and deliberated on the critical issue of participating in the 2005 general election.**

The Council noted that on the 26th of August 2005, the National Executive of the party suspended the party's participation in the elections until such time as the Mugabe regime had complied with basic fair election standards as set out in our Restore Document and the SADC Election Guidelines and Principles as agreed in Mauritius on the 18th of August 2004.

The National Executive stated that for this to happen, the government needed to combine a comprehensive reform of Zimbabwe's electoral framework with significant political reforms, in particular the ending of political violence and the repeal of repressive laws that place gratuitous curbs on the independent media and citizens' democratic rights pertaining to freedom of speech, assembly and association.

The Council reviewed the extent to which the regime has complied with the party's demands for compliance with the SADC Protocol and noted that the regime has failed and failed dismally to comply with those guidelines.

More than ever the electoral playing field remains uneven and unequal. Rule of law concerns have not been addressed. The media remains muzzled. Free assembly is proscribed by the Public Order Security Act. The recently appointed Electoral Commission is yet to prove its independence. The shambolic voter's roll continues to be the principal vehicle for electoral fraud. The Constituency boundaries have been subjectively gerrymandered whilst militias and militia bases continue to multiply. International observers continue to be unwelcome.

The Council expressed concern over the violation of the one-man, one-vote principle, through the continued disenfranchisement of Zimbabweans because of their ancestry, place of residence and a deeply flawed voter registration and management regime.

At the same time we note with regret the failure of the SADC of putting the regime on the spot and demanding the reproduction and implementation of fair electoral standards in this country. Zimbabweans feel betrayed and let down by the region.

Clearly therefore a free and fair election is not possible in Zimbabwe under the present conditions.

The Council noted various resolutions from our 12 provinces, from hundreds of party structures, from our supporters and friends and from our pro-democracy partners mandating the MDC to lift the 26 August suspension, in spite of the hostile political environment in the country today.

We, however, remain vigilant of the regime's machinations and reserve the right to take corrective measures should the political situation on the ground deteriorate further.

Having regard to the above, it is with a heavy heart, that the National Council has resolved the MDC will participate in the forthcoming elections.

This is a decision based primarily on the demands of our people, the working people of Zimbabwe who wish to exercise their hard fought and inalienable right of voting and still make a statement against the tyranny of this criminal state.

The participation is therefore a strategic decision to recognize our internal democracy and sacrosanctity of nationhood and the right to vote.

We participate under protest. We participate without prejudice. We participate to keep the flames of hope for change alive.

**Paul T Nyathi**  
**Secretary for Information and Publicity, [Movement for Democratic Change]**