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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE ON THE DETERIORATING POLITICAL SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE**

The situation in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate with the government's ongoing repression of basic political and human rights, its crackdown on dissent and suppression of the rights of citizens to free speech, assembly, and association.

On Sunday, March 11th, Zimbabwean police used force to breakup a peaceful prayer meeting in the capital of Harare organized by the Save Zimbabwe Campaign. Leaders from opposition political parties, civic and church groups who were in attendance were arrested and one activist, Gift Tandare, was shot and killed by the police. Many of these unarmed citizens were badly beaten during the course of the arrest or later while in police custody.

Among those arrested were Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, leaders of the two formations within the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Those arrested were prevented from meeting with their lawyers while Tsvangirai and others who sustained serious injuries were denied access to medical care until several days after the event. More recently, Nelson Chamisa, spokesman for the MDC, was brutally attacked at the Harare airport as he attempted to leave the country to attend meetings in Europe. Two other senior MDC activists were prevented from traveling to South Africa to seek advanced medical treatment for serious injuries sustained at the hands of the police.

NDI Chairman Madeleine K. Albright made the following statement:

"The National Democratic Institute (NDI) joins democrats around the world in strongly condemning the Government of Zimbabwe's use of force in disrupting a peaceful prayer meeting and the recent arrests of civic and political activists who were only exercising their political rights.

Those arrested should receive access to medical care and legal representation, and should be treated according to regional and international standards such as those set out in the African Charter for Human and People's Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government of Zimbabwe has the responsibility of ensuring that the rule of law is respected to include a thorough investigation of the death of Gift Tandare and allegations of torture by the police.

We call on the Government of Zimbabwe to allow a full investigation into police brutality in a process that can be monitored by relevant regional and international institutions. We call upon the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) to join in condemning these acts of violence and the suppression of political rights, and to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the ongoing crisis. We encourage democratic leaders in Zimbabwe to emerge from this tragedy stronger and more united to confront the problems facing their country. Finally, we urge the Zimbabwean government to restore full political and human rights to the people of Zimbabwe, and to engage in an open dialogue to resolve the tensions that threaten to destroy the social, political and economic fabric of the country."

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