

The New Age Voices

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Amplifying youth voices

For feedback email The New Age Voices on newagevoices@gmail.com

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Mudzi murder: A wake up call for youth

By Francis Rwodzi

The murder of an MDC activist in Mudzi over the weekend is surely a wake-up call for youth and is a clear sign the country is not ready for elections anytime soon, youths across the country have said. Analysts in the youth sector said it is worrying to note that we are continuing to get more politically motivated violence reports as we move closer to general elections than ever before since the inception of the Inclusive Government a sign that next year's elections will be violent.

Youth Leaders interviewed by *The New Age Voices* said the recent fatal political skirmishes are a true reflection of the human rights situation prevailing in the country and urged the United Nations Human Rights chief Navi Pillay who recently "toured" the country to take the Inclusive Government to task over political violence.

"We are not surprised by the recent violence because it has always been Zanu PF's trump card in the run up to elections to intimidate people to vote for its party. It is there for everyone to see that Zanu PF is afraid of electoral defeat that is why they are trying to block the constitution making exercise that is

set to pave way for free and fair elections.

"We have not seen anything yet if the June 2008 run-off tactics employed by the same party are anything to go by," said former Zimbabwe Youth Council Board Member Lawrence Mashungu.

Coordinator of Youth Forum Wellington Zindove blamed politicians for fuelling violence and hatred amongst youth.

"As a young person fighting for a just Zimbabwe, I feel that politicians are at it again inciting poor innocent youth into acts of violence which unfortunately have resulted in the death of one adult. I urge young people to refrain from being coerced into violence for violence breeds more violence and I call upon the ZRP to act professionally and true to their word in order to bring all perpetrators to book. Its unfortunate that the ZRP record in such situations is always opposite to public expectation," Zindove said.

Youth Agenda Trust Programs officer Trust Nhubu said that the country's political leadership are hypocrites who do not practice what they preach.

"It's a clear sign that the political leadership in the country is not enforcing what they preach into action because supporters within

political parties are continuously fighting in the communities," said Nhubu.

Former Zinasu Secretary General who also works with Heal Zimbabwe Trust Lovemore Chinoputsa said the Mudzi murder is just a tip of the iceberg.

"The murder in Mudzi is actually a slap in the face of the human rights situation that Chinamasa had wanted to portray in the country. What has happened is just a microcosm of what is happening across the country and it shows the insincerity of Zanu PF in the promotion of peace. It shows Zanu PF has not changed its stance towards violence as a weapon of silencing its opponents," said Chinoputsa.

Trevor Murai of Students Solidarity Trust (SST) bemoaned the ignorance of youth towards violence saying they were digging their own graves. "The Mudzi violence must be harbinger of bigger violence yet to be unleashed by Zanu PF machinery. Any youth who shall be used to perpetrate violence is insane," Murai said.

Grace Chirenje a young female leader who works with ZWINIP urged youths to shun violence and instead concentrate on developing the country.

"It is high time youth begin to see themselves as leaders, transformative leaders who are not violent but are determined to build the country, person by person. Let us harness our energy for the good of the nation, not violence," said Chirenje.

Youths who spoke to *The New Age Voices* in Mudzi and Harare expressed dismay at the manner in which the law is being applied selectively with newspaper reports saying that the attacks in Mudzi took place in full view of the police and fear that the dark days reminiscent of the 2008 run-off plebiscite are all but back.

Tedius Chimhare of Mudzi lamented the partisan approach of the police in the area saying if the murder had been perpetrated by youths from a different political party, the police response could have been different.

Rodrick Shumba of Mufakose said the police should be blamed for the lawlessness that has gripped the country because it is treating some criminals as sacred cows.

"The police should just arrest people who commit crimes regardless of political affiliation. No one should be above the law," said Shumba.

UN human rights chief's visit okay but.....

By Staff Writer

The visit by the United Nations Human Rights chief Ms Navanethem Pillay to assess the country's human rights situation is a step in the positive direction for Zimbabwe but youth say the tour could have yielded better results if the tour had been extended to different parts of the country such as Mudzi, Gokwe and other such places which have become a hub of political violence in the country.

Pillay was in the country last week to see for herself the magnitude of human rights violations in the country and to give her assessment on how far the country has gone in as far as reforms with regards to democracy and human rights are concerned.

However, Pillay's visit was confined to Harare where she was whisked from one government office to another and was not allowed the chance to go to the grassroots and meet the real victims of human rights violations.

Youths interviewed by *The New Age Voices* expressed concern at how Pillay was hoodwinked by Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa and his allies into calling for the suspension of sanctions targeted at some key human rights violators dotted across the Zanu PF political turf.

