



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

15 May 2009

ZWE103119.FE

Zimbabwe: Whether members of the Movement for Democratic Change were arrested and abused by the authorities after the signing of the power-sharing agreement in September 2008 and after the inauguration of the coalition government in February 2009

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

An article published in the *Harare Tribune* reports that, in 2008, political violence perpetrated by the Zimbabwe African Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) killed more than 200 supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) across the country (23 Feb. 2009).

Treatment of MDC members after the signing of the September 2008 power-sharing agreement

According to an Amnesty International (AI) article of 15 September 2008, [AI English version] "Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe ... signed a power-sharing agreement with the leaders of the two formations of the Movement for Democratic Change, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara" (see also HRW Jan. 2009 and Reuters 15 Sept. 2008). The agreement was signed on 15 September 2008 (AI Jan. 2009). According to Reuters, under the terms of the agreement, Robert Mugabe would remain president and the ZANU-PF would be responsible for 15 portfolios; Morgan Tsvangirai would become prime minister and the MDC would be responsible for 13 portfolios; and Arthur Mutambara, leader of a dissident faction of the MDC, would be responsible for 3 portfolios (15 Sept. 2009).

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the signing of the power-sharing agreement, reached under the mediation of then-president Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, has done nothing to quell the political violence in Zimbabwe (HRW Jan. 2009; see also AI Jan. 2009). The agreement was weakened by disagreement over the distribution of ministries (HRW Jan. 2009; see also UN 13 Nov. 2008 and AI Jan. 2009). An article published by AI indicates that the MDC and the ZANU-PF could not agree on the distribution of the main ministries (Home, Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Economy) (Jan. 2009).

According to Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), in September 2008, opposition group members were the victims of 1,300 acts of violence, including rapes and killings (UN 13 Nov. 2008). In addition, HRW reports that from October to December 2008, 43 MDC members and human rights activists were "arbitrarily arrested" and detained (HRW 15 Jan. 2009; see also AFP 4 Mar.

2009). According to the same HRW report, the detainees told their lawyers that they had been "subjected ... to beatings and other torture" (15 Jan. 2009). In addition, they were "forced to make false confessions" to participating in various "acts of sabotage, banditry and terrorism" and to recruiting people to overthrow the government (HRW 15 Jan. 2009). Further information on these cases could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

An article published by the United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) reports that Nelson Chamisa, a spokesperson for the MDC, accused President Mugabe of "launching another wave of attacks" against the MDC (UN 13 Nov. 2008). The MDC spokesperson stated that "ZANU-PF militias...were re-establishing torture camps and using them as a base for their attacks on MDC supporters" following Mugabe's defeat in the 29 March 2008 general election (ibid.). Chamisa also stated that on 27 October 2008, more than 30 MDC supporters were attacked at a settlement near Harare and that on 30 October 2008, in Mashonaland West province, the homes of the MDC leaders were raided and nine MDC officials were arrested (ibid.). According to an officer in the Zimbabwe National Army, who refused to be identified, "senior army officials had been deployed to rural districts, where they had virtually taken charge of all operations previously handled by local government officials," including the distribution of food and seed, allegedly depending "on loyalty to ZANU-PF" (ibid.).

Treatment of MDC members after the swearing-in of the coalition government in February 2009

In February 2009, after months of deadlock, the party in power and the opposition reached an agreement to form a coalition government (*Le Potentiel* 7 Feb. 2009). The new government was sworn in on 13 February 2009 (nouvelobs.com 13 Feb. 2009) and took office the same day (AFP 13 Feb. 2009). Sources state that, on its first day in office, the government had to deal with the arrest of White MDC leader Roy Bennett, whom sources indicate had been appointed either Deputy Minister of Agriculture (Reuters 13 Feb. 2009) or Secretary of State for Agriculture (nouvelobs.com 13 Feb. 2009). According to an MDC press release cited by Reuters, the police charged Bennett with [translation] "treason" (Reuters 13 Feb. 2009). An article published by Agence France-Press (AFP) reports that the police fired shots into the air and used dogs to disperse MDC supporters who were demonstrating for Bennett's release at the police station in Mutare, located 400 kilometres from Harare (13 Feb. 2009). Other sources report that Livingstone Chipadze, a magistrate who ordered Bennett's release, was arrested in early March (BBC 12 Mar. 2009; AFP 6 Mar. 2009). According to AFP, Magistrate Chipadze was arrested for abuse of office for [translation] "having authorized the release of Bennett after a court had granted him a conditional release" (6 Mar. 2009).

The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), an international not-for-profit network that works to promote "free and fair media" (IWPR n.d.), reports that in February 2009, about 30 members of the MDC "charged variously with attempting to either destabilise the government or oust President Robert Mugabe" were still in detention at Chikurubi prison, near Harare (ibid. 13 Feb. 2009).

In a 16 February 2009 press release, AI called on the African Union and the UN [AI English version] "to investigate human rights violations committed by

Zimbabwe's security forces during the current transitional period." According to Simeon Mawanza, AI's Zimbabwe expert:

[AI English version]

"A number of events that have taken place since the swearing in of a new government in Zimbabwe suggest that there is a force within the Zimbabwean security forces, that continues ordering violations of human rights as a method of dealing with people they do not like." (AI 16 Feb. 2009)

A 24 February 2009 article published by AI reports instances of [AI English version] "torture" and other abuse inflicted on three prisoners who are members of the MDC. According to the report, the three were being held on [AI English version] "allegations of either recruiting youth to undergo military training or bombing of police states and railway lines" (AI 24 Feb. 2009). Although two of them have been hospitalized, they were at risk of being returned to Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison without receiving the appropriate medical care; and one detainee had not been taken to hospital, even though a court had ordered that he be examined (ibid.).

