

ZIMBABWE BRIEFING

a crisis in zimbabwe coalition regional office weekly report

6-12 JULY 2011

ISSUE 33



The Military's toxic role during the 2008 Elections

*This week, we continue with publishing edited excerpts from a report published by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition titled **The Military Factor in Zimbabwe's Political and Electoral Affairs**. Below is Chapter 4 of the report. Please also see accompanying story at the bottom of the page.*

Although the role of the military was covert and subdued in the lead up to the March 2008 elections, it became decisive and toxic during the presidential runoff election campaign period between April and June 27. The military had overtly taken over and had become the arbiter of Zimbabwe's fate during this period. In early June 2008 MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai noted that the country had witnessed a de facto coup d'état and was now effectively run by a military junta.

In an attempt by the military to reverse Mugabe's defeat by Tsvangirai in the first round of presidential elections, the military effectively overthrew the electoral process and unleashed violence and intimidation on a wide scale. The military emerged at this time as the bedrock and political commissar of ZANU-PF. Following a defeat at the polls by the MDC in March 2008, ZANU-PF's evaluation noted the obvious, that the party structures were virtually non-existent and lacked capacity to mount an effective campaign, hence the strategy to turn to the military for a campaign of coercion. Political scientist Eldred Masunungure noted on the runoff campaign period: "The April to June 2008 interregnum was a militarized moment. A ZANU-PF that had been de-stooled as the ruling party in Parliament was not prepared to be dislodged from State House... In the process, the winds of democratic change were de-



THE PRESIDENT'S MEN: President Robert Mugabe (right) is pictured here with Army Chief, General Constantine Chiwenga (centre) and Intelligence boss, Happyton Bonyongwe.-dailymail.co.uk

fied; a peaceful, election-centered process of transition away from authoritarianism and towards democracy was interrupted."

Between April and the June 27 runoff election, the security forces took a central role in violently campaigning for the ZANU-PF candidate, Robert Mugabe. During this period soldiers were deployed in all the ten provinces across the country with the aim to ensure that ZANU-PF wins the presidential election at all costs. A report by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum indicates organized violence and torture increased in association with the various parliamentary by-elections that took place.

However, there was an absolute increase in organized violence and torture from the middle of the year 2008 as the campaign for the Presidential election gained momentum up to present day. As the violence generally increases, so does the number of cases in which members of the army are implicated as the primary perpetrators. Investigations by international human rights watchdog, Human Rights Watch

(HRW), also implicated the military in widespread electoral abuses. In a report, HRW stated that the scale of military attacks exceeds anything seen previously during Zimbabwe's long history of electoral violence. Soldiers carried out scores of attacks in Harare and surrounding townships. The military takeover has meant an explosion in the level of violence in Zimbabwe. Names of top military commanders accused of masterminding the ruthless campaign to keep President Robert Mugabe in power include Air Vice Marshal Henry Muchena, Air Commodore Michael Karakadzai, Air Vice Marshal Abu Basutu, Major General Engelbert Rugeje, Retired Major General Gibson Mashingaidze and Brigadier General Douglas Nyikayaramba.

According to the HRW report, witnesses interviewed identified numerous senior military officers as being directly involved in the violence. The report further claimed that documents leaked by disgruntled army officers named 200 of them, each assigned an area to oversee in Operation Makavhoterapapi? or Operation Where Did You Put Your Vote?, a campaign

to punish those who voted for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), particularly in areas perceived to be traditional ZANU-PF strongholds of Masvingo, Mashonaland, and Manicaland provinces. One victim, quoted in the report described armed soldiers going from house to house in the township of Chitungwiza searching for MDC supporters and beating them: "I did not know my assailants, but they were in army uniform and drove an army truck. They were boasting of being given a three-day assignment to 'bring hell' to the people."

Army officers have been personally involved in a number of 're-education' meetings at which local residents are forced to renounce opposition and swear allegiance to the ruling party after being beaten and tortured. The Army however continues to deny any involvement in the violence and speaking on this Army deputy public relations officer, Major Alphios Makotore, said: "The Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) wishes to raise concerns over articles being published in the print and the electronic media on allegations relating to the alleged political violence, assaults, harassment and robberies perpetrated by men in army uniforms ... the army categorically distances itself and any of its members from such activities."

The military's meddling in political and civilian affairs has been strongest in Mashonaland East, where soldiers at Joko Army Barracks have taken army drills to villages. In Manicaland province traditional chiefs were summoned to an "indoctrination workshop" where the Brigadier-General Douglas Nyikayaramba told them to support ZANU PF or be deposed from their positions.

The face of Zimbabwe's military brass

As Robert Mugabe's health reportedly deteriorates and renewed infighting grips Zanu-PF's two factions, Zimbabwe's military openly declared its support for the 87-year-old president.

As a result, the unity government has been rattled. Alliances in Zanu-PF have shifted at the likelihood of a military coup d'état and, with elections looming, it has increasingly become evident that the military leaders will not be sidelined. Zimbabwe's next ruler might have to court it for survival. The Mail & Guardian looks at the five power brokers in Zimbabwe's military.