The youths cited the continued delay by Chinamasa in the setting up of an independent and vibrant Human Rights Commission as a sign of reluctance by his party to promote human rights. They said such spanner throwing antics are should have been exposed by Pillay whose sentiments after the tour have been welcomed by some sections of the Zanu

PF party.

"Madam Pillay's visit was a move in the right direction but however the only problem with these visits is that nothing concrete will happen and the government can disregard the proposal of Madam Pillay," said Lovemore Chinoputsa of Heal Zimbabwe Trust.

Grace Chirenje a young women's rights activist said Pillay's visit was "awesome" and showed that women see things as they really are just like Ms Anna Tibaijuka who once visited the country in 2005 after the devastating Operation Murambatsvina.

Trevor Murai of Students Solidarity Trust said the visit was stage managed and people should not read much into it.

"Any serious representative of any human rights watchdog organization must come around the election period when the campaigns gather impetus and the immediate post period," Murai said.

Youth Forum Coordinator Wellington Zindove said Pillay's visit was too broad which could have affected her qualitative assessment of the human rights situation in the country.

"I think she touched on too many things in a short space of time and that alone led to too many inconclusive remarks and to me it's like we are simply where we were before she came in," said Zindove.

Some youths who spoke to *The New Age Voices* urged the United Nations to consult widely in the future so as to avoid getting wrong feedback that would ultimately lead to wrong course of action by the World Body.

Making a link between youths in Zimbabwe and Denmark



The visiting OD youths from Denmark interview YAT Coordinator Fortune Nyamande

By OD youths

We are seven young women from Denmark, and in april 2012 we visited Harare. Together with Youth Agenda Trust we visited the areas Chitungwiza and Epworth. We met a lot of young men and women our age and got some perspectives on how young Zimbabweans live their lives in these areas.

This made a great impression on us. We will spend time the next months on making people in Denmark aware of young Zimbabweans living conditions.

Back in Denmark we have shared our new knowledge with our colleagues in our organisation, Operation A Day's Work (OD). OD is a student organisation, that works for international solidarity between young people in Denmark and the rest of the world. We

spoke about our trip to Zimbabwe at one of our anual meetings, where around 60 danish high school students participated.

In the time to come we will be showing the students video interviews made with young members of both YAT and NYDT, a Bulawayo based NGO. The videos will adress the issues "gender", "youths and democratic rights" and "economic crisis and future prospects". This way Danish high school students will learn more about living conditions in Zimbabwe. They will also relate the issues to Danish conditions. This will make them aware of how being a young person is different in Denmark and in Zimbabwe. It is also the intention, that thay can reflect on things us youths may have in common, even though we live in so different parts of the world.

COPAC draft an insult to youths?

By Francis Rwodzi

IT is 4 years since the Inclusive government mandated the Constitution Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) to come up with a people driven constitution which many people hoped will pave way for elections that would usher in a people's government and bury the illegitimacy ghost haunting the Government of National Unity (GNU).

However, the merrymaking attitude that has characterized this incestuous relationship between the 3 feuding political parties in the coalition government has not missed COPAC who despite hurriedly concluding the outreach process without properly consulting the youth have had the temerity to spend ages writing nothing if the leaked draft is anything to go by.

To believe that the draft constitution mentioned youths only twice in the whole document is as hard to believe as believing that the select committee will finish writing the document after all.

The New Age Voices has plucked out the only sections that talk about the youth in the much awaited draft constitution. Below are the extracts:

2.10 Youth

All State and governmental institutions and agencies at every level must take **reasonable** measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that the youth, that is

to say people between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five years:

- (a) have access to appropriate education and training;
- (b) have opportunities to associate and to be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life;
- (c) are afforded opportunities for employment and other avenues to economic betterment;
- (d) have opportunities for healthy recreational activities and access to recreational facilities; and
- (e) are protected from harmful cultural practices, exploitation and all forms of abuse.

2.24 Domestication of international instruments

The State must ensure that all international conventions, treaties and agreements to which Zimbabwe is a party and which:

- (b) address issues relating to children, ethnic communities, **youths**, elderly persons and persons living with disabilities; or
- By merely looking at the language that was used in these few sentences, it shows unparalleled arrogance and ignorance that need to be dismissed with the contempt it deserve.

When a whole drafter puts into a national

constitution vague words such as *reasonable* you wonder if they are even concerned after all. How does one measure *reasonable*? How do you go to court and challenge the state that you could not complete ordinary level because the state did not put reasonable measures for you to go to school?

The minister of education will tell you that we built the schools and gave you the teachers, go there and pay so that you learn, whether you will be sitting on a rock or a tombstone who cares? What is appropriate education and training? We need COPAC to be specific that it is the right of every youth to learn up to advanced level, university level, period!

Subsection b) says: have opportunities to associate and to be represented and participate in

political, social, economic and other spheres of life. What opportunities are we talking about here? Is it the quota system that we are talking about? If it is then let's have it clearly written.

