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Reference: //2005

From: [REDACTED]

Date: [REDACTED]

cc: PS/PUS

[REDACTED]

ZIMBABWE: URBAN CRACKDOWN; ROY BENNETT: INFORMATION NOTE

[REDACTED]

1. [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED]

DETAIL: URBAN CRACKDOWN

3. GoZ Actions The Zimbabwean police initiated a crackdown on 25 May, initially targeted at informal traders and businesses in Harare (see Harare telno 5729/05, Flag A). The stated aim was to identify those who might be involved in illegal currency exchange.

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Since then 'Operation Clean-up' has gathered pace, moving from businesses into housing areas and also extending into other urban centres like Bulawayo, Mutare and Victoria Falls (where 10 kms of curio stalls were burned on 30 May). Bulldozers, sledgehammers and fire have been used to remove small business and accommodation, destroying property, furniture personal effects and business stock. At least 22,000 people have been arrested (statement provided on 1 June by police spokesman), and many thousands rendered homeless (including some Embassy local staff). This displacement has created a serious internal refugee problem, compounding the humanitarian crisis that looms due to food shortages. The authorities have moved many displaced people to farms in the peri-urban areas to be processed for return to the rural communities. MDC have urged Zimbabweans to mobilise against the Government. The Zimbabwe National Pastors Conference also condemned the actions of the authorities. There are also widespread reports, confirmed to the Embassy by the Commercial Farmers' Union, of an upsurge in farm invasions, of an increasingly violent character.

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