

PARTY ACTIVITIES

Media rapped for bias

THE reluctance by Zimbabwe's mainstream media, particularly the government-controlled ones, to adhere to domestic and internationally recognized journalistic standards when it comes to reporting on different political views in the country has again been thrust in the spotlight.

This time by Zimbabwe's most senior political luminaries: President Mugabe and Prime Minister Tsvangirai.

Speaking after signing the Constitution Amendment Bill into law, Mugabe **"took a swipe"** at some unnamed sections of the media **"for peddling lies and using his name to push their sales"** (*Daily News* and Zi FM, 23/5). The President said: **"Some are using my name to sell their papers. Mugabe this, Mugabe that; I am compiling all the Mugabe papers so that I claim compensation for making profit with my name."**

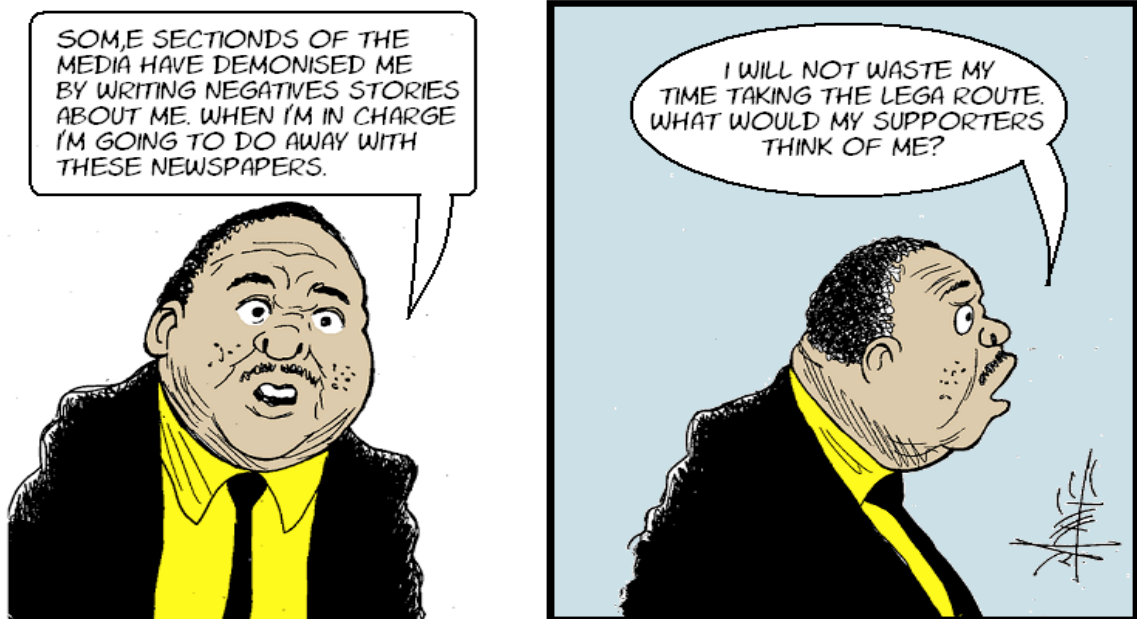
He added: **"Our journalism must be journalism of truth; you are now being downgraded because you act like people who have never been to school. Don't tell lies."**

Mugabe, however, singled out the State-run *Herald* for being **"obsessed"** with Tsvangirai: **"Herald yakananganawo naVaTsvangirai (is targeting Tsvangirai)"** – *The Daily News* and Zi FM (23/5)

Three days earlier, *The Herald*, *Newsday* and *Daily News* (20/5) reported Tsvangirai as having raised similar complaints against the State-run media during the launch of his party's national policy conference in Harare.

They quote Tsvangirai: **"You cannot have a newspaper with six articles saying Tsvangirai this and Tsvangirai that. Every day! Regai vakadaro. But musi umwe gava richadambura musungo (one day you will meet your fate)."** Tsvangirai added: **"That kind of a media has no future in a democratic Zimbabwe. I want to tell you this. Muchadya izvozvo".**

Politically correct dictatorship



Subsequently, *The Herald* (22/5) ran a news report and an editorial comment projecting Tsvangirai as having threatened to “**close**” the paper. The news report was accompanied by calls from media representative bodies such as Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), discouraging political interference in the activities of the media.

One of these, ZUJ secretary general Foster Dongozi was quoted: ***“We appeal to him (Tsvangirai) to protect the jobs of some journalists and their welfare. We are appealing to him to protect them from today and in the future. If the PM is not happy with the way other media organizations are reporting on him and his party, there are other avenues that he can take to seek recourse and not to threaten to close newspapers.”***

MMPZ fully subscribes to ZUJ’s position that politicians have no business in interfering or threatening media houses considering that there already exist laws that provide more than adequate redress to those whose reputations may have been harmed by false or inaccurate reporting.

