



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE39076 – ZANU-PF –
Violence and intimidation – Forced
recruitment – Chivhu, East Mashonaland
27 July 2011

1. Please provide information on ZANU-PF related violence, intimidation, and forcible recruitment etc. in and around Chivhu in the period between 2007 - present.

There have been a number of instances of violence and intimidation related to Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in and around Chivhu since 2007, particularly in the lead-up to and during election campaigns. In June 2011, a Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) ward chairman in Chivhu was reportedly abducted by suspected ZANU-PF activists, and at the time of writing, his whereabouts remained unknown. Timothy Mugari was abducted following a ZANU-PF rally attended by the ZANU-PF political commissar, who reportedly questioned why the area “was harbouring ‘sell-outs’ after seeing a red flag flying at Mugari’s homestead”. The following day, ZANU-PF activists reportedly asked Mugari why he was flying an MDC-T flag, before forcing him into their vehicle. While the colour red is synonymous with the MDC-T, neighbours reportedly claimed that the flag was not political, and rather represented an apostolic church.¹

In April 2011, *The Independent* reported that ZANU-PF youths had been engaging in acts of intimidation and coercion, and were forcing people to sign an anti-sanctions petition under the pretence that signing said petition was compulsory. School headmasters in Chivhu were reportedly ordered to provide centres for signing, and some shop owners were told that they would lose their licences if they did not sign the petition. There were also reports that a number of MDC officials had been arrested for refusing to sign, although this claim was rejected by police.²

According to a press release from the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), a number of labour leaders were assaulted and harassed by ZANU-PF militia, supporters and state security agents in the lead up to the 27 June 2008 presidential run-off election. Among those was ZCTU district chairperson for Chivhu, Tinashe Murau, who was allegedly seriously assaulted by ZANU-PF militia before the run-off election, resulting in a broken hand. He was reportedly beaten by militia after being questioned as to why he was wearing ZCTU t-shirts, and as to why he attended ZCTU meetings.³

In June 2008, the *Zimbabwe Independent* reported that a Chivhu-based newspaper distributor claimed that he had been stopped in the street in Chivhu by a “group of youths wearing Zanu

¹ ‘Shamu purge utterances spark abductions’ 2011, *Newsday*, 10 June <http://www.newsday.co.zw/article/2011-06-10-shamu-purge-utterances-spark-abductions> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 1

² ‘Zanu PF campaign a sign of things to come’ 2011, *The Independent*, 1 April <http://www.theindependent.co.zw/local/30482-zanu-pf-campaign-a-sign-of-things-to-come.html> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 2

³ ‘Two reports of state-sponsored violence’ 2008, Sokwanele website, 30 June <http://www.sokwanele.com/thisiszimbabwe/archives/1141> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 3

PF bandanas who took his ID card and told him to stop distributing the Sunday Times in the town”. The distributor claims the youths told him that the *Sunday Times* and other private newspapers had been banned in Chivhu and Masvingo, and threatened to kill the operators if they continued distributing the papers in the area. The manager further claimed that many of the company’s vendors in Harare had been assaulted, intimidated and forced to wear ZANU-PF regalia when selling newspapers.⁴

Also in June 2008, the family of a recently elected MDC Member of Parliament was attacked by a group of ZANU-PF supporters in Chivhu, before reportedly being “force-marched from the family homestead to a torture camp at a place called Chipisa”. Upon arrival at the camp, they were ordered to denounce the MDC and its leaders; they were then told that the family had to be “taught a lesson in patriotism”.⁵

According to an April 2008 report from *VOA News*, the Zimbabwean opposition claimed that an “official crackdown on its members by police, soldiers and youth militia of the ruling ZANU-PF party ha[d] intensified”. Seven opposition sources were abducted in Mashonaland East, while sources in Chikomba said that youth militia had reportedly “set up a torture camp at Daybrook Farm near Chivhu, and that soldiers ha[d] taken over food distribution in the area”.⁶

In September 2007, MDC candidate Maxwell Mazambani was assaulted by soldiers and ZANU-PF supporters after he was abducted from his home and taken to an air force base between Gutu and Chivhu. One of the three other abductees – Fibion Mafukidze – later died as a result of the assaults.⁷

While no information was located specifically relating to forced recruitment in Chivhu, sources indicate that there are expectations within Zimbabwe that ZANU-PF youths would be deployed again in the run-up to another election, and that forcible recruiting to ZANU-PF will continue.

