

MDC Executive Committee Member and 11 March victim of torture meets New Zealand Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Members of parliament, October 9 2007



Mrs Sekai Holland (MDC) and Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand

Mrs Sekai Holland of the Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe this week had separate meetings with New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, Foreign Minister Winston Peters and Members of Parliament.

Mrs Holland was accompanied by NZ-based activists for democracy and the rule of law in Zimbabwe, including Driden Kunaka, Save Zimbabwe Campaign NZ, Wellington Region Chair.

Part of the discussions explored the current negotiations mediated by South African President Thabo Mbeki. Members of the New Zealand Parliament strongly supported the calls of the Movement for Democratic Change for an immediate end to violent repression of the opposition.

Mrs Sekai Holland, a member of the MDC National Executive Committee, is one of 30 leaders violently bashed by Zimbabwean police and security agents on March 11 this year.

Mrs Holland and the delegation first met with three of the four MPs of the Maori Party, acknowledging the Maori people as the indigenous people on Aotearoa New Zealand, and explaining to them the way the Mugabe regime abused the land issue to distract from its abject failure to govern for the benefit of the people. The Maori Party MP Mr Hone Harawira undertook to issue a five point statement of support for the democratic opposition to the Mugabe regime.



Mrs Holland (MDC) with Maori Party MPs and activists

Next the delegation held a media conference hosted by the Green Party spokesperson on foreign affairs, Mr Keith Locke MP, at which Mrs Holland explained in detail how she was tortured, and why the Mugabe regime felt it had to suppress the peaceful democratic resistance campaign that was organised so well in Harare. Mrs Holland warmly acknowledged the work of Rod Donald, the Co-Leader of the Greens, who led the campaign for a cricket boycott of Zimbabwe. Mr Donald was a persistent critic of the Mugabe regime's abuses of human rights, up to his death in late 2005.



Mrs Sekai Holland (MDC) and Mr Keith Locke MP, Greens spokesperson on foreign affairs

The Prime Minister, Ms Helen Clark, also met Mrs Holland to find out first hand what had happened in March and to show her strong personal support for the democratic process. Foreign Affairs Minister Mr Peters emphasised how sustained his government's attention to the Zimbabwe crisis had been and asked for advice on how to maintain the pressure for democratic change. Mrs Holland thanked the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Peters and the government for providing protection to all Zimbabweans who fled to New Zealand because of the collapse of Zimbabwe's society under Mugabe.

On the evening of 9 October, Mrs Holland was guest speaker at a forum at Victoria University of Wellington, organised by the Institute for Policy Studies. The lecture theatre was packed with 200 people, spellbound by Mrs Holland's account of the process by which the nation created MDC in the 1990s and how the decisions taken by the Mugabe regime to destroy MDC had destroyed the country.

"The indicators are that we are now in the 'endgame' of one of the most spectacular and brutal collapses of a government and an economy in our times. The MDC will have a critical role on this 'endgame', having survived for eight years despite everything, with a mature and renewed MDC leadership and with the people now recognising the foresight of MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai," she argued forcefully. "The end is coming, it will happen fast and we are determined that it will be peaceful," she said.

She asked everyone to support the people of Zimbabwe so that genuinely peaceful and fair elections could take place. She insisted that there would need to be international intervention to guarantee a fair process, under the umbrella of the United Nations. And she pointed

out that with a completely destroyed economy, Zimbabwe had regressed to a dramatically lower standard of living and far lower average life expectancy, than at independence in 1980.

She concluded: "This will be our second chance at reconstruction and our message this time is extremely simple: bad and corrupt governance destroyed the economy; this is our chance to rebuild; we have to start from the rubble that is Mugabe's legacy".

Mrs Holland has been interviewed by the main national news and current affairs radio programs and by Maori Television.

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