



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE37330 – Universities –
Criminal Investigation Officer – Exit
procedures – Private anti-government views
15 September 2010

1. Is there any information as to whether Criminal Investigation Officers are employed as undercover agents at Zimbabwe universities?

A search of available resources found no specific reports that Criminal Investigation Officers are employed as undercover agents at Zimbabwe universities.

Criminal Investigation Officers are employed by the Criminal Investigation Department which forms part of the Zimbabwe Republic Police. ¹

There have been instances when student arrests were dealt with by the CID, such as the following. On 7 March 2007, an article related that students were detained and handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department of the Zimbabwe Police's Law and Order Section.²; a 9 August 2009 article related that student leaders were ordered to report once a week at the Harare Central's Criminal Investigation Department.;³ however, neither of these articles indicate that Criminal Investigation Officers were employed as undercover agents in the Universities.

2. Is so, what activities do they engage in?

Although there are no reports of *Criminal Investigation* Officers (CIO) working as undercover agents in the Zimbabwe universities, there are confirmed report of *Central Intelligence* Officers (CIO) who have worked as undercover agents and pretended to be students, attended lectures with a view of spying on government opponents, as is reported in the UK Home Office Country of Origin Report of Zimbabwe on 23 December 2009:

¹ Jusa, D. undated, 'Country Report – Zimbabwe' http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/PDF_rms/no70/p156-162.pdf - Accessed 9 September 2010.– Attachment 1

² 'VOA News: Student activists arrested while gathering in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe' 2007, US Fed News, 7 March – Attachment 2

³ Zimbabwe court grants bail to four student leaders', BBC Monitoring Africa, 9 August – Attachment 3

9.45 The USSD 2008 noted that:

“CIO personnel have assumed faculty and other positions and posed as students at the University of Zimbabwe and other public universities to intimidate and gather intelligence on faculty who criticize government policies and students who protest government actions. (Adviser’s emphasis) CIO officers regularly attended all lectures where noted MDC activists were lecturers or students. In response both faculty and students often practiced self-censorship in the classroom and academic work.”⁴

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) made corroborating findings on the issue of students and academics being adversely treated because of their political views, and provides the following case as an example:

Makahamadze had joined the opposition Movement for Democratic Change in 1999 as a final-year student at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare. He saw it as a vibrant party, with many young people involved and one that respected the aspirations of academics and professionals.

“But, in Zimbabwe, aligning yourself with the opposition is as good as applying for a death sentence,” he says.

....

“In Zimbabwe, if you are in any education and you don’t dance to the tune of the ruling party, it means you are an enemy of the state and you can be abducted,” he says.⁵

3. Is it possible to know what level of interest or attention an expression of dislike of the ZANU-PF regime in private discussions at an institution such as the Midlands State University in 2006 would attract?

There are no reports which discuss the consequences of having private discussions such as is described in the abovementioned question. Information on the situation for ordinary Zimbabweans who are not politically active is contained in the following advice from the UK Home Office Operational Guidance Note of March 2009:

3.6.18 Ordinary Zimbabweans who are not politically active or in sensitive occupations will not generally be at continuing risk of politically motivated mistreatment. There have, however, been ongoing reports of incidents in which MDC supporters have been attacked for e.g. wearing MDC ‘regalia’ or expressing anti-ZANU-PF views, so each case will need to be considered on its merits. The evidence indicates that these are generally local incidents at the hands of ZANU activists/supporters, but there is not yet evidence that an applicant would be able to rely on the Zimbabwean justice system for sufficient protection. In many cases internal relocation elsewhere in Zimbabwe is likely to be an effective way of avoiding such a threat, but if there is a real risk which could not be avoided by internal relocation, or if in the circumstances of the case internal relocation would be unduly harsh, a grant of asylum will be appropriate. As with any asylum or human rights claim, the burden of proof is on the applicant to show why they would be at risk and why they could not avoid that risk by internal relocation.⁶

⁴ UK Home Office 2009, *Country of origin information report; Zimbabwe*, 23 December - Attachment 4

⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 2010, *Education Under Attack*, UNESCO website, pp83and 85 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001868/186809e.pdf> – Accessed 9 June 2010 – Attachment 5

⁶ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, March (3.6.18 MDC supporters, human rights defenders and other perceived opponents of ZANU-PF) March – Attachment 6

To contextualise the prevailing conditions at the Midlands State University, an article from All Africa of 4 December 2007 may be useful. It makes reference to comments made by the former Vice-Chancellor Professor Gordon Chavhunduka, University of Zimbabwe:

Chavhunduka believes the standard of education is now worse than it was 30 years ago. Students are destitute following the institution's refusal in July to re-open their halls of residence, effectively banning students from staying on campus. Student leaders believe this was part of the administration's plan to "fix them" for their demonstrations over deteriorating standards. The situation at all State universities -- Bindura, Chinhoyi, National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and Midlands State University - is no better.⁷

There have also been reports of arrest and detention of students for demonstrating against fee increases.⁸

4. What would be the possible consequences of the expression of such views?

If a person is a political activist, he may be treated adversely as is outlined in the following advice from the UK Home Office Operational Guidance Note of March 2009:

