

Zimbabwe Update August 2011

In the August edition of the Zimbabwe Update, we cover the recent SADC summit in Angola, EU calls for an inquiry into Marange abuses; and the death of Solomon Mujuru. You will also read about the recent ZCTU Congress, intimidation of journalists, the restoration of