Sources state that on 14 March 2009, Admire Mukorera, a member of the MDC and deputy mayor of Mutare, was arrested because "his vehicle was used in political violence" (VOA 14 Mar. 2009; ZimOnline 16 Mar. 2009).

According to HRW, the acts attributed to ZANU-PF supporters against the MDC were carried out "with almost absolute impunity" (Jan. 2009; see also *Harare Tribune* 23 Feb. 2009). The *Harare Tribune* reports that MDC supporters called on the coalition government to take measures against human rights abusers (23 Feb. 2009).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agence France-Presse (AFP). 6 March 2009. "Zimbabwe : arrestation du juge ayant autorisé la libération de Roy Bennett." (Jeune Afrique)
<<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20090306T132100Z/-Zimbabwe-politique-justice-Zimbabwe--arrestation-du-juge-ayant-autorise-la-liberation-de-Roy-Bennett.html>> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2009]

_____. 13 February 2009. "Zimbabwe : la police tire en l'air pour disperser des opposants." (24 heures.ch).
<<http://www.24heures.ch/depeches/monde/Zimbabwe-police-tire-air-disperser-opposants>> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2009]

Amnesty International (AI). 24 February 2009. "Document-Zimbabwe. Torture/Mauvais traitements/Prisonniers d'opinion. Fidelis Chiramba; Gandhi Mudzingwa; Kisimusi Dhlamini."
<<http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/AFR46/015/2009/fr/e897e214-de19->

4b8b-9f20-42d0cfc848c5/afr460152009fra.pdf> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2009]

_____. 16 February 2009. "Zimbabwe. L'UA et l'ONU doivent immédiatement envoyer des observateurs chargés de veiller au respect des droits humains" <<http://www.amnesty.org/fr/for-media/press-releases/zimbabwe-au-and-un-should-immediately-send-human-rights-monitors-2009021>> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2009]

_____. January 2009. Pascal Fenaux. "Zimbabwe ? Le calice, jusqu'à la lie." <<http://www.amnestyinternational.be/docarticle14053.html>> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2009]

_____. 15 September 2008. "Zimbabwe : l'accord de partage du pouvoir doit être clarifié." <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/details-zimbabwe-deal-remain-unclear-20080915>> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2009]

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). 12 March 2009. "Zimbabwe Cabinet Nominee is Freed." <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7939149.stm>> [Accessed 18 Mar. 2009]

Harare Tribune. 23 February 2009. "Political Violence on the Increase in Zimbabwe." <http://www.hararetribune.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=230:political-violence-on-the-rise-in-zimbabwe&catid=18:zim-today&Itemid=96> [Accessed 21 Apr. 2009]

Human Rights Watch (HRW). 15 January 2009. "Zimbabwe: Free Activists Unlawfully Held." <<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/01/14/Zimbabwe-free-activists-unlawfully-held>> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2009]

_____. January 2009. "Zimbabwe." *World Report 2009*. <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/zimbabwe.pdf> [Accessed 18 Mar. 2009]

Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). 13 February 2009. Jabu Shoko. "Zimbabwe Crisis Reports: Tsvangirai Fails to Deliver on Prisoner Pledge." <http://www.iwpr.net/?p=zim&s=f&o=350074&apc_state=henizim200902> [Accessed 21 Apr. 2009]

_____. N.d. "About IWPR: Aims and Activities." <http://www.iwpr.net/?p=&apc_state=henh&s=o&o=top_aims.html> [Accessed 4 May 2009]

Nouvelobs.com. 13 February 2009. "Zimbabwe : le gouvernement d'union prête serment devant Mugabe." <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/actualites/international/20090213.OBS4682/le_gouvernement_dunion_prete_serment_devant_mugabe.html?idfx=RSS_notr&xtor=RSS-17> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2009]

Le Potentiel. 7 February 2009. "Zimbabwe : brin d'espoir dans le partage du pouvoir." (AllAfrica) <<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200902091056.html>> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2009]

Reuters. 13 February 2009. MacDonald Dzirutwe. "Arrestation au Zimbabwe d'un dirigeant MDC accusé de trahison." (msn.com)

<[http://news.fr.msn.com/monde/article.aspx? cp-documentid=14133895](http://news.fr.msn.com/monde/article.aspx?cp-documentid=14133895)>
[Accessed 17 Mar. 2009]

_____. 15 September 2008. MacDonald Dzirutwe. "Robert Mugabe signe un accord de partage du pouvoir au Zimbabwe." (contre-feux.com)
<<http://fr.reuters.com/article/topNews/idFRGAR53658420080915>> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2009]

United Nations (UN). 13 November 2008. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). "Zimbabwe: Violence Returns as Talks Flounder."
<<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81453>> [Accessed 18 Apr. 2009]

Voice of America (VOA). 14 March 2009. "Zimbabwe's Mugabe Calls for End to Political Violence." <<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-03-14-voa15.cfm>>
[Accessed 18 Mar. 2009]

ZimOnline. 16 March 2009. "Mutare Deputy Mayor Arrested over Violence."
<<http://www.zimonline.co.za/Article.aspx?ArticleId=4369>> [Accessed 18 Mar. 2009]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Agence Centrafrique Presse (ACAP), Associated Press (AP), Canal Togo, *Daily Nation*, Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS), *Jeune Afrique*, *La Conscience*, Le Devoir.com, Lepoint.fr, Reporters sans frontières (RSF).

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.