



CIVIL COURAGE PRIZE

Acceptance Speech

Lovemore Madhuku

2004

Acceptance speech by Geoffrey Nyarota on behalf of Lovemore Makhuku

I feel honored tonight to stand in front of this very distinguished gathering and accept an award on behalf of a man who, as he steadfastly refused to be intimidated, has consistently and courageously acted and spoken, always at great personal risk, on behalf of and in the interests of the silenced citizens of our beautiful and once prosperous country. Over the past five years he has tirelessly campaigned for progressive constitutional reform, for justice, for freedom and for the basic human rights of his people. He has spoken for the voiceless and has defended the defenseless.

The authorities have targeted him for retribution. Their newspapers have castigated and vilified him. Mr Mugabe's highly politicized policemen have arrested him, not once, but repeatedly. I have lost count of how many times he has been thrown behind bars. In February they arrested him yet again. They beat him savagely. Thinking he was dead they dumped his body in the bush.

When he recovered he took his rescuers by total surprise. His first words were: "We will not be deterred by the beatings and the cruelty of this regime. They can only stop us by killing us."

It is a mark of his commitment and selfless dedication to the ongoing struggle for political change in Zimbabwe that, given the opportunity to travel to New York to attend this distinguished occasion, he opted to remain by his post in Harare.

He deserves this recognition and honor and it is my own great honor and privilege to accept the award on his behalf.

I will now read a message from Dr Madhuku:

Dear colleagues,

On Wednesday 6 October 2004, the Mugabe regime confirmed our worst fears. It formally introduced in Parliament a proposed law (the Non Governmental Organizations Bill) that seeks to ban organizations such as my own, the National Constitutional Assembly. It is well known that the NCA is perhaps target No.1 of this proposed law. The Bill will be debated on Tuesday 12 and Wednesday 13 October, 2004. If it becomes law, organizations such as the NCA will immediately become illegal.

My leadership is required on an hour-by-hour basis as we face this period of uncertainty. On our part, following the very successful demonstrations staged last week, we intend to organize

huge protests outside Parliament either on October 12 or 13. I have to lead these protests in order to inspire and encourage our membership and the public.

I, therefore, request that the rest of my program not be cancelled, but that it be postponed to a convenient period, so that I can still travel and fulfill the extremely useful program you had laid out for me. I feel strongly that it would be most useful for me to undertake my visit when it has become clear whether or not we can still operate as before or under completely different circumstances.

Thank you.