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## **Joint IRI/NDI Election Observation Mission Statement on Crackdown on Opposition Leaders and Supporters**

**Harare, Zimbabwe**—The joint International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute Zimbabwe International Election Observer Mission (ZIEOM) expresses deep concern over the reported assaults, detentions and abductions of opposition supporters and leaders in certain regions of Zimbabwe. The ZIEOM decries politically motivated attacks on freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of speech, and intimidation of opposition party leaders and supporters based on their political beliefs, and the ZIEOM calls on the government to respect the political rights and guarantee the personal security of all Zimbabweans.

On August 7, 2018, the government of Zimbabwe called for the arrests of senior MDC Alliance officials on charges, among other things, of organizing an illegal demonstration. The senior MDC Alliance officials included Tendai Biti, Morgan Komichi, Happymore Chidviza, Jim Kunaka, Paddington Japajapa, Mafaiti Mubaiwa, Jeff Tafadzwa Chaitezvi, Lovejoy Chitengu, and Chamunorwa Madya.

On August 8, 2018, MDC Alliance senior official, former Minister, and recently elected legislator for Harare East, Mr. Tendai Biti, was arrested at the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia and held in custody until released on bail today. The ZIEOM joins those calling on the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure the safety of any political leaders who may be detained and to fully safeguard their constitutionally recognized human rights.

As noted in the August 2 joint communique with other international election observation missions, the ZIEOM condemns the excessive use of force by security agencies and all electoral-related violence and vandalism. With respect to the anticipated MDC Alliance petition challenging the election results, ZIEOM, consistent with its mandate, will monitor the judicial process concerning Zimbabwe's laws and procedures and for adherence to international standards for due process of law.

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