

2011 in political retrospect

The passage of time is a rarely considered element in our national political discourse. A year begins and a year ends and we are all afflicted by short memories. Momentous political events are not easily remembered even in the wake of their occurrence. Instead they are left to the academic historians or the now rare village griot to recount many years after.

2011 might however not be an easy year to forget. As it comes to a close, it must be remembered as an internationally momentous year. From the 'revolutions' in Tunisia and Egypt that were phenomenal in their occurrence and somewhat not as significantly defined in their aftermath.

Close on the heels of these revolutions was the removal from power of Ivory Coast's Laurent Gbagbo and Libya's Muammar Qaddafi from power via direct liberal intervention by France and Nato respectively. These interventions left the African Union's weak standing in international relations literally confirmed while the long awaited independence of South Sudan brought fresh hope for that country's civil war to come to a final end.

Other events such as the assassination of Osama bin Laden and the riots by young British citizens were felt more in the West than elsewhere, while the Global Financial crisis though epitomized most tellingly by the events and change of government in Greece, is only beginning to be felt in Zimbabwe via the reduction of donor funding to government programmes on health such as the Global Fund to combat HIV/AIDS.

But to be specific to Zimbabwe, we began the year 2011 with a lot of what was then considered serious political tension. There were disputes over outstanding issues in the inclusive government and SADC made interventions via a still very disputed Livingstone Troika summit in March.

The issues that were considered 'outstanding' by the three parties in the GPA which included an election roadmap, the expansion of JOMIC, the role of the military and human rights violations



DEFIANT: President Robert Mugabe, 87, has called for elections in 2012 and has been endorsed by his party, ZANU PF as its candidate. The call for elections has been met by wide criticism as Zimbabwe is not ready for polls yet. -nehandaradio.com

remain outstanding as we approach the end of 2011. At the time they were being presented, there was a sense of urgency which has turned out to be a false urgency. And this is what has come to be the definitive character of our national politics in Zimbabwe via the inclusive government.

Throughout the whole year we have been threatened with a referendum and elections. Where the three parties have held congresses or conferences, the language has been that of creating a sense of urgency that is not grounded in political reality and therefore has been false.

And as 2011 comes to close, we should expect the cycle to continue in the aftermath of the Zanu Pf conference which predictably will insist on elections in 2012, a year short of the government and parliament serving out its constitutional five year term. And as the political parties continue with their false senses of urgency, there is the continuation of repression of the media, human rights activists and ordinary members of the public.

When it comes to reviewing the socio-economic problems that the country

faced through 2011, limited little changed significantly. The government economic reform programmes have a broad neo-liberal framework that, judging by the policy pronouncements and speeches of cabinet ministers, wrongly places emphasis on private-public partnerships (PPPs).

In the course of the year, the only real evidence of these PPPs has been the government's policy of economic empowerment and indigenization via Community Share Trusts. Whether these CSTs become of any public benefit, is yet to be seen but it is evident that due to the political contests over the matter together with the politicization of the entirety of the process, these CSTs are more likely to have a trickle down effect on the lives of the communities they are intended to benefit.

As in 2010 the government still does not have comprehensive health, transport and education (including tertiary) plans. Its approach has been to douse out fires, if it does so at all. To be specific, in the health services there is the perennial challenge of over-dependence on international partners, who should they decide to

move elsewhere or say they have run out of funding as with the Global Fund, the country is left high and dry. In relation to education, the government continued to grapple with teachers salaries without taking a holistic review of the entirety of the education system to make it work.

This essentially means once again, come January 2012, we will be faced with a teachers strike, high tertiary and school fees. As regards, transport, the government has done next to little to improve public transportation systems. The National Railways of Zimbabwe works intermittently and there is still no visible evidence as to what the road tollgate revenue is being utilized for. More often than not the Ministry of Transport is threatening car dealers and owners with a banning of one thing or the other as regards motor vehicles. Similarly the ministries of Youth and Women's affairs, who have misunderstood the young people and women of Zimbabwe by assuming that all they want are 'projects' yet none of them have offered a comprehensive public works framework to deal with the high levels of unemployment in the country.