In May 2011, *The Zimbabwean* reported that “[d]ozens of rampaging ZANU PF youth militia invaded the Harare suburb of Mbare over the weekend, beating up and displacing MDC-T supporters from their homes”. There are also claims that people in the area are being forced to attend ZANU-PF meetings on a daily basis. Leaked confidential documents reportedly show that the Mugabe regime has been recruiting impoverished youths from rural areas since November 2010, and has been providing them with military training. It is believed that the regime planned to train up to 70,000 youths by the end of May, who would then be deployed to “terrorize perceived opposition supporters”. Recruitment is reportedly being conducted in

⁴ ‘Zanu PF Supporters Disrupt Distribution of Newspapers’ 2008, *All Africa Global Media*, Source: *Zimbabwe Independent*, 27 June <http://allafrica.com/stories/200806270900.html> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 4

⁵ ‘Another MDC MP’s family attacked in Chivhu’ 2008, *The Zimbabwean*, 5 June <http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/news/13176/another-mdc-mps-family-attacked-in-chivhu.html> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 5

⁶ Kandemiiri, J. & Gombakomba, C. 2008, ‘Zimbabwe Opposition And Physicians Say Post-Election Violence Surging’, *VOA News*, 18 April <http://www.voanews.com/english/africa/zimbabwe/2008-04-18-voa49.cfm?rss=war%20and%20conflict> – Accessed 1 May 2008 – Attachment 6

⁷ ‘Soldiers, Zanu PF supporters brutally assault MDC man’ 2007, derkeiler.com website, Source: MDC Information Department, 13 October <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.zimbabwe/2007-10/msg00107.html> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 7

Mashonaland West, East and Central provinces, “traditionally viewed as ZANU PF strongholds and home to some of the worst political violence over the years”.⁸

The great concern for the international community is that ZANU PF militants and others will employ violence and intimidation to regain a parliamentary majority. In October 2010 *IRIN News* reported that Jabulani Sibanda, President of the so-called ‘War Veterans’, had established a camp in Masvingo, a province where “voters switched their support from ZANU-PF to the MDC in 2008”. The MDC fears that the camp, and others like it, will be used to stage campaigns of violence and intimidation in the time remaining between now and the elections. Sibanda describes his operation, reportedly codenamed “Budiranai Pachena” (Declare your Position), as simply a campaign to ‘remind people about the history of Zimbabwe’s liberation wars’.⁹

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CZC), a coalition of more than 350 civil society organisations in Zimbabwe, reports that political violence has been on the increase since at least October 2010, particularly in districts which swung towards the MDC in 2008. The CZC also reports that ZANU PF has established at least five camps to train youths in preparation for the re-launch of ‘Operation Surrender’, described as a campaign “originally launched during the run-up to the June 2008 election, as a strategy to arm-twist MDC supporters into supporting ZANU-PF [and involved the] training of youths at designated bases and unleashing of violence on villagers.”¹⁰

In July 2009, *The Standard* reported that a ZANU-PF deputy secretary had admitted that the party had deployed youth militias in its election campaign the previous year. The article referred to reports of more recent deployments in rural areas to campaign for ZANU-PF’s position on the new constitution, observing that these youths were “reportedly threatening to unleash another reign of terror if the country holds another election”.¹¹

In addition to forcible ZANU-PF recruitment, there has also been forcible recruitment into Zimbabwe’s National Youth Service (NYS), which reportedly involves military training and pro-government teachings. The trainee youths are used to harass and intimidate political opponents of the ZANU-PF party and supporters of the MDC. As such, the youths are more commonly known as the ‘youth militia’ or ‘Green Bombers’ (based on the colour of their uniforms).¹² While some youths join the NYS voluntarily, in part due to increased employment prospects following completion of the training program, reports of kidnappings, abductions and forcible recruitment were widespread in the early years of the NYS training programme.¹³ The Zimbabwe Child Soldier Victim Foundation claims that youths who do not

