1. Please provide information on the War Veterans Association (WVA) dating back to 2000, activities membership etc. What is the current status of WVA? Are they active?

Since 2000 the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (WVA), which is allied to President Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), has been involved in negotiating war veterans’ benefits with the government, land seizures, human rights abuses as well as taking part in business opportunities. It is also involved in training the youth militia. Not all of those people calling themselves “war veterans” necessarily participated in Zimbabwe’s liberation war in the 1970s; some are too young to have taken part. War veterans also lead Zimbabwe’s security agencies. The WVA is a legal organisation and is still active.

Human Rights Watch states that the WVA was formed in April 1989 to obtain increased government assistance.¹ The WVA is generally known as “war veterans”.² The WVA brought together ex-combatants of two liberation armies³, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army⁴ (ZANLA), affiliated with ZANU-PF, and the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army⁵ (ZIPRA), affiliated with the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) then led by Joshua Nkomo⁶. In September 1997 President Robert Mugabe announced a benefits package for veterans of a once-off payment and a monthly pension for life. The announcement gave some war veterans an interest in the continuing rule of the ZANU-PF.⁷ The WVA is allied to the ZANU-PF.⁸ According to a UK Home Office report, a September 2009 Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Country Profile – Zimbabwe stated that the WVA emerged in the 1990s as a major pro-government pressure group. The group led the occupation of white-owned farms in 2000 and some war veterans formed pro-ZANU-PF militias attacking those opposed

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² Amnesty International 2008, *Zimbabwe: A trail of violence after the ballot*, June, AI Index: AFR 46/014/2008, p.1 – Attachment 1. Please note that in this Country Advice the terms “WVA” and “war veterans” are used interchangeably depending on the context of the information.
to the party. There are reports, however, that a breakaway WVA faction (Zimbabwe Liberators’ Platform/Zimbabwe National Association of Liberation War Veterans Cadres) declared its opposition to President Mugabe and ZANU-PF’s inner circle.

Since 2000 the US State Department has reported that war veterans have been involved in occupying commercial farms, forcing opposition members and supporters from their homes as well as killing, beating, abusing and threatening farm owners and other persons believed to oppose the ZANU-PF. A wide range of sources cited by the UK Home Office report indicate that the war veterans are involved in widespread human rights abuses, including harassment, threats, violence and torture. The Jane’s Profile in the UK Home Office report noted that the war veterans have been able to act with impunity with the police not restraining their activities.

The war veterans are also associated with trainees of the National Youth Service (NYS) programme, commonly referred to as the “youth militia”. The NYS programme was established by the Mugabe government in 2001. The target age group for NYS recruits is 16 to 30 years of age. The programme reportedly was created to develop national pride and provide vocational skills for the Zimbabwe’s youth. Sources, however, report that military training, including weapons training and lessons in the teachings of the ruling ZANU-PF, was also involved.

The Solidarity Peace Trust, in a 2003 report on the NYS, stated that the youth militia often worked under the direction of the war veterans. The Solidarity Peace Trust, quoted

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14 The Solidarity Peace Trust is a non-governmental organisation registered in South Africa concerned with human rights, freedom and democracy in southern Africa.
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 17.
16 The Solidarity Peace Trust is a non-governmental organisation registered in South Africa concerned with human rights, freedom and democracy in southern Africa.
unsupervised in a 2001 *The Zimbabwe Independent* news article stating that “war veterans’ focus would be “to drum into the youth ZANU-PF’s political agenda ... and would seek to indoctrinate trainees with a history of the liberation war – as seen from ZANU-PF’s side – and the need to revere the current crop of national leaders”.

Information accessed on the Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias website state that all veterans of the war in the 1970s became WVA members by default. Not all people who call themselves “war veterans”, however, took part in Zimbabwe’s liberation war during the 1970s. Some so-called “war veterans” work with ZANU-PF leaders and a faction within the WVA to engage in a violent campaign against opposition groups; some of these “war veterans” are too young to have taken part in the war in the 1970s. The so-called “war veterans” are, however, for the most part led by genuine war veterans. *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment Country Profile – Zimbabwe*, cited by the UK Home Office, also noted that the police, Zimbabwe Defence Force (ZDF) and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) are all run by war veterans; genuine veterans of the war are also “technically stipend reserve” ZDF members.

Given that the WVA negotiates with the government on members’ benefits, its members hold leading positions in the security forces and there are no reports of people being arrested for being members of the WVA, the WVA is a legitimate organisation condoned by the government. The US State Department has also described the war veterans as an “extralegal militia”.