As it is and as the year 2011 comes to a closure Zimbabwe and its citizens are running the risk of continuing with a political cycle that has become less about the people and more about the people in government. Their disputes and actions have largely been partisan not only on behalf of their political parties but also on behalf of their 'comfort zones' (to which they have demonstrated an unfortunate sense of entitlement to via their purchase of luxury vehicles, unclear mineral and iron production deals, numerous trips abroad).

And as the new year approaches, it is hoped that civil society, members of the public shall at some point begin to hold the inclusive government to account with regards to its performance legitimacy, and not just the politics of elections.

By Takura Zhangazha, an independent political and social analyst

Police Intensify Crackdown on Civil Society Actors

That president Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's only leader since attainment of independence in 1980, and is Zanu PF party are strongly calling for elections early next year gives a false impression that major steps have been taken to level the political field in preparation for free and fair elections.

However the developing trend of intensified harassment, intimidation and detention of civil society activists confirms that very little has changed—politicized and partisan state institutions such as sections of the police continue to align themselves with Zanu PF in their persecution of civil society actors through a subversion of the rule of law and use of various draconian pieces of legislation that remain on statute books.

On 5 December Gwanda police arrested two Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) employees, Ms. Fadzai December and Ms. Molly Chimhanda to-

gether with MMPZ member, Gilbert Mabusu for allegedly contravening section 25(1) (b) of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), for allegedly 'participating in a gathering without seeking authority from the regulating authority' and also for allegedly contravening section 37(1) (b) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, by 'distributing material that is likely to provoke a breach of peace'.

On Tuesday 6 December 2011 police in Harare raided and picked up MMPZ Project Coordinator, Andrew Moyse for allegedly possessing some materials on Gukurahundi (the 1980s massacre of members of the minority Ndebele people) and confiscated some Digital Video Disc (DVD)'s from the organisation's offices.

They later released him after going through an interrogation session which lasted several hours. The unwarranted acts of harassment and intimid-

ation are not isolated. In recent weeks police have arrested and detained independent media editors and journalists on spurious, politically motivated charges.

Zanu PF is strongly resisting any reforms to the police and other sections of the security sector to make them genuinely independent, professional and non-partisan. In the absence of such critical security sector re-alignment to desist from political interference and from partisan conduct, Zimbabwe cannot hold free and fair elections.

In light of renewed attempts by state agents to muzzle the independent press and silence civil society actors as characterized by the unwarranted harassment, detention and intimidation of journalists and activists, Zimbabwe's civic movement has taken long to rally together in defence of fundamental freedoms. The human rights and democracy community has not always publicly identified with victims of regime brutality

for a number of reasons, such of which may have to do with a false sense of security that is derived from maintaining deafening silence when colleagues are under attack.

The onslaught on democracy and its defenders will not relent because citizens have chosen the route of silence. Only open defiance and speaking out in defence of our rights can stop this upward trend in rights abuses.

These unfortunate and worrying attacks be the regime show clearly that, contrary to pronouncements by those within Zanu PF that Zimbabwe is ready and should go for polls early in 2012, little has changed in our political environment characterized by extreme repression and subversion of the rule of law. The political field remains uneven, tilted in favour of Zanu PF. Under such conditions, there is no way Zimbabwe can hold free and fair elections.

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We Have Done Nothing Wrong – We have No Fear

Coordinator's Note



dewaMAVHINGA

Remnants of Zimbabwe's repressive regime have singled out human rights activists and civil society organizations for attack, harassment, intimidation or vilification. With the increased hype about early elections in 2012, unjustified, politically motivated arrests and detentions of activists across the country have intensified.

The motive is obvious: to strike fear into the hearts of vocal activists in order to silence them as the last act of shutting down democratic space. But we have done nothing wrong – we have no fear and we shall not be silenced. A shadowy weekly paper with close links to Zanu PF, the Patriot, has over the last several weeks been devoting its pages to verbal abuse of courageous and

outspoken rights activists – vilifying them and using hate speech against them. These activists, including myself, have been variously labeled European Union Spies, agents of the west or regime change agents. It appears our crime is that we are non-profit organizations that receive funding from various sources, including from western philanthropic organizations.

It is unfortunate that these un-informed regime activists do not know that the same western organizations and countries fund a significant portion of government work in Zimbabwe – including the celebrated constitutional reform process.

