



**National Hero selection process condemned**



**Civil Society reacts to Mugabe's funeral diatribe**

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THE Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform (ZLP) has issued a statement castigating the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) political party's continued monopoly, inconsistency and partisan bias in deciding who gets conferred with national hero status saying it should be an inclusive process.

The ZLP statement comes in the wake of ZANU PF's decision – made in usual consultation with itself – to confer national hero status upon Retired Air Commodore Mike Karakadzai, party founder and former cabinet minister Enos Nkala as well as politburo member Kumbirai Kangai who all died last week.

The ZLP noted that soon after independence in 1980, ZANU (PF) came up with a criteria to be used to accord hero status with 'consistency' in terms of participation in the liberation struggle and in terms of 'contribution to the development of the country' after independence being the main criteria.

According to the ZLP, the ZANU (PF) Politburo has singlehandedly declared national heroes/heroines using the said criteria ever since whilst:

*"Persistent and consistent suggestions by other political, economic/business and social interest groups that a non-partisan, national body be established to determine national hero status criteria and using the said criteria, to accord national hero status, have contemptuously been ignored."*



*The National Heroes Acre in Harare*

The ZLP said that as a result of this monopoly over the process only ZANU (PF) members or those close to Politburo members have enjoyed hero status, whereas several deserving people had been denied the honor due to ZANU PF's desire to "serve narrow partisan interests".

Civil Society leaders who shared their views with the Crisis Report indicated that ZANU PF's monopoly over the national hero selection process was at odds with the spirit of inclusivity that underscored the New Constitution and flied in the face of every rudimentary concept of fairness or equality.



*Abel Chikomo*

*"The only thing that ZANU PF has succeeded in doing is shredding and doing away with any significance which the conferment of national hero status might once have held. People have realized that the whole selection process is a circus and they have now realized that the national hero status means nothing,"* said the Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Abel Chikomo.

Chikomo's remarks are borne out by the views of the ZLP who mentioned in their statement that over the years, ZANU PF had excluded several deserving candidates from receiving the conferment:

*"George Nyandoro was made a national hero, James Chikerema was not. Both were pioneers of the liberation struggle (going as far back as the 1950's) but they later joined Bishop Abel Muzorewa's Zimbabwe-Rhodesia regime. Was Nyandoro more consistent than Chikerema?"*

The ZLP went on to query the seemingly haphazard use of the purported selection criterion of consistency pointing out that:

*"Fibion John Shonhiwa and Sheba Tavarwisa (Wekwete), trained freedom fighters who held senior positions in ZANU (PF) and sacrificed their lives for Zimbabwe, were not declared national hero and heroine respectively. Was Joseph Culverwell who was in London during the liberation war, more consistent than these two?"*

The Women's Trust Director, Memory Kachambwa said the debate around who is a national hero was almost elitist because it excluded various social groups including women whose contributions did not seem to be equally valued.

*"The people who still care about the conferment of the national hero status are those who have something to benefit from caring or those who also hope to be buried there because the views of ordinary citizens have been ignored and people have become despondent. They are tired of this debate because they know nothing is going to change. And the whole issue of a 'hero' is very masculine so you also wonder how women's contributions are factored in."*

However, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Chairperson and Director of Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (Zimrights), Okay Machisa opined that Zimbabweans should be concerned about who was conferred with national hero status because it was a national issue that ought to be as inclusive as possible.



*Okay Machisa*

*"Zimbabweans do care and want to contribute to the discussion on who becomes conferred with national hero status. Under normal circumstances, the people of Zimbabwe certainly would engage with the issue of how national heroes are selected even though there are so many things that have transpired which people are trying to process," said Machisa.*

Media Centre Director, Ernest Mudzengi weighed in on the issue by concurring with Machisa's take on the matter pointing out that the conferment of the national hero status was of national interest.

*"It's a national issue and people have already commented on the selection process in the past and aired their views but if those who are in authority choose to ignore the views of the people, it's difficult for them to continue engaging," said Mudzengi.*

The ZLP maintained that:

*"Many Zimbabweans have distinguished themselves in politics, economics, business, scientific research, culture and other spheres. They deserve due recognition by their own country, hence the need to set up an independent national body to perform a non-partisan national duty of according deserved hero status to them," adding that:*

*"Social justice demands that this should be done, otherwise history would judge the present leadership harshly. Leadership is judged by the nature of legacy it leaves."*

Retired Air Commodore Mike Karakadzai was, on Sunday 25 August buried at the National Heroes Acre, whilst the burial of Enos Nkala has been slated in for Thursday 29 August with Kumbirai Kangai's burial penciled for Saturday 31 August at the same venue.

## Civil Society reacts to Mugabe's funeral diatribe

ADDRESSING mourners at the burial of Retired Air Commodore Mike Karakadzai at the National Hero's Acre on Sunday 25 August, President Robert Mugabe gave credence to the old adage that old habits die hard when he threw a hissy fit and haranguing the West, threatening Western companies with restrictions and disowning the residents of Harare and Bulawayo.

Mugabe, who is notorious for turning burial ceremony speeches into ranting sessions by going off tangent and taking a swipe at his enemies, real or imagined, raised the ire of ordinary citizens, civil society members and had economists sounding the warning bell on the consequences of his reckless utterances.

Without departing from his anti-West script, Mugabe on Sunday said he was fed up with being "harassed" by the British and the Americans before issuing a veiled threat to place restrictions on Western companies, a stance which analysts say could repel foreign investors.

Civil society leaders have reacted variously to Mugabe's remarks with Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) Director, Jenni Williams saying she was "disgusted" by the President's remarks particularly in threatening to disown residents of Harare and Bulawayo for not voting for his party.



Jenni Williams

Said Williams: *"He (Mugabe) must know that if he was inaugurated as the President of this country then it means that he is the President of every citizen not only those that voted for him. We fully intend to hold him and his Government accountable as residents in Bulawayo and our members in Harare will certainly do the same."*

Williams said Mugabe might be in need of refresher course in democracy as his remarks were at odds with the most rudimentary concepts of democracy and leadership.

The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Spokesperson and Director of Bulawayo Agenda, Thabani Nyoni said that Mugabe's remarks only served to prove the level of his consistency in churning out hate speech. In concurrence, Director of the National

Youth Development Trust (NYDT), Liberty Bhebhe said although it was improper for a President to think that his office serves only those who voted for him such conduct was to be expected:

*"His remarks are not surprising at all because we do not expect anything from him or from his Government because Bulawayo has been marginalized under Mugabe's rule for a long time and we will survive by the grace of the lord."*

However, Media Centre Director, Ernest Mudzengi said that these utterances should not be taken at face value, stating that:

*"The President was making a political statement and not a policy statement as far as I can tell".*

With the pending burials of party founder and former cabinet minister Enos Nkala as well as politburo member Kumbirai Kangai who both died last week and were declared national heroes – Mugabe will have to conduct himself in a way befitting his position or face more backlash from infuriated citizens.