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Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Thursday December 1st – Wednesday December 14th 2011
Election Watch 2011-1

PARTY CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Intolerant language characterize ZANU PF conference

THE ZANU PF annual national conference in Bulawayo was the highlight of the campaign activities of Zimbabwe's main political parties in the media as the year drew to a close.

The state media devoted 142 (85%) of the 167 reports they carried on the activities of the parties in the inclusive government to the event. Of these, 132 were positive portrayal of President Mugabe and his party, while the remaining 10 were neutral.

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC received attention in 23 stories, 14 of which focussed on Tsvangirai's "marriage" to businesswoman Locadia Karimatsenga Tembo. None of the 23 reports on the MDC-T were positive: four were neutral and the rest (19) negative. The activities of the smaller MDC faction, led by Industry Minister Welshman Ncube, were covered in two reports, (one neutral and the other negative).

But it was the belligerent remarks by President Mugabe and other senior ZANU PF officials at the conference, which exposed the political intolerance and continued poisonous political atmosphere in the country despite the formation of the inclusive government in 2009. There were 19 such utterances recorded in the media in the period under review.

While Article 19.1 (e) of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) discourages the media from ***“using abusive language that may incite hostility or unfairly undermine political parties and organizations”***, none of these media analysed the implications of these remarks on the country’s volatile political situation.

In one case, the media passively reported President Mugabe telling his party supporters at the congress to prepare for the burial of the inclusive government and those ***“condemned”*** by the people, saying it was high time Zimbabweans terminated this political arrangement through elections as the MDC arm of government was ***“frustrating”*** the implementation of Cabinet decisions (*The Sunday Mail* and *The Standard*, 11/12).

The two papers quoted Mugabe: ***“Let us now start preparing for elections and as we do that, we are digging the grave of this monster (the inclusive government). The grave must not always be the usual six feet: it must be six feet times 10 deeper and deeper and deeper and never again to come out. Those who have ridden it without the ticket from the people; those who just asked for a lift and were given a free lift will sink with it six feet, six feet, six feet and six feet times 10.”***

He added: ***“As to where they will go that is not our concern. Are you ready to dig the grave? Have you (got) the picks and shovels ready? And have you identified where the graves will be? Are you sure you have pastors and priests to pray for them? What is left now is for us to decide on the day when those who have been condemned are put to death.”***

These comments came at a time Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has been under a month-long attack from the state media and their “columnists” such as Jonathan Moyo and Nathaniel Manheru for his alleged traditional marriage to Locadia in November, a month in which such cultural practices are considered taboo in Zimbabwe.

In fact, *The Sunday Times* (11/12) reported The MDC-T as having lodged a complaint with the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (Jomic) over Moyo’s ***“abusive language”*** and ***“hate speech”*** in one of his weekly instalment in *The Sunday Mail* (4/12) headlined: *Morgan’s open-zip and shut-mind approaches*. In it, the former Information Minister mocked Tsvangirai over his alleged bed hopping.

Reportedly, the MDC-T viewed Moyo’s article as not only ***“defamatory”*** and ***“malicious”***, but also as violating Article 19.1 (e) of the GPA.

The private media’s coverage of the three coalition parties was generally balanced.

They accessed the performance of each of the three parties, exposing their ideological shortcomings and the blunders of their leaders. This was reflected in the 98 reports the private media carried: [ZANU PF (72), MDC-T (21) and MDC-N (five)].

THIS week the state broadcaster, ZBC, gave lavish coverage to the recent three-day ZANU PF annual congress. For example, ZTV alone devoted nearly 11 hours of airtime to the event in the four days that MMPZ monitored the station's coverage of the proceedings. This consisted live coverage, prime time viewing and news bulletins (8pm).

- **Live coverage** – ZTV beamed live the ZANU PF conference for three days. However, due to power outages, MMPZ was only able to monitor the first two days (8 and 9/12), which chewed off a total of seven hours 49 minutes of normal programming of the country's sole TV station. The first day of the congress (8/12) was broadcast live for nearly six hours in the afternoon while the second day received nearly two hours.
- **Prime time viewing** – On the first day of the congress (8/12) ZTV also ran a "special edition" of the conference at 6pm, a slot reserved for its early evening news bulletin. The programme ran for 2 hours 40 minutes and replaced the prime time programming leading to the main 8pm news bulletin.
- **News bulletins (8pm)** – The congress dominated news programming on ZTV. It consumed a quarter (one hour) of the four hours of the station's main *News Hour* bulletins (6-9/12) that MMPZ monitored (including sport, foreign news, business and the entertainment segments).

Such prominence given to the ZANU PF congress constitutes grossly inequitable, unfair and partisan publicity to one political party and makes nonsense of Article 19d of the Global Political Agreement advocating **"balanced and fair coverage"** of the coalition parties' **"legitimate political activities"**.