We are transparent about our work and we are proud to be calling for human rights respect and peace in our country in our

lifetime when many choose to be indifferent to the suffering of the masses and the massive corruption, loot and plunder that goes on daily in our beloved country which now is just but a shell of its former glory.

The problem is not the demonization and vilification we are subjected to by the Patriot and state-owned but Zanu PF-aligned papers like The Herald and The Sunday Mail, it is that such hate speech against us acts as a form of justification for more dangerous attacks and other forms of abuse by state agents of zealous party supporters.

Should anything happen to any of the activists unfairly subjected to hate speech in these extremely partisan papers, then the editors and writers of the hate speech must know in no uncertain terms that the blood of innocent activists

will be on their hands.

As 2011 draws to a close and we look to 2012, we do so with great determination and courage to fight on until a full measure of democracy and sustainable socio-economic development is achieved in Zimbabwe. No amount of baseless, shameful attacks on us will silence us.

I urge those that have thus far been silent and indifferent to now speak out in defence of justice and peace. It is time for all peace-loving Zimbabweans to reject violence and intimidation and say 'enough is enough.' The only way to stop bullies is to stand up to them, not to submit to them.

I challenge those who claim to be patriots to defend Zimbabwe from the kleptocrats who are milking our country dry; from the enemies of peace who

are preying on innocent people; from sycophants eager to revive the old regime for personal gain; and from merchants of violence who needlessly spread fear, confusion and panic.

The time has come for each Zimbabwean citizen to take a firm stand for justice; to stand aside and watch is to aid the regime and to be complicit in the continuing injustice.

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SPECIAL NOTE

The just ended 12th annual Zanu PF conference in Bulawayo endorsed Robert Mugabe as the party's presidential candidate for the next elections likely to be held mid 2012 if Zanu PF's wishes are not resisted.

Women must build sustainable peace

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender based violence are over. A lot of events have been happening and it is exciting to see the dedication from various sectors and the support for the cause of women's rights.

However, in as much as all this has been happening, a lot still needs to be done to bring about peace in the home to peace in the world. On reflection of life and women's lived realities, it is sad that even women themselves sometimes are gate keepers of militarism that perpetuates violence against women.

In this regard, I thought it worthwhile to look at what might be happening at a personal level and thus causing this. Let us take a look at intra-personal peace and what it can do to transform the world and enable sustainable peace amongst women. This I believe is critical if women are to transform this world!

Imagine, a woman, full of life, energy, and ideas and not afraid to speak her mind. Someone who is able to make a difference (well, according to their personal assessment!), a well spoken and meticulously dressed sister. How would other women generally respond to that sister? Well, the reactions differ and if she is lucky to meet the more liberal and caring sisters, she could walk away with a compliment!



What I am saying here is that often women look at the very trivial things of life and focus on those instead of enhancing each other's capacities in both the formal and informal spaces so that what emerges is a formidable force to reckon with and thus we transform the world!

However, this may not be a disease of women only but today we will focus on the sister's ability to be psychologically abusive. That being said, it is very important for us to note that during these 16 days and throughout the year, every woman has a role to play in ensuring her own peace is realized.

It is entirely up to the women of this generation to begin to align themselves internally so as to exude externally the goodness of peace that is stored within

I am a strong believer that when people are at peace with themselves, they exude peace to the world! Once a person begins to walk the journey

of self discovery and they become comfortable with their being, then the process of peace begins. When one has noise within them, that means when some-

one has got negative energy stored within them through negative behavior, attitude, talk and you name it, then they will have nothing positive to offer.

Take a moment to reflect on your personal life and what you say and do – how does that bring peace first to you, those around you and to the world? Unless you are at peace with who and what you are, there is not much peace building you are likely to do!

Well, we are not perfect beings but one thing for sure is that there is need for us to stop the negativity and begin to focus on the strength of our diversity as women. It is a

truism that we constitute the majority nationally and even internationally.

This translated could mean that women have the greatest potential to lead this world to a better standing where peace, equality and equity rule.

However, it is important for us to realize that it is only when we decide to be at peace with ourselves that we can begin to own who and what we are and then take steps to transform first our own personal lives, our homes, the community and world as a whole.

When women decide to be loving, caring, transformative and peaceful, the whole home will follow suit. It is entirely up to the women of this generation to begin to align themselves internally so as to exude externally the goodness of peace that will be stored within.

