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Zimbabwe: Details about the Zimbabwe Central Intelligence Organisation (Organization) in recent years (2002-2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) of Zimbabwe is under the control of the Minister of State for National Security in the President's Office (25 Feb. 2004). The CIO can arrest suspects and is responsible for internal and external security (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004).

Information on the CIO's operations was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. In 2002, the *Financial Gazette* reported that:

[A] crack unit of the government's Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) was established to trail the EU and Commonwealth election observers. According to the paper's sources, CIO officers were instructed to report on their meetings with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change and civic organisations perceived to be working against Mr Mugabe's re-election bid (*The Guardian* 19 Feb. 2002).

Information on the CIO's mandate, structure and size was not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Amnesty International has published several reports in recent years (2002 to 2004) detailing allegations of abuse perpetrated by members of the CIO (Amnesty International 5 Apr. 2004; *ibid.* 2 May 2003; *ibid.* Dec. 2002; *ibid.* 25 June 2002).

In general, Amnesty International has expressed concern over the tendency of the Zimbabwe government to grant immunity to members of the CIO who have been accused and/or convicted of serious crimes (Dec. 2002; *ibid.* 25 June 2002). Several reports offered details about specific cases where CIO officers were never punished or investigated for alleged abuse (*ibid.* 5 Apr. 2004; *ibid.* 25 June 2002). This information is corroborated by *Country Reports 2003* (25 Feb. 2004).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has published a report on civil and political rights in Zimbabwe that details persistent abuses by ruling party militias and

state security forces, which may include the CIO (6 June 2003). The report mentions a specific incident where members of the CIO were involved in an interrogation of a member of the Manicaland Church Forum, "an inter-denominational organization committed to peace building" (HRW 6 June 2003). The Forum member who was arrested and interrogated was never charged with any crime (ibid.).

In its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*, the US Department of State reported that Zimbabwe's human rights remained poor and that "[m]embers of the security forces and youth militias committed numerous, serious human rights abuses" (25 Feb. 2004). The report described specific cases of abuse allegedly committed by CIO officers who were never punished for their actions (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004).

In 2002, articles were published in British newspapers addressing the British government's policy of deporting failed asylum seekers back to Zimbabwe (*The Observer* 13 Jan. 2002; ibid. 1 Sept. 2002). The articles indicated that critics of the policy were claiming that the CIO was in control at the Harare airport and that failed asylum seekers who were returned to Zimbabwe by the British government faced mistreatment and possible death at the hands of the CIO (ibid. 13 Jan. 2002.). One article offered a profile of an asylum seeker who claimed to have been tortured by the CIO in Zimbabwe before he arrived in Britain (ibid. 1 Sept. 2002). His supporters argued that his life would be in danger if he were returned to Zimbabwe (ibid.).

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sources: Black Information Link, International Press Institute, MBendi, New Zimbabwe.com, Transparency International, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Zimbabwe Information Centre.

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