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## ZIMBABWE

**Statement by:**

**The Honourable Vivienne Poy**

**Thursday, February 12, 2009**

## THE SENATE

Thursday, February 12, 2009

### ZIMBABWE

**Hon. Vivienne Poy:** Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about the current governance crisis in Zimbabwe and the dire humanitarian situation facing its people. As usual in crisis situations, the women rally. Women of Zimbabwe Arise, WOZA, includes 35,000 human rights activists of all ages engaging in peaceful protest to express their objections to human rights abuses in Zimbabwe.

Every year on Valentine's Day, February 14, brave women gather on the streets of cities across Zimbabwe to distribute roses to express their motto that "the power of love can conquer the love of power."

WOZA wants good governance, access to education and food, health care delivery, and a civil society. Their pleas for a better life have resulted in harassment, detentions and torture.

In 2002, I was twinned by Amnesty International with Willias Madzimore, an MP with the Zimbabwean Movement for Democratic Change, MDC. Last year, when the MDC had apparently succeeded in the elections, I thought there would be an improvement in the governance situation. Willias Madzimore was re-elected, as were many other MDC members. However, as you

know, the election was followed by further violence. Willias Madzimore's own furniture factory was firebombed last July.

Honourable senators, today, as we prepare to celebrate Valentine's Day with our loved ones, I ask that, as senators, we pledge our support through Amnesty International by buying roses and sending messages to encourage the women of WOZA in their struggle against an oppressive regime.

Zimbabwe is coping with an unstable government, widespread human rights abuses, spiraling inflation, and a massive decline in living standards. The recent cholera epidemic, which has spread from the cities to rural areas, has added additional hardship to the lives of Zimbabweans.

This year, WOZA demonstrated two days ago, prior to the swearing-in ceremony of MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai as Prime Minister of a new unity government yesterday. Eight members of WOZA and two lawyers were arrested and remain in custody.

Honourable senators, if this new Zimbabwean government is to have any chance, we must continue to support the brave women of WOZA and all the people of Zimbabwe.

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