As we reflect on the commemoration of 16 Days of activism against gender based violence, may every woman be challenged to be supportive of the next sister's space so that she is developed as a peace builder first in her own life, home and into the world?

It is a choice we can all make and it indeed is a worthwhile choice...let us do this the sky is the limit and women have the power to be peace builders!

By Grace Chirenje-Nachipo, an activist

Whose election is it anyway?

President Robert Mugabe and a cabal of security chiefs acting in cahoots with a hard line faction within ZANU (PF) want to force the country to go to an election in the first quarter of next year. In fact were it not for South African President Jacob Zuma and SADC, Mugabe and this cabal would have forced an election on us this year. They have tried everything that they can to ensure that the inclusive government collapses so that Mugabe can call a snap election. But they have not bothered to the nation how such an election is in the national interest and how it will benefit ordinary Zimbabweans.

Mugabe has told his supporters that he wants an early election because the inclusive government is not working. Frankly that is a bunch of baloney. It is akin to a spouse lying, cheating and not respecting a marriage and then rushing to the courts to file for divorce on the grounds that the marriage is not working! The inclusive is not working because Mugabe and his party do not want it to work. If they really wanted it to work why would they take every opportunity to work against it?

I posit that Mugabe and his few henchmen want an election for selfish personal considerations. Mugabe reasons that because of his advanced age, time is running out. He wants an early election that he hopes to win and guarantee himself that he will die in office. Otherwise what else would motivate an 88-year-old man to contest an election? What does he hope to deliver to Zimbabweans now that he has not been able to deliver in the 31 years that he has been in power?

The argument that if he goes then his party will collapse is nonsensically selfish. Zimbabwean citizens do not all belong to ZANU (PF) and they care less what happens in that political party because it is a private matter.

I have noticed that within ZANU (PF) those that are making the loudest noise about an election are those that do not occupy positions in the inclusive government. The likes of Jonathan Moyo and Christopher Mutsvangwa are angling for ministerial positions and they hope to ingratiate themselves to Mugabe by shamelessly groveling about elections. Moyo thinks that his swashbuckling and irresponsible confrontational attitude towards Zuma and his facilitation team has endeared him to Mugabe and that he will get either the Foreign Affairs ministerial portfolio or he will be returned to the Information Ministry.

What Moyo does not seem to realize is that his no-prisoners-taken approach

to politics has embarrassed well-meaning members of ZANU (PF) who feel that he is creating more enemies for the party in the region and on the continent at a time when it should be making more friends. At any rate the Wikileaks cables have exposed him as a 'flip-flopper' and 'useful messenger' of US interests in Zimbabwe. This has caused some ructions among those in the party who have always questioned Moyo's loyalty since the beginning of his flirtation with ZANU (PF).

The securocrats have never accepted the GNU since its consummation. They have never wanted Morgan Tsvangirai anywhere near the levers of state power and that explains why they turned the 2008 presidential election run-off into a blood-bath. They have not made a secret of their desire to see ZANU (PF) governing alone. Personal economic interests drive their attitudes. They see the MDC presence in the government as a threat to their interests as it has reduced opportunities for rent-seeking and lucrative government tenders. They also fear that the more Mugabe interacts with Tsvangirai the less he will dislike him. The possibility of Tsvangirai and Mugabe striking a political deal that excludes them is too dreadful to contemplate for the securocrats.

Mugabe and his small cabal seem to have forgotten why the inclusive government was formed in the first place. This government was born out of a disputed electoral outcome. And that disputed outcome was a result of the political conditions prevailing at the time. Those conditions are still very much in place. I challenge anyone to tell me what has changed since 2008. Only a fool continues to do the same thing and expecting different results.

ZANU (PF) elements now want to pretend that the GNU is a burden to them when in actual fact it gave them a lifeline. If Tsvangirai had refused to sign that pact agreeing to form a power sharing government Mugabe and ZANU (PF) would be history by now. Even after claiming to have won the presidential election run-off Mugabe could not form a government because he knew that he had not have legitimacy internally and externally. How do they hope to gain legitimacy this time round? Or they think they can buy it? If they think that the money being looted from the Chiadzwa diamond fields can buy them legitimacy then they should think again. They need look no further than Libya to see that money cannot buy legitimacy.