Political activists, human rights defenders, members of civil society, and those in sensitive professions, such as journalists (see separate section below for teachers), **may be at risk of persecution or serious harm. Each case must be considered on its individual merits but it is likely that those whose activities have or would be likely to bring them to the adverse attention of elements within the Zimbabwean state which remain loyal to ZANU-PF, or of non-state ZANU-PF supporters, will be at continuing risk.**⁹ (Adviser's emphasis)

5. Please describe exit and departure processes for international travellers from Zimbabwe.

To obtain a Zimbabwean passport one must undergo criminal checks. The processing and issuance of this passport is centralised and is done in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe¹⁰. Computerised technology was first introduced in 2005 – this included an advanced Personal Identification and Registration System (PIRS) to capture information from the passports of incoming and outgoing passengers and computerised scanners; in this way the Zimbabwean Department of Immigration's is able to maintain a database on exits and entries into Zimbabwe.¹¹

⁷ Sifile, V 2007, 'Education – 30 years backwards and still declining [analysis] – Attachment 7

⁸ Zimbabwe student leaders detained in fees protest' 2009, *Reporting Development Network Africa*, 8 August - <http://reportingdna.org/blogs/?p=15> - Accessed 15 September 2010 – Attachment 8

⁹ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, March (3.6.17 MDC supporters, human rights defenders and other perceived opponents of ZANU-PF) March – Attachment 6

¹⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT Report No. 08/97 – Zimbabwe: Process for obtaining a Zimbabwean passport*, 1 October - Attachment 9

¹¹ 'Immigration Department to Unveil Computerised Technology At Airport' 2005, *The Herald*, 18 October, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> - Accessed 26 March 2007 - Attachment 10

Relevant information on departing Zimbabwe is contained in Question 4 of a previous Research Response ZWE31566 of 28 March 2007¹²:

What are the procedures for departing Zimbabwe?

No exit visa is currently required to depart Zimbabwe (Nkala, Oscar 2007, 'Chinamasa slammed over "exit visa" threat', *New Zimbabwe*, 13 February <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/senate23.13157.html> – Accessed 26 March 2007).

An article dated 18 October 2005 in *The Herald* reports that the Zimbabwean Department of Immigration with the assistance of the International Organisation for Migration has introduced a Personal Identification and Registration System (PIRS) at Harare International Airport. PIRS captures information from the passports of incoming and outgoing passengers enabling the Department of Immigration "to maintain a database on exits and entries into Zimbabwe." A blog dated 22 May 2006 by journalist Peta Thornycroft reports that "if the scanners are working details of passports of every person passing through immigration are fed into a central system as part of Zimbabwe's paranoia to detect undesirables". An interview dated 16 January 2007 quotes journalist Peta Thornycroft as saying Zimbabweans are "not terribly efficient at airports, despite their electronic scanning" ('Immigration Department to Unveil Computerised Technology At Airport' 2005, *The Herald*, 18 October, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 26 March 2007; Thornycroft, Peta 2006, 'Zimbabwe's morgue-like airports', *Telegraph Blogs*, 22 May <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/foreign/petathornycroft/may06/airport.htm> – Accessed 26 March 2007; and Gonda, Violet 2007, 'Interview Part 4: Prof Moyo and Thornycroft', *New Zimbabwe*, source: *Hot Seat*, 16 January <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/interview21.15840.html> – Accessed 26 March 2007).

6. Would a person who privately expressed opposition to the government have been able to depart Zimbabwe easily in 2007?

Since 2002 the Zimbabwean government had been considering measures to restrict the travel of its opponents.¹³ However, no specific information was found on the actual process at the airport. Please refer to Question 5 for information on departures.

Attachments

1. Jusa, D. undated, 'Country Report – Zimbabwe' http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/PDF_rms/no70/p156-162.pdf - Accessed 9 September 2010.
2. 'VOA News: Student activists arrested while gathering in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe', US Fed News, 7 March. (FACTIVA)
3. 'Zimbabwe court grants bail to four student leaders', BBC Monitoring Africa, 9 August. (FACTIVA)
4. UK Home Office 2009, Country of origin information report; Zimbabwe, 23 December.

¹² RRT Country Advice Service 2007, *Research Response ZWE31566*, 28 March – Attachment 11.

¹³ Zimbabwe to restrict movement of domestic opponents: report [corrected 08/01/02], 2002 *Agence France Presse*, 1 August – Attachment 12

5. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 2010, *Education Under Attack*, UNESCO website, pp83 and 85
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001868/186809e.pdf> – Accessed 9 June 2010.
6. UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, March.
7. Sifile, V 2007, 'Education – 30 years backwards and still declining [analysis]. (FACTIVA)
8. 'Zimbabwe student leaders detained in fees protest' 2009, *Reporting Development Network Africa*, 8 August - <http://reportingdna.org/blogs/?p=15> - Accessed 15 September 2010.
9. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008, *DFAT Report No. 08/97 – Zimbabwe: Process for obtaining a Zimbabwean passport*, 1 October. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX211318)
10. 'Immigration Department to Unveil Computerised Technology at Airport' 2005, *The Herald*, 18 October, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 26 March 2007.
11. RRT Country Advice Service 2007, *Research Response ZWE31566*, 28 March.
12. Zimbabwe to restrict movement of domestic opponents: report [corrected 08/01/02], 2002 *Agence France Presse*, 1 August. (FACTIVA)