Youth leaders who were contacted for comment by **The New Age Voices** poured scorn at the leaked draft saying it does not represent the interests of the youth but those who are authoring it.

"You do not need a rocket scientist to tell you that this piece of paper is just like the one we had before in as far as the youth are concerned. We really need a constitution that

speaks to issues that affect young people and not one guided by generalized assumptions. So if this is the draft that is going for referendum then it is unfortunate," said Youth Agenda Trust Coordinator Fortune Nyamande.

Former Zimbabwe Youth Council board member Lawrence Mashungu had no kind words for the draft which he said was too silent about the youth. He called on COPAC to be more specific and consult the youths if they were facing challenges in coming up with the real issues.

"I think what we are seeing here is a true reflection that the youth were not properly consulted and we have said that before. We feel that the drafters were busy concentrating on some other issues and forgot to write about the youths which they then did at the final minute hence these empty phrases," Mashungu said.

However, Youth Agenda Trust has blasted the negative forces that are calling for the disbanding of COPAC saying it is these elements who have been causing confusion in COPAC beginning with the violence that rocked the outreach process, the tampering of data and the haggling characterizing the drafting process.

YAT said in a statement that the country cannot afford not to have a new constitution saying that the consequences would be too ghastly to contemplate.

Youth Agenda Trust Statement on UN tour of Zimbabwe

Youth Agenda Trust welcomes the visit to Zimbabwe by the United Nations Human Rights Chief Navi Pillay at a crucial time for not only the youths but the country as a whole.

We appreciate the interest that the World body has shown towards the Zimbabwe crisis and we hope that we will continue to see more efforts (towards resolving the Zimbabwean crisis) by the United Nations as we continue to reel under a repressive system put in place by some politicians who are desperate to prolong their stay in government despite clear signs that they have since reached their sell by date.

However, we are disappointed by Madam Pillay's statements where she called upon the European Union to suspend sanctions targeted at some individuals mostly aligned to the former ruling Zanu PF party.

As Youth Agenda Trust we feel that the targeted sanctions must remain until the Zanu PF regime stops widespread human rights violations and that the reforms spelt out in the Global Political Agreement are implemented in full.

The youths of Zimbabwe have watched painfully as one party for reasons known by everyone is frantically trying to destabilise the constitution making process and is unilaterally setting the pace to elections when it is clear that no electoral reforms have been made to 4 years after the formation of the Government of National Unity.

We would like to make it clear to those politicians in whatever space who are calling for the holding of elections this year without a new constitution that it is a clear violation of the Global Political Agreement which must not be tolerated by any right thinking Zimbabwean.

We therefore appeal to the United Nations to urge Zanu PF to respect the rights, freedoms and dignity of fellow Zimbabweans which include a new constitutional order before asking the European Union to remove the sanctions and before elections are held.

We also feel that the Inclusive Government must implement the GPA in full before talking about holding elections because the political turf is not even and is dangerous to the youth who will ultimately end up as the victims and perpetrators of violence sponsored by politicians.

Youth receive leadership training

By Staff Writer

Youths in Chitungwiza and Epworth recently graduated with certificates after undergoing week long capacity building training on leadership which was organized by Youth Agenda Trust.

The youths were trained in governance, leadership, conflict transformation, citizen journalism and lobby and advocacy.

A total of 160 youths have so far

benefitted from the project, "Breaking the Culture of Silence" which is meant to break those barriers that prevent youth from assuming influential leadership positions in their communities.

The training is part of YAT efforts to empower youth in communities with skills to spearhead the development of their communities and shake off the negative tag that has been put on them by some who see them as social misfits who are bent on causing problems for their peers.

YAT expect the youths who were trained to pass on the skills and information they gained to their peers and also make sure that they are active agents of transformation in their communities.

The leadership training is also part of a series of trainings the youth in Epworth and Chitungwiza will be getting from YAT which also includes life skills training and informational activities such as health tours in their communities.



The picture on top shows youth from Epworth going through training on new media technologies while the bottom picture shows Chitungwiza youth undergoing leadership training.

ARE YOU 18 AND ABOVE?
ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE?
Take the First 5 Steps to Democracy...

1. COLLECT YOUR IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS
2. VISIT YOUR NEAREST VOTER REGISTRATION OFFICE WITH YOUR I.D AND PROOF OF RESIDENCE
3. REGISTER TO VOTE AT ALL COSTS
4. COLLECT YOUR REGISTRATION SLIP AND KEEP IT SAFELY
5. PATIENTLY WAIT FOR THE NEXT ELECTION TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATE OF YOUR OWN CHOICE

YO VOTE CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE
CLAIM YO VOTE, CLAIM YO FUTURE

Contact us for more information on the Voter Registration office near you