The WVA is still an active organisation. It negotiates with the government on members’ benefits. There are also reports that the war veterans have continued with land seizures, are involved in land seizures, and are involved in land grabbing. The information was accessed on the Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias website.


violently supporting ZANU-PF’s position on constitutional changes\textsuperscript{29} and are part of a consortium seeking to buy a stake in the telecommunications operator Telecel Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{30}

2. Please provide information on the availability of state protection in Zimbabwe.

Having regard to the current political situation in Zimbabwe as well as police inefficiency and corruption and the restrictions placed on the judiciary, limited state protection may be available to those who oppose President Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF. The UK Home Office has also reported that persons who fear ill-treatment from war veterans cannot apply to the state for protection as it is a group associated and acting with the acquiescence, or encouragement, of ZANU-PF controlled agents of the state.

A unity government was created under the Global Political Agreement (GPA) which was approved in September 2008 and took effect on 11 February 2009\textsuperscript{31}. On 19 February 2009 the unity government was sworn in comprising the ZANU-PF led by Robert Mugabe, the Movement for Democratic (MDC-T) led by Morgan Tsvangirai and the MDC rival faction (MDC-M) led by Arthur Mutambara.\textsuperscript{32} The ZANU-PF retained control of the army, intelligence services and the Attorney General’s Office. The ZANU-PF and MDC-T jointly control the police.\textsuperscript{33} An International Crisis Group (ICG) report, dated 3 March 2010, states that the unity government has started off well with schools and hospitals re-opening and civil servants paid and returning to work. The report continued, however, that major concerns remain: hardline generals, as well as Mugabe’s ZANU-PF loyalists refusing to implement the government’s decisions.\textsuperscript{34}

Brian Raftopoulos, a former associate professor of the Institute for Development at the University of Zimbabwe and now Director of Research and Policy at the Solidarity Peace Trust in South Africa\textsuperscript{35}, comments on state protection in an April 2010 	extit{CapeTimes} interview:

> It is clear that the capacity of the Zimbabwean state to protect its citizens has been severely compromised, though Zimbabwe is not a failed state as is generally


understood, and it certainly has the capacity to maintain central state power in the near future....

Although the ICG stated that human rights activists reported “a significant drop in abuses”\(^{37}\) Amnesty International has reported that “Torture, harassment and politically motivated prosecutions of human rights defenders and perceived opponents have persisted”\(^{38}\). In February 2010 Human Rights Watch also reported that groups such as the war veterans and the ZANU-PF youth, used in the past to target the opposition, remain. It stated that the ZANU-PF continues to use parts of the security forces as “instruments of repression”.\(^{39}\)

The most recent US State Department report stated that the police were underpaid, corrupt and poorly trained and equipped. The police refused to investigate cases of political violence and seldom responded to vigilant violence.\(^{40}\) For example, June 2010 news articles reported that in recent farm “invasions” the police, in many instances, did not seek to “contain the invasions and associated violence”.\(^{41}\) The US State Department stated that the “government seldom investigated reported abductions”.\(^{42}\) It stated that the army and police organised, participated in or provided support to perpetrators of political violence.\(^{43}\) Amnesty International noted that the police, especially within the Law and Order section, needed to be reformed to end a culture of impunity.\(^{44}\)

On the judiciary, the US State Department reported that the constitution provided for an independent judiciary but it was under pressure to conform to government policies. The government repeatedly refused to obey court decisions. Defendants in politically sensitive cases were reportedly more likely to receive a fair hearing in the magistrates’ lower courts than in the higher courts.\(^{45}\) Although the judiciary was impartial and independent, in practice it “showed indications of being politically influenced or intimidated in cases involving high-ranking government officials, politically connected persons, or violations of human right”.\(^{46}\)

\(^{36}\) Weaver, Tony 2010, ‘Why Mugabe has proved so hard to dislodge’, Cape Times, 19 April – Attachment 29.


A 2010 Freedom House also reported that judicial independence has been substantially eroded in recent years, although it “somewhat” improved in 2009.\(^{47}\)

Freedom House also reported on the impunity of ZANU-PF militias as follows:

…ZANU-PF militias operate as de facto enforcers of government policies and have committed assault, torture, rape, extralegal evictions, and extralegal executions without fear of punishment; the incidence of these abuses increased significantly in 2008 and continued, though at a decreased rate, in 2009…\(^{48}\)

The UK Home Office, in a report dated March 2009 (after the swearing in of the unity government in February 2009), noted that war veterans, amongst others, ill-treated persons perceived as opponents of ZANU-PF.\(^{49}\) In such cases the UK Home Office stated on state protection:

3.6.8 Sufficiency of protection. As this category of applicants’ fear is of ill-treatment or persecution by the state authorities or groups that are associated with and act with the acquiescence or encouragement of ZANU-PF controlled agents of the state, they cannot apply to the state for protection.\(^{50}\)

Attachments


\(^{49}\) UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, March, pp.5-7/paras.3.6-3.6.7 – Attachment 34.

\(^{50}\) UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, March, p.7/para. 3.6.8 – Attachment 34.


17. 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. (REFINFO)


29. Weaver, Tony 2010, ‘Why Mugabe has proved so hard to dislodge’, Cape Times, 19 April. (FACTIVA)