Constantine Chiwenga: Army commander, Zimbabwe Defence Forces

Nicknamed "Zim 2" because of his ranking after Mugabe, Chiwenga (56) is the latest in a long list of loyalists touted to succeed the president and hopefully neutralise Zanu-PF's tense succession race. Chiwenga had previously kept a low profile, but emerged to bulldoze Mugabe into electoral victory in the violent 2008 presidential elections. Like his predecessor,

the late Vitalis Zvinvashe, Chiwenga echoed the unwritten law among the military chiefs that they "would never salute anyone without liberation credentials".

Chiwenga is the chairperson of the Joint Operations Command, a body that includes Zimbabwe's military, police and intelligence services, but it's perceived bias in favour of Zanu-PF has led the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to label it a "mafia". Chiwenga's influence in Zimbabwe's politics cannot be underestimated. Calls for him to remove his uniform to become a politician by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai may prove less enticing, because as army commander he has a vantage point that makes even the MDC wary.

Augustine Chihuri: Commissioner general, Zimbabwe Republic Police

In the past decade, Chihuri has effectively turned the police into a military wing of Zanu-PF. Its partisan stance has included launching violent crackdowns against opposition figures, beating MDC activists, journalists and civic lead-

ers. Since the formation of the unity government, police have arrested many MDC ministers.

Popular opinion in the country is that Chihuri was also the mastermind of the controversial Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, which sought to destabilise the MDC's growing urban support base under the pretext of building new houses for the homeless. But the police commissioner's bias towards Zanu-PF has served to solidify Mugabe's grip on power, because the police brutality has been a day-to-day reminder to citizens of who is really in charge and calls the shots in government.

Paradzai Zimondi: Commander, Zimbabwe Prisons Service

It is no coincidence that Zimbabwe's prisons are "hell on Earth", according to the MDC's Roy Bennett, who was arrested on treason charges. After all, it is the perfect place to throw dissenters after the police arrest them. Shortages of food and medical healthcare, coupled with deplorable living conditions, have made the country's prisons a horror.

In Zimondi's grip, the prisons have become a harbinger of

death for opposition opponents. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly condemned the squalid living conditions in the prisons but reform is yet to take place.

Douglas Nyikayaramba: Brigadier general, Zimbabwe Defence Forces

The brash and outspoken Nyikayaramba has not hidden his dislike of either the MDC or Morgan Tsvangirai. As head of Mugabe's election team in 2002 and blamed for rolling out Mugabe's 2008 re-election campaign, the brigadier has become a barometer of the temperature within the military camp. Political analyst Eldred Masunungure described him as "an indicator of the desperation within Zanu-PF". Nyikayaramba recently revealed that Mugabe would win the upcoming elections, described Tsvangirai as a "national security threat" and scoffed at suggestions that Mugabe should be replaced and a successor appointed.

Perence Shiri: Air marshal, Zimbabwe Air Force

Shiri (56) is Mugabe's cousin and has been the country's air marshal supremo since 1992

when he took over from the late Josiah Tungamirai. He is nicknamed "Black Jesus" because of the power he wields in deciding whether an individual lives or dies. As the commander of the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade army in the 1980s, Shiri was linked to the Gukurahundi massacres in which an estimated 20 000 people were killed.

At the height of Zanu-PF's land seizures in 2000, he is believed to have orchestrated the invasion of several white farms. He is also an alleged beneficiary of the airlifting of diamonds in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the 1997 conflict. It is widely believed that the country's most decorated wing man cannot fly.

Shiri's close family ties to Mugabe, his involvement in the Joint Operations Command and his place on the European Union sanctions list make it most likely that he will seek to maintain the status quo.

- From the Mail & Guardian Online: <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-01-the-face-of-zimbabwes-military-brass/>

Total rejection of use of violence for political ends

Coordinator's
Note



dewaMAVHINGA

Last week I had a lengthy political discussion with my nephew from a community in rural Zimbabwe during which he expressed his dismay and surprise at the ease with which political activists and supporters quickly resort to the use of violence – believing it to be a legitimate means of achieving political ends. Extreme polarization and violence continue to characterize village-level politics in Zimbabwe despite the existence of an inclusive government that brings together in one government political leaders from the three main parties in the country. Clearly there is more to why the scourge of political violence persists in plaguing our society, but certainly lack of political will and leadership features prominently among those reasons.

Surprisingly, save for violent persecution in the Anglican Church, there is much tolerance and peaceful co-existence among Zimbabweans belong-

ing to different churches or Christian denominations. In rural Zimbabwe, often at funerals various church or denomination leaders are lined up and take turns to preach the gospel in harmony and in celebration of differences and diversity. No violence breaks out because a member of the community has chosen to belong to the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe or the Apostolic Faith Mission. It should be so with politics as well. Why should violence be visited upon a person who chooses to identify themselves with the Movement For Democratic Change, or with Ndonga party, or Ndu?

