

**Appeal for a Worldwide Reading for Democracy and Media Freedom in
Zimbabwe on 9th September 2007**

The human rights abuses in Zimbabwe go back to the early 80s, when Robert Mugabe implemented the Gukurahundi operation - the bloody murder of more than 20.000 Ndebele people. Since 2000 he has been responsible for the eviction of white farmers from their land, actions which have led to corn shortages and, consequently, to terrible famine. During the Murambatsvina (filth removal) campaign of 2005, Mugabe responded to the opposition's demonstrations by having several slums bulldozed. Hundreds of opposition members and dissidents have been arrested, kidnapped or tortured. A general ban on demonstrations has been in force since February 2007. The freedom of the press is extremely limited and there is discrimination against foreign media. Mugabe influenced the election by means of violence and absolute control in such a way that fear was caused to everyone who voted for the opposition. In mid-March 2007 Zimbabwe's most important opposition party leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was arrested during a protest rally and later severely beaten in custody.

Only a decade ago Zimbabwe had been one of the richest and most developed countries in Africa, with the highest educational standards on the continent and a literacy rate of almost 85%. Over recent years Mugabe has led his country to economic collapse and his people into bitter poverty. Officially, Zimbabwe's inflation rate is 3700%, the highest in the world. The unemployment rate is 80%. With an average life expectancy of 34 years for women and 37 years for men, Zimbabwe has become the country with the lowest life expectancy in the world.

Through this reading the international literature festival berlin (ilb) would like to help draw attention to the situation in this post colonial country. The reality of Zimbabwe had been concealed long enough, unfortunately also by members of the political class in South Africa, which shoulders a special responsibility in this matter.

We would like to ask for your support for our project and we appeal to radio stations, schools, universities, theatres and other cultural institutions in Africa and all over the world to read poems by Chenjerai Hove, Chirikurú Chirikurú and Dumbudzo Marecharas, Elinor Sisulu's foreword written for the book "Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988" (Johannesburg 2007). It attacks the silence, the result of a false sense of solidarity, which is one of the bases of Mugabe's power. Everybody is authorised to use the attached texts and poems in readings and performances as all the rights are open on September 9, 2007.

This appeal has been signed by:

Hector Abad, Colombia; Ali Abdollahi, Iran; Meena Alexander, India/USA; Tariq Ali, Pakistan/U.K.; Eugenijus Alisanka, Lithuania; Maria Teresa Andruetto, Argentina; Yuri Andrukhovych, Ukraine; Hanan Al-Shaykh, Lebanon/U.K.; Homero Aridjis, Mexico; Jorge Luis Arzola, Cuba/Germany; John Ashbery, USA; Margaret Atwood, Canada; Hanan Awwad, Palestine; Ricardo Azevedo, Brazil; Alessandro Baricco, Italy; Jeanne Benameur, France; Zofia Beszczyńska, Poland; Piedad Bonnett, Colombia; Breyten Breytenbach, South Africa/France/Senegal; André Brink, South Africa; Martha Brooks, Canada; Pam Brown, Australia; Melvin Burgess, U.K.; Ian Buruma, Netherlands/USA; José Anibal Campos, Cuba; Raúl Antonio Capote, Cuba; Patricia Cavalli, Italy; Gianni Celati, Italy; Dilip Chitre, India; J.M.