It would be tragic if these ‘grievances’ against the media by the politicians were to be used as ammunition by those seeking excuses to further control media activity in Zimbabwe to add more legal constraints – in addition to the already battery of repressive media laws – to continue to stifle media freedom in the country.

However, it is equally important to state that the media should also seriously take aboard genuine grievances from the public, not least from politicians, as a way of promoting accountability and responsible journalism in the media houses. That is as long as the complaints are not designed to muzzle the media from playing its role of fully informing the public about national developments, accountability in government and the private sector, and those issues of public interest.

This is especially so as there is growing evidence of the media in Zimbabwe exhibiting varying degrees of bias and intolerance against those they do not share the same political views with. These include individuals, political parties, civic groups, and some sections of the international community.

And with the country heading for yet another election, media organizations and some parties have been complaining about an escalation of biased media reportage by the media, some of which amounts to hate speech. Some of this unprofessional journalistic conduct has been recorded elsewhere in this report.

This development is indeed a sad state of affairs – and a vindication of the media wasteland Zimbabwe has become – when it has become the norm for the public, including the President and the Prime Minister of the country – to predict unerringly which media outlet will carry which political point of view.

Anti-Tsvangirai campaign continues

THE State media's continued vilification of Prime Minister Tsvangirai and his MDC party appeared to vindicate observations by Mugabe and the PM that the State media was biased against the MDC-T.

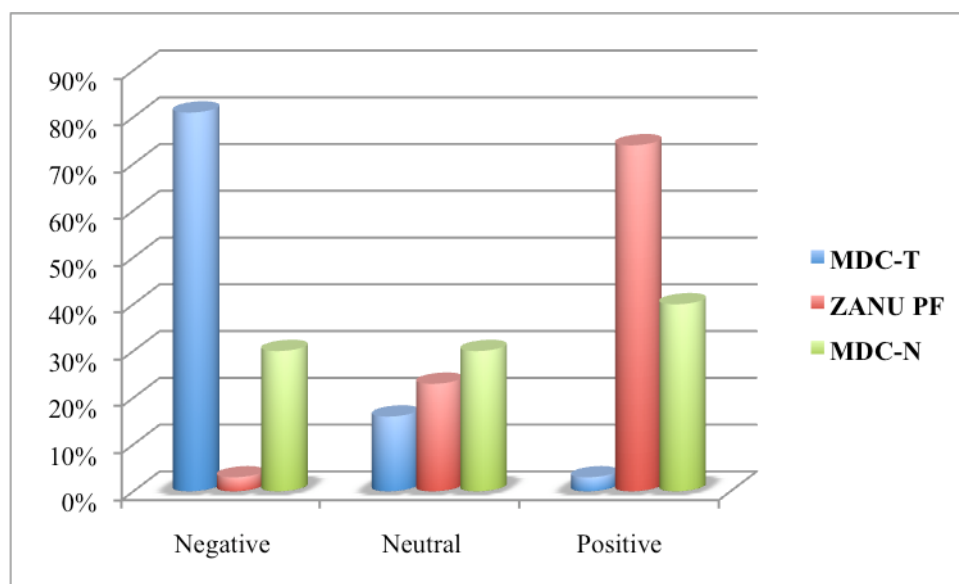
Of the 83 stories the government media carried on the activities of the MDC-T, 67 (81%) portrayed the party in bad light. Thirteen (16%) were balanced. Three positively depicted the party.

In contrast, ZANU PF got favourable coverage in 56 (74%) of the 75 stories the public media carried on the party's activities. Seventeen (23%) of these stories were balanced. The remaining two were negative.

The smaller MDC formation led by Industry Minister Welshman Ncube received less attention than its two coalition parties. It received publicity in 10 stories, four (40%) of which were positive. Three (30%) were negative, while another three were balanced. See Fig 1.

Notably, the three times the MDC-N received positive coverage in the public media was when it was reported in the context of the party being at loggerheads with the MDC-T.

Fig 1: Analysis of the coverage of the parties



Even after President Mugabe had publicly aired his disapproval of the way the official State media was treating his political opponent, there appeared no let off.

These media mostly castigated the PM for embarking on a regional tour to urge SADC to convene a special summit to nudge President Mugabe to implement outstanding issues under the Global Political Agreement (GPA), particularly media and security reforms, before Zimbabwe hold its elections.