ZANU PF accuses MDC of delaying constitutional reforms

MORE claims by ZANU PF that the MDC formations were delaying the conclusion of Zimbabwe's controversial constitutional reform process to prolong the lifespan of the inclusive government received widespread publicity in the media.

They formed the bulk (24) of the 27 reports the media carried on the administrative aspect of the forthcoming general elections. The remaining three stories were based on the views of political commentators and civic organizations that Zimbabwe was not yet ready for elections, citing inadequate resources; hostilities among coalition parties; and inadequate reforms.

Fourteen of the 27 reports appeared in the state media and 13 in the private media.

ZANU PF's views on constitution making and elections stemmed from comments made at the party's annual congress in Bulawayo. Reportedly, these views also formed part of the congress' resolutions, which urged the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac) to urgently complete the process to pave way for national elections early next year (*The Herald*, *Chronicle* and *The Sunday Mail*, 9, 10 and 11/12).

While the official state media reported ZANU PF demanding urgent completion of the constitution making exercise, they did not reconcile this to indications by Copac that the process could take six months, barring any further delays that may arise due to political bickering and funding difficulties.

But the private media reported a coalition of civic groups expressing concern over the likelihood of ZANU PF views dominating the draft constitution as the party allegedly drowned other voices during the outreach to gather views on the new constitution (*NewsDay* and *The Standard*, 10 & 11/12). The views of the civic groups were contained in a 60-page report on the constitution making process by organizations that include the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR).

Reports that Mugabe threatened to block the passing of a new constitution if it does not reflect the ***“cardinal goals of our liberation struggle and our national culture and values”*** (*Zimbabwe Independent* and *New Zimbabwe.com*, 9/12) appeared to vindicate civil society's concerns. The President made these remarks in a report tabled at the ZANU PF national conference.

Rights abuses continue

THE private media recorded fresh incidents of politically motivated violence and other rights violations despite calls by the country's coalition parties for Zimbabwe to desist from this vice.

For instance, *The Herald* (9/12) reported President Mugabe telling delegates at his party's conference: ***"We in ZANU PF must renounce violence completely. We must reject it. We do not need it in the party..."*** The ZANU PF conference later endorsed this position as part of its resolutions (*The Sunday Mail* and *NewsDay*, 11 & 12/12).

The private media reported political commentators questioning ZANU PF's sincerity considering the fact that violence was still prevalent in the country (*NewsDay*, 12/12).

They recorded 18 incidents of rights violations.

Among these were:

- The arrest of MDC-99 leader Job Sikhala for holding a demonstration in Harare, allegedly calling on Zimbabweans to stage Egyptian or Tunisian style revolutions against Robert Mugabe (SW Radio Africa, 13/12).
- Alleged blockade of food aid to villagers perceived to be MDC-T supporters in Marange and Bocha in Manicaland by suspected ZANU PF officials (*The Zimbabwean*, 8/12), and
- The alleged dismissal by ZANU PF officials of a senior teacher from Chinembiri Secondary School in Chivi for purportedly preaching politics (*The Zimbabwean*, 8/12).

What they said...

Do these statements augur well with the spirit of the Global Political Agreement?

What do you think?



- ***“Those people are sell-outs, who pretend to like the President in his presence but go to the enemy behind him and criticise him. Dogs are even better than these people. A dog is not educated but it can understand better and defend its home than these people. Some of these people are even educated and some of them are even holding degrees”*** – War veterans’ leader Jabulani Sibanda attacking senior ZANU PF officials implicated in leaked US classified diplomatic cables for having secretly called for leadership renewal in their party (*Daily News*, 10/12).

- ***“Regrettably, both the male and female broadcasters (from foreign based radio stations) are what socialists would describe as the “running dogs of imperialists” with sections of the Zimbabwean Press also turning themselves into running dogs by publishing stories that also demonise ZANU PF and its political leaders” - The Herald’s columnist Stephen Mpofu (5/12).***
- ***“If Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has one fatal character weakness which defines his persona and leadership or lack of thereof, it is that just like he typically approaches national issues with an open mouth, he now routinely approaches women anywhere and everywhere...with an open zip and shut mind” – ZANU PF Politburo member Jonathan Moyo (The Sunday Mail, 4/11).***
- ***“Morgan Tsvangirai is a promiscuous politician who cannot be trusted by voters in particular and women in general; Tsvangirai’s open-zip approach to the women he meets anywhere and everywhere including at places such as political rallies, offices, supermarkets and airports poses a clear and present danger to Zimbabwe’s otherwise successful and internationally respected fight against HIV and Aids to the detriment of Government policy; and Tsvangirai lacks the moral authority necessary for a leader with his kind of ambition and aspirations to be president of this country” - Moyo (The Sunday Mail, 4/12).***
- ***“Today MDC-T is known as the party of knickers, with its punchline, “chinja maitiro, maitiro chinja” being vulgarized through a fatal insertion of an “s” on the “t” on “maitiro” – The Herald’s columnist Nathaniel Manheru (10/12).***

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