Article 18 of the Global Political Agreement that set the framework for Zimbabwe’s current inclusive government notes that resort to political violence undermines our collective independence as a people and our capacity to exercise our free will in making political choices. As a result, political

leaders from ZANU-PF and the two MDC formations agreed, among other things:

a) To promote the values and practices of tolerance, respect, non-violence and dialogue as means of resolving political differences;

b) To renounce and desist from the promotion and use of violence, under whatever name called, as a means of attaining political ends;

c) That the government shall apply laws of the country fully and impartially in bringing all perpetrators of political violence to book;

d) That all political parties, other organizations and their leaders shall commit themselves to do everything to stop and prevent all forms of political violence, including by non-state actors and shall consistently appeal to their members to desist from violence;

e) To take all measures necessary to ensure that the structure and insti-

tutions they control are not engaged in the perpetration of political violence.

Sadly, not much has been done to put into practice these noble ideas. Structures and instruments of political violence continue to be sharpened in anticipation of the much-talked-about elections in 2011 under unreformed conditions that prevailed during the widespread electoral violence of between April and June 2008. Hate speech that entrenches polarization characterizes state media reports. Political leaders who control instruments of violence have not embraced values that engender peace, they have not truly rejected violence in all its forms.

But hope for a better future comes from the ravaged communities themselves to take leadership in rejecting all forms of violence and embracing peace and non-violence. It is from these communities that true peace-makers will emerge. My nephew with

whom I had the charged political discourse with had no kind words for those who engage in political violence.

He said ‘In our community we have rejected violence, we left it for dogs that cannot communicate. For us dialogue resolves all differences.’ Profound words that should ring from every hill and valley in Zimbabwe.

If communities unite against violence then merchants of this evil practice will not find room to divide families and communities by sowing their seeds of discord and hatred. We should simply say it in our hearts and loudly that Zimbabwe’s next election will be an election with a difference – an election without violence or intimidation. And we must be prepared to defend our peace and to speak out against all forms of violence. It is not an easy task yes, but it is not an insurmountable task either.

- coordinator@crisiszimbabwe.org

Cynthia Manjoro case: Where is the activist boyfriend?

Cynthia Manjoro has become a household name overnight and for what? A lot of us have different reason for that but for the purposes of this writing, I will cite her unlawful incarceration and her reason for being denied bail, she is considered a” flight risk”. Talk about selective application of law! However, mine is not to vent my anger at the legal system in Zimbabwe (oh, how I wish I could but at least not in the whole article) but to look at Cynthia’s life as a woman and try and understand what her being held up in such conditions has done to her life, her son’s life, her mother’s and also maybe to attempt an unpacking process of the role of her boyfriend and his role in all this.

Cynthia’s life dramatically changed when she was picked up by the police and told she had to be arrested because her car (which her boyfriend had been driving) was seen at the scene of a crime she was clueless about. As an IT Specialist, I’m sure this was not really something she anticipated at any one point. In this particular instance, her crime is that she is a girlfriend to an activist who was doing his own thing and got caught up in this “messy” web.

Tracing the media today, it is explained that she will be used as bait to lure her boyfriend who is nowhere to be found. My question here then is, what kind of love do we purport to have for each other when we let our loved ones suffer for the kind of jobs that we have? Is it morally right, to let the one I love pay for the crime that I commit in my line of duty? As a woman, I find it painful and confusing that I give the man of my dreams my car only to be rotting in jail because he is not being humane enough to own up to his role in some issue that concerns him? Think about it, what is Cynthia’s crime? Being girlfriend to Darlington? If I may know, then what crime did she commit? That her heart chose to fall in love with a man who has now left her to suffer for his activism. Let us do what we can as activists and fight for Cynthia’s freedom,



FALSELY IMPRISONED: Cynthia Manjoro is pictured here with her two year-old son.-pic supplied

never mind the man that is missing in this picture. Let us look at her family, two year old son whose rights are also being violated because her mother’s boyfriend has not been able to own up by coming to explain his side of the story and fight for Cynthia’s freedom! The family am sure is suffering because of this. Imagine the mother, siblings and you name them, each one of them. The emotional trauma of knowing that Cynthia is not guilty but is suffering for being that woman who just happened to love a man of her choice and the next thing her car leads to her being linked to some crime. Let us be serious people and separate issues! My heart goes out to each of them.

Let us be serious and clean up our act as human beings. It is good to do the right thing but again, who determines what the right thing is? For me in this particular

case, the right thing is that Cynthia is exonerated form a crime she did not commit and that she is freed. Why do we let this happen to our children, sisters, mothers, aunts and loved ones? Let us continue to rally behind Cynthia Manjoro and proclaim that enough is enough, Justice delayed is justice denied so let her be free now.

No to illegal arrests of activists and let us be true to the legal field and practice true legal reforms....**Cynthia Manjoro should be freed and freed now!**

By Grace Chirenje, an activist with a keen interest in Women and Youth Affairs.

UPCOMING
ACTIVITIES:

- > **PLAY - Rituals (Rooftop Promotions):**
- **Wits University (13- 14 July 2011)**
- **Central Methodist Church (15 July 2011)**
- **Hillbrow Theatre (16 July 2011)**