In one front-page story, *AU snubs Tsvangirai*, *The Herald* (25/5) reported the PM as having **“cancelled”** his pending trip to Ethiopia at the **“last minute”** after his advance team of Zimbabwean **“quasi-political groupings masquerading as non-governmental organizations”** that had convened in Ethiopia **“to advance MDC-T demands for reforms ahead of elections”** were told to leave.

Reportedly, the NGOs were allegedly barred because the AU Golden Jubilee celebrations organizing committee had not made provisions for non-State actors.

The Herald (25/5) maintained that the AU had snubbed Tsvangirai although they did not provide evidence to sustain this line of argument. This was also despite “clarification” by the PM’s spokesman, Luke Tamborinyoka, that his boss cancelled the trip because his wife was **“not feeling well”**.

Tamborinyoka explained: **“Ours is a unique situation where there is shared power. All the principals were invited by the AU and this matter was discussed during the principals meeting and they agreed they should all go. The AU are guarantors of this power-sharing deal and that is the reason why the principals agreed that all of them were supposed to attend the celebrations”**.

Tamborinyoka added: **“That is the reason why (Deputy Prime Minister) Arthur Mutambara is there. This is contrary to your views as The**

Herald.”

In an attempt to discredit Tamborinyika’s presentation of the matter, *The Herald* (25/5) resorted to editorial intrusions: **“The Golden Jubilee celebrations, however, are for Heads of State and Government and are not a GPA affair as alleged by the PM’s Office”.**

Similarly, it reported **“sources close to the developments”** saying Tsvangirai **“wanted to push his reform agenda that took him on a wild goose chase around SADC and West Africa recently.”**

On the other hand, ZANU PF was portrayed as exclusively in control of its affairs; enjoying widespread support; and being the only party with solutions to Zimbabwe’s problems.

This was reflected in reports such as: *Indigenous churches predict ZANU PF victory* (*The Herald*, 28/5); *ZANU PF resolves Masvingo dispute and President reassures farmers* (*The Sunday Mail*, 19/5); *President saluted for stance against homosexuality* (*The Herald*, 25/5); *ZANU PF probe team in Chinhoyi* (*The Herald*, 24/5); *Bulawayo forges ahead with unity* (*The Herald*, 2/5); *ZANU PF hailed on gender policy* (*The Herald*, 14/5); *British paper predicts ZANU PF victory in elections* (*The Sunday Mail*, 12/5); *Mvundura, Ndlovu appointment above board: Gumbo* (*The Herald*, 6/5); *ZANU PF primaries’ guidelines finalized and Khaya Moyo’s probe team heads to Masvingo* (*The Herald*, 10/5); *ZANU PF goes on mobilization drive* (*The Herald*, 8/5); *ZANU PF rallies Bikita supporters and Masvingo ready for probe team* (*The Herald*, 3/5); *ZANU PF vows to reclaim Manicaland and ‘ZANU PF set to reclaim Harare’* (*The Herald*, 17/5); *War collaborators march in support of President* (*The Herald*, 17/5); *Campaign teams unleashed* (*The Herald*, 13/5); *ZANU PF team ready to roll* (*The Herald*, 21/5); and *ZANU PF Manicaland buries the hatchet* (*The Herald*, 7/5).

RIGHTS ABUSES

Abuses decline

THE media recorded 19 incidents of rights violations this month, a significant decline of 32% from last month’s 28 cases.

Of these, 14 (74%) appeared in the private media, while the remaining five were contained in the government media.

Here is a selection of some of them:

- Reports of the burning of a home of a ZANU-PF member, Steven Mamvura, in Bikita in a case the police suspected to be politically motivated (*The Herald*, 1/5);
- The confiscation by the police of 15 motorcycles belonging to the MDC-T in Mashonaland Central province on suspicion that they could have been smuggled into the country (*NewsDay* 7/5); and

- The granting by government of a six month ultimatum to shops and other businesses owned by non-Zimbabwean nationals across the country to comply with new regulations, which require them to apply for indigenization compliance certificates. These certificates were listed as mandatory, according to a Government Gazette published on May 17th (SW Radio Africa, 20/5).

What they said...

“There have to be certain reforms that need to be speeded up. If ZANU-PF says they (polls) should be held in June or July that is probably playing politics. All parties should agree that the time is ripe for an election” - South Africa's International Relations Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim (SW Radio Africa, 14/5).

“Our position as SADC is that the Constitution was concluded and the next step is the election, whether it's held within one month, two months, three months or the next six months, it is up to those with the powers to decide” – SADC executive secretary Tomaz Salamao addressing a Press conference after an extraordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government held on the sidelines of the 21st Ordinary Session of the AU General Assembly in Ethiopia (*The Herald*, 27/5).