Coetzee, South Africa/Australia; Bora Cosic, Germany/Croatia; Edgardo Cozarinsky, Argentina; Alonso Cueto, Peru; Bei Dao, USA/China; Mahmoud Darwish, Palestine; Siddhartha Deb, India; Don DeLillo, USA; Xabier P. DoCampo, Spain; Ariel Dorfman, Chile; Tishani Doshi, India; Finuala Dowling, South Africa; Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Russia; Dave Eggers, USA; Asli Erdogan, Turkey; Jeffrey Eugenides, USA/Germany; J. Glenn Evans, USA; Nuruddin Farah, Somalia/South Africa; Raymond Federman, USA; Enrique Fierro, Uruguay/USA; Christoph Fleischer, Germany; Jonathan Safran Foer, USA; Jon Fosse, Norway; Carlos Franz, Chile/Spain; Greg Gatenby, Canada; Jochen Gerz, Germany/France; Natasza Goerke, Poland/Germany; Nadine Gordimer, South Africa; Ronnie Govender, South Africa; Jorie Graham, USA; Günter Grass, Germany; Ha Jin, China; Ulla Hahn, Germany; Ulf Peter Hallberg, Sweden/Germany; Philip Hammial, Australia; Aziz Hassim, South Africa; Milton Hatoum, Brazil; Paal-Helge Haugen, Norway; Hannes Heer, Germany; Daniel Hevier, Slovakia; Nick Hornby, U.K.; Jaime Huenún, Chile; David Huerta, Mexico; Jabbar Yassin Hussein, Iraq/France; Nancy Huston, Canada; Eirik Ingebrigtsen, Norway; Drago Jancar, Germany; Louis Jensen, Denmark; Keorapetse Kgositsile, South Africa; Ulrike Kistner, Germany/South Africa; Ko Un, Korea; Ingrid de Kok, South Africa; Nicole Krauss, USA; Ekkehart Krippendorff, Germany; Antjie Krog, South Africa; Hari Kunzru, U.K.; Goretti Kyomuhendo, Uganda; Simon Levy, USA; Vyvyane Loh, Malaysia/USA; Prof. Arno Lustiger, Germany; Chiara Macconi, Italy; Claudio Magris, Italy; Jamal Mahjoub, U.K./Denmark; Norman Manea, Romania/USA; Angeles Mastretta, Mexico; Federica Matta, France; Zakes Mda, South Africa; Abdelwahab Meddeb, Tunisia/France; Pauline Melville, U.K.; Amanda Michalopoulou, Greece; Poni Micharvegas, Argentina; Pankaj Mishra, India/USA; Adrian Mitchell, U.K.; Paul Muldoon, USA; Verónica Murguía, Mexico; Alberto Mussa, Brazil; Azar Nafisi, Iran/USA; Nabil Naoum, Egypt; Marie N'Diaye, France; Per Nilsson, Sweden/Denmark; Cees Nooteboom, Netherlands; Wilfried N'Sondé, Congo/Germany; Elsa Osorio, Argentina/Spain; Amos Oz, Israel; Michael Palmer, USA; Thorsten Palzhoff, Germany; Hagar Peeters, Netherlands; Hans Pienaar, South Africa; Henning J. Pieterse, Netherlands; Antonio José Ponte, Cuba; José Prats, Mexico; José Manuel Prieto, Cuba; Francine Prose, USA; Tania Quintero, Cuba/Switzerland; Laura Restrepo, Colombia; Adrienne Rich, USA; Raúl Rivero, Cuba/Spain; Santiago Roncagliolo, Peru; Alberto Ruy Sanchez, Mexico; Rolando Sánchez Mejías, Cuba/Spain; Faraj Sarkohi, Iran/Germany; Joachim Sartorius, Germany; K.S. Satchidanandan, India; Peter Schneider, Germany; Eugene Schoulgin, Norway; Hermann Schulz, Germany; Thomas Schwarz, Germany; Eduardo Sguiglia, Argentina; Ishtiyag Shukri, South Africa; Nicholas Shakespeare, U.K.; Nasrin Siege, Iran/Germany; Manuel Sosa, Cuba/USA; Peter Stamm, Switzerland; Manil Suri, USA/India; Matthew Sweeney, Ireland/U.K.; Tajima Shinji, Japan; Veronique Tadjo, France/U.K.; Nathaniel Tarn, U.K./USA; Paulo Teixeira, Portugal; Ivan Thays, Peru; Annika Thor, Sweden; Peter Torberg, Germany; Jutta Treiber, Austria; Tenzin Tsundue, Tibet/India; John Updike, USA; Jane Urquhart, Canada; Chiara Valerio, Italy; Carolyn van Langenberg, U.K./Australia; Mario Vargas Llosa, Peru; Haris Vlavianos, Greece; Ornela Vorpsi, Albania; Abdourahman Waberi, Djibouti/France; Cécile Wajsbrot, France/Germany; Eliot Weinberger, USA; Renate Welsh-Rabady, Austria; Cao Wenxuan, China; Herbert Wiesner, Germany; Gernot Wolfram, Germany; Yang Lian, China/U.K.; Péter Zilahy, Hungary.