⁸ ‘ZANU PF turn Mbare into a war zone’ 2011, *The Zimbabwean*, 31 May

<http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/news/40077/zanu-pf-turn-mbare-into-a-war-zone.html> – Accessed 25 July 2011 – Attachment 8

⁹ ‘Zimbabwe: Election call raises fears of more violence’ 2010, UNHCR Refworld, source: *IRIN News*, 22 October <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4cc672ff1e.html> – Accessed 27 January 2011 – Attachment 9

¹⁰ ‘Zimbabwe: Election call raises fears of more violence’ 2010, UNHCR Refworld, source: *IRIN News*, 22 October <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4cc672ff1e.html> – Accessed 27 January 2011 – Attachment 9

¹¹ ‘Kasukuwere Admits Militia Campaign’ 2009, *All Africa Global Media*, Source: *The Standard*, 4 July <http://allafrica.com/stories/200907060929.html> – Accessed 14 July 2010 – Attachment 10

¹² Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *ZWE101401.E – Zimbabwe: The National Youth Service (NYS) training program; the type of training involved; age of participants; whether the training program is mandatory; whether there are exemptions; and the penalty for refusing to serve or for desertion (2001 – 2006)*, 22 June – Attachment 11

¹³ Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, ‘National youth service training – ‘shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner’’, 5 September, pp. 53-54 http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf – Accessed 21 December 2010 – Attachment 12

join the NYS voluntarily are often “abducted under force, from the streets, their homes, schools and even churches.”¹⁴ It is noteworthy that the activities of the NYS training camps were seriously affected by financial difficulties from at least 2007 onwards, with most being closed down due to lack of funds and food.^{15 16} There is evidence to suggest, however, that the NYSTP has not been abolished.^{17 18 19}

An article from *The Telegraph* in November 2009 reported that Zimbabweans fear any further election contested by Robert Mugabe “will be preceded by another campaign of killing, kidnapping and torture at the hands of the Green Bombers”.²⁰ Reporting from July 2010 indicates that forcible recruiting to the ZANU-PF continues, including through the withholding of food aid from those who refuse to become party members.²¹

Reporting on forced militia recruitment in the Mudzi district of Mashonaland East province in October 2009, *SW Radio Africa* provided the following detailed information on the use of threats to recruit “reluctant youths” to the Green Bombers:

A squad of ZANU PF militants, who were behind last year’s election violence, is moving around the Mudzi district forcibly recruiting innocent youths to join the notorious ‘green bomber’ militia. Our correspondent Lionel Saungweme reports that between the 12th and 14th of October dozens of villagers below the age of 35 were rounded up in the Chinake, Chatima, Murenji and Denga areas of Mudzi. They were taken to Nyamapanda near the border with Mozambique and told they would undergo ‘unspecified’ training.

Although a unity agreement signed between ZANU PF and the two MDC parties agreed on the need for a national youth training programme, a key condition was that it had to be apolitical and accommodate all youths, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender and religion. But Saungweme reports that ‘Youth Officers’ employed by the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment are using ZANU PF trucks to go around picking up the reluctant youths. In all cases threats are being used to recruit.²²

¹⁴ ‘History of the camps’ (undated), Zimbabwe Child Soldier Victim Foundation website <http://www.zimbabwechildsoldiers.com/existing-camps/history-of-the-camps/> – Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 13

¹⁵ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *ZWE101401.E – Zimbabwe: The National Youth Service (NYS) training program; the type of training involved; age of participants; whether the training program is mandatory; whether there are exemptions; and the penalty for refusing to serve or for desertion (2001 – 2006)*, 22 June – Attachment 11