“It is wrong for the MDCs to think that this country must be run by other nations. They are undermining regional solidarity by being crybabies. They behave just like my little daughter who each time she has a disagreement with her mother she cries whilst looking at me. As a father all I do is say ‘come my daughter’ and that's how it ends. That's why (President) Zuma sometimes ignores them because as a facilitator he understands his role” - National Constitutional Assembly chairman Lovemore Madhuku speaking during a lecture to mark the 50th anniversary of the AU in Harare (*The Sunday Mail*, 26/5).

“Those countries from which they are seeking solutions have their own problems. South Africa needs to deal with their poverty and Mozambique is busy trying to deal with Dhlakama. The MDCs are mistaken in their belief that SADC is our Moses. No nation loves other countries more than itself . . . it's not possible” – Madhuku (*The Sunday Mail*, 26/5).

“He (Prime Minister Tsvangirai) talks a lot and he is contradicting himself. He must be in Zimbabwe to provide leadership in Parliament. He does not have leadership qualities. The PM must know that there is no country in the world that has everything. You can only get that in heaven” – ZANU PF Politburo member Jonathan Moyo (*The Herald* 2/5)

“He (Kanengoni) has been honoured for killing Kombayi to protect (President) Mugabe's interests, what can we do about it as a family? Nothing. It's the system which is wrong” – Hamutendi Kombayi's, son of the late Gweru businessman and politician Patrick Kombayi, reacting angrily to ZANU PF's decision to confer national hero status on the late Central

Intelligence Organisation (CIO) deputy director (internal) Elias Kanengoni (NewsDay, 27/5).

“We do not recognise Elias Kanengoni as a hero at all. This is a man who was convicted of the attempted murder of a civilian, Patrick Kombayi. Together with Kizito Chivamba, they pumped more than seven bullets into the lower abdomen of Patrick Kombayi. They were sentenced to a prison term, but they actually had to be pardoned by Mugabe. The National Heroes’ Acre should be a place for people who fight on the side of the people of Zimbabwe, not a place for murderers and hired assassins” - MDC-T spokesperson Douglas Mwonozora (NewsDay, 27/5).

“We can’t build an economy that survives on peasants. Having everyone going into farming is not sustainable. We have to remove people from the farms to the industries than removing people from the industries to the farms because I don’t see that working” - MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai addressing party supporters at Zimbabwe Grounds in Highfield, Harare (*The Herald*, 20/5).

“We can’t talk of indigenization without empowerment...Indigenization without empowering the broad majority is selfish and only meant for a few. I want to assure you we will review that indigenization law so that we create an empowerment law for the majority of the people of Zimbabwe” – Tsvangirai (*The Herald*, 20/5).

“If I was given the option to choose my father before birth, where would I go? I would have been chatunga’s (President Mugabe’s youngest son) elder brother. I would have been number one at First House, at president Mugabe’s house. I would have said that’s where I want to be born” – Information Minister Webster Shamu (Daily News 1/5)

“Other than being archaic, the Mines and Minerals Act is extremely colonial and selfishly crafted to harbour, propel and protect the interest of the former colonizers” - Mines Minister Obert Mpofu addressing stakeholders in Harare yesterday at a consultative workshop hosted by the ministry on a new minerals policy (*The Herald*, 23/5).

“The reason why ordinary people are not benefitting from our indigenization policy is because of corruption among us. There is rampant corruption within our leadership and had it not been for the greed, we could easily give each one of you \$1 million considering the profits realised by companies such as Zimplats. We can only be able to do that if you pray for us, please pray for us. I was ashamed when I visited some of my colleagues in the party only to discover that they have enriched themselves to the extent that they own several mansions, many of which they never use until they die” – Webster Shamu (Daily News 12/5).

“We all agreed unanimously. Now we are surprised that there are some people like (Defence Minister Emerson) Mnangagwa who are now leading another faction claiming that they want to take over the party. Anyone who objects the legitimacy of Mai Mujuru as the vice president of the

party, then that person does not belong to ZANU PF” – ZANU PF Secretary for Administration Didymus Mutasa (*Daily News* 7/5).

Produced and circulated by the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, 9 Knight Bruce Road, Milton Park, Harare, Tel: 263 4 741816 / 778115, E-mail: monitors@mmpz.org.zw

Feel free to write to MMPZ. We may not be able to respond to everything, but we will look at each message. For previous MMPZ reports, statements and more information about the Project, please visit our website at <http://www.mmpz.org/>