By attempting to ditch the GNU Mugabe and his small cabal are behaving like the proverbial drowning fool who



An elderly woman is assisted by a polling agent as she casts her vote in the March 2008 polls.-
zimbabwepictures.com

gets a life vest from a well-wisher only to throw it away before making it to the shore claiming that he now can swim! That fool will sink to his death unless the well-wisher is kind enough to throw him another vest.

Frankly no one in this country except Mugabe and his small cabal wants an election. The business community has since cautioned against an early election fearing that the modicum of economic stability they are enjoying will be wiped out. Barring Kasukuwere's legalized asset stripping through the ill-conceived indigenization policy, which has become an avenue for crony capitalism, the inclusive government has created a relatively friendly environment for business to function, albeit not to full capacity.

The bullish Finance Minister, Tendai Biti has managed to cushion companies against outright robbery by central bank governor Gideon Gono. Prior to the formation of the inclusive government Gono nefariously issued dubious foreign currency retention regulations that were essentially a scam for the hemorrhaging of the central bank for the benefit of ZANU (PF) cronies.

Civil society has categorically stated its opposition to an early election. The conditions on the ground are not conducive for free and fair political competition. The infrastructure of violence is still very much intact. Rights activists and journalists continue to be targets of arbitrary arrests.

As I am writing three media rights activists from the Media Monitoring Project (MMPZ) are in police custody for violating the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), that shameful relic of colonial repression. ZANU (PF) thugs are terrorizing innocent citizens in Mbare and other communities with impunity. The police continue to arrest the victims of violence instead of the perpetrators.

The public media continues to exhibit partisan coverage of news as it only carries the ZANU (PF) voice. The MDC is only mentioned when it is being lampooned and ridiculed. Attempts to open up the electronic media space have been hijacked as ZANU (PF) linked companies have snapped up the two licenses on offer. ZANU (PF) members and supporters themselves do not want an election. Mugabe's MPs have not made a secret of their opposition to his call for elections next year.

Most of them would rather see the end of their legislative terms in 2013 than be subjected to an electoral challenge. Moreover, a majority of them are opposed to Mugabe's candidature. If Mugabe follows foolish counsel by the small cabal that wants elections for selfish personal interests then he risks his MPs revolting against him. They will do another 'Operation bhora mudondo' as they did in 2008 when they urged their supporters to vote for a ZANU (PF) candidate in the parliamentary election but have the liberty to make up their own minds on their choice of President.

Ordinary ZANU (PF) supporters do not want an election. They too have borne the brunt of poverty and deprivation under a ZANU (PF) government and they see the inclusive government as having given them some modicum of relief, which they would rather not lose. As the party is gathering in Bulawayo for its annual conference, I challenge Mugabe to put the issue of elections to a popular vote by the conference delegates.

I am confident that a majority of them will say no to an election next year. Only the hoodlums and political pimps who benefit opaque beer and cheap Chinese-made t-shirts would say they want an election.

By Charles Mangongera, a political analyst.

Police Intensify Crackdown on Civil Society Actors

From Front Page

It is great wonder why anyone would blindly push for sham elections under an skewed political field, unless the idea is for a particular political party to benefit from the uneven political field.

2011 saw little, painfully slow progress being made in the areas of instituting critical electoral reforms; 2012 should be devoted to completing critical reforms that pave way for free and fair polls.

Essential pillars for any functional democracy are a robust, free and independent press and a vibrant civil society sector. It is no wonder that elements opposed to fundamental freedoms would target these two pillars for attack, harassment, intimidation and vilification.

When subjected to such a relent-

less onslaught, it is of paramount importance that individuals and institutions concerned with democracy should come together under a common banner to defend values they cherish.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), and particularly South African which is mediating over Zimbabwe's peace process should insist that there should be no elections in Zimbabwe until the political field is level, state institutions are independent and guarantees are in place for a free and fair election where violence or intimidation play no part.

Dewa Mavhinga, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Coordinator.

We are taking a break. Zimbabwe Briefing returns on Wednesday, 18 January 2012.

**Thank you for your support in 2011 and we hope you'll continue supporting us in 2012 as we fight for credible electoral reforms to be instituted in Zimbabwe before any election is held.
Best wishes.**