



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice
Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE39557– MDC Family
Members – Harare
24 November 2011

1. Deleted.

2. Deleted.

3. **Please refer to Country Advice ZWE38123. Are there any updates to this response in relation to attacks against family members of MDC activists, in Harare, during 2011?**

RRT Country Advice ZWE38123 was finalised on 18 February 2011. This advice found that whilst there was some information to suggest that people could be targeted due to the political activities of their family members, the reports cited related to family members of relatively prominent MDC activists, members of parliament or MDC office bearers, rather than lower level supporters.¹

No further information was located which specifically reported that family members of MDC activists have been targeted for harm, in Harare, during 2011 (to date).

According to a report by the MDC publicity department in May 2011, 35 MDC supporters were arrested on assault and theft charges while attending the funeral of an MDC activist in Warren Park, Harare. The activist's father was among those arrested, however the report does not state whether the activist's father held MDC membership.²

More widely, families of MDC members have reportedly experienced economic hardship as a result of MDC activists having been arrested. In June 2011, 23 activists were arrested following the death of a police inspector in Glen View, Harare. Other activists in the area had reportedly gone into hiding to avoid being targeted by police. According to an MDC spokesperson, an increasing number of MDC families per day had been approaching the MDC headquarters, Harvest House, requesting economic assistance since the arrest of the 23 Glen View activists.³

¹ RRT Country Advice 2011, *Country Advice ZWE38123*, 18 February

² 'The MDC Today Issue 198' 2011, *SW Radio Africa*, source: MDC Information & Publicity Department, 20 May <http://www.swradioafrica.com/pages/mdctoday200511.htm> – Accessed 17 November 2011

³ 'MDC-T Activists' Family Under Attack' 2011, Nottingham Zimbabwean Community Network website, source: *Radio VOP*, 22 June <http://nzcw.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/mdc-t-activists%E2%80%99-family-under-attack/> – Accessed 16 November 2011

Another instance whereby family members of Harare MDC members may be directly affected involves forced evictions. A nongovernmental organisation called the Solidarity Peace Trust reported that in January 2011, over 200 ZANU-PF youths patrolled the high-density suburb of Mbare, forcibly evicting MDC-T supporters from their homes and then assaulting them. According to the Solidarity Peace Trust, at least 140 people, including women and children, were displaced from Harvest House and church centres.⁴

Regarding political violence in Harare more generally, in January 2011 *The Christian Science Monitor* claimed that violence had spread to cities, rather than being concentrated in rural areas as was the case in previous election years.⁵ Examples of political violence in Harare have been reported. For example, in September 2011, “crowds” of ZANU-PF supporters harassed and assaulted members of the public in Harare’s Africa Unity Square, coinciding with President Mugabe’s address to open a new session of Zimbabwe’s parliament. A *Voice of America* article contains an eyewitness statement that the violence continued throughout the duration of the president’s address: “They [the ZANU-PF supporters] were singing party songs and slogans and if you failed to answer the slogan then they will start beating you, even stones they were throwing, everything”.⁶

In March 2011, *The Standard* reported that ZANU-PF youths had blocked an area of Harare where the MDC had intended to hold a rally, and assaulted civilians as they approached the area. One victim was reportedly advised by police that he would not have been harmed if he had recited a ZANU-PF slogan to his attackers.⁷ Also in March 2011, a group of ZANU-PF youths reportedly disrupted a Harare funeral, chanted ZANU-PF slogans and demanded attendees produce ZANU-PF cards.⁸

However, the Solidarity Peace Trust noted in April 2011 that, nationwide, political violence had not reached 2008 levels; approximately 200 people sustained physical and psychological injuries as a result of politically-motivated violence in January-March 2011 compared with 3,320 such cases for a comparable period in 2008.⁹

⁴ Solidarity and Peace Trust 2011, *The Hard Road to Reform*, Solidarity Peace Trust website, 13 April p. 35-37 http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/TheHardRoadtoReform_13April.pdf – Accessed 16 November 2011

⁵ ‘Robert Mugabe clamps down further in Zimbabwe’ 2011, The Zimbabwe Situation website, source: *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 January http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jan29_2011.html – Accessed 16 November 2011

⁶ Thornycroft, P. 2011, ‘Violence Reported in Harare as Mugabe Calls for Peace’, *Voice of America* <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/southern/-Violence-in-Harare-as-Mugabe-Calls-for-Peace-129310488.html> – Accessed 19 October 2011

⁷ ‘Zimbabwe – Blow for Tsvangirai as court stops rally’ 2011, *All Africa Global Media*, source: *The Standard*, 20 March <http://allafrica.com/stories/201103210009.html> – Accessed 22 March 2011

⁸ Karimakwenda, T. 2011, ‘Zimbabwe – Police Detain MDC Gravedigger Assaulted by Zanu PF Youth’, *All Africa Global Media*, source: *The Zimbabwean*, 10 March <http://allafrica.com/stories/201103101178.html> – Accessed 20 October 2011

⁹ Solidarity and Peace Trust 2011, *The Hard Road to Reform*, Solidarity Peace Trust website, 13 April p. 32-35 http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/TheHardRoadtoReform_13April.pdf – Accessed 16 November 2011

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