¹⁶ ‘ZIMBABWE: “Green Bombers” deserting poor conditions in camps’ 2004, *IRIN News*, 23 January <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=48241> – Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 14

¹⁷ Youth Initiative for Democracy in Zimbabwe 2010, ‘Youth’s position on the proposed reintroduction of National Youth Training Programme (Youth Service)’, Kubatana website, 15 April <http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/chiyou/100415yidz.asp?sector=CHIYOU> – Accessed 1 July 2010 – Attachment 15

¹⁸ Chimhete, C. 2009, ‘Violence intensifies after MDC-T pull out’, *The Zimbabwe Standard*, 31 October – Attachment 16

¹⁹ Gonda, V. 2009, ‘Government Dedicates Three Days to National Healing’, *All Africa Global Media*, source: *SW Radio Africa*, 22 July – Attachment 17

²⁰ Boynton, G. 2009, ‘Robert Mugabe: will Zimbabwe be let back into Commonwealth?’, *The Telegraph*, 28 November <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/zimbabwe/6671136/Robert-Mugabe-will-Zimbabwe-be-let-back-into-Commonwealth.html> – Accessed 14 July 2010 – Attachment 18

²¹ Madongo, I. 2010, ‘Food Violence Blamed for Child Malnourishment’, *All Africa Global Media*, Source: *SW Radio Africa*, 12 July - <http://allafrica.com/stories/201007121304.html> - Accessed 14 July 2010 – Attachment 19

²² Guma, L. 2009, ‘ZANU PF begins forced militia recruitment in Mudzi’, *SW Radio Africa*, 19 October – Attachment 20

2. Does the President’s wife originate from the Chivhu area, and would this be part of the reason ZANU-PF has been campaigning so heavily in the area, as it would be a major embarrassment for the President to not win the support of this area? Please comment on this also.

Information was located supporting the claim that President Robert Mugabe’s wife, Grace Mugabe, originates from Chivhu. In 2009, *New Zimbabwe* reported that Mrs Mugabe was born in South Africa in 1965, and relocated to Zimbabwe in 1970, attending primary school in Chivhu. She then reportedly undertook her secondary education near Rusape, in Manicaland.²³ A 2010 report from the *Zimbabwe Mail* alleging that Grace Mugabe had been involved in a secret affair with Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono stated that both individuals “come from the same area in Chivhu District in Mashonaland East province”.²⁴ Additional reporting from 1998 indicated that Mrs Mugabe had “splashed \$3 million on another palatial residence – this time in her home town of Chivhu, about 141 km south of Harare”.²⁵

It is likely, if not expected, that the ZANU-PF will campaign heavily in Chivhu. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) advice from May 2011 provided comment on the likelihood that ZANU-PF would campaign heavily in areas that would be likely to cause political embarrassment should the MDC be successful, including the province of Mashonaland East in which Chivhu is situated. To wit:

...there are some parts of Manicaland where MDC-T won seats in the last election. ZANU-PF is desperate to regain these seats and higher levels of intimidation are likely, particularly as an election approaches. Additionally, in the ZANU-PF stronghold provinces of Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West and Mashonaland Central, there would be little tolerance for those who openly espoused pro-MDC views.²⁶

²³ ‘Mugabe’s wife flunks degree course’ 2009, *New Zimbabwe*, 13 November

<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/shopper8.12773.html> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 21

²⁴ ‘Bitter family feud and Zanu PF infighting blamed for Grace-Gonogate’ 2010, *The Zimbabwe Mail*, 28 October

<http://www.thezimbabwemail.com/zimbabwe/6467.html> – Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 22

²⁵ ‘Grace builds \$3m villa in Chivhu’ 1998, *All Africa Global Media*, Source: *The Independent*, 10 July

<http://allafrica.com/stories/199807100124.html> - Accessed 22 July 2011 – Attachment 23

²⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *DFAT Report No. 1272 – Zimbabwe: RRT Information Request: ZWE38606*, 12 May – Attachment 24

Attachments

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24. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *DFAT Report No. 1272 – Zimbabwe: RRT Information Request: ZWE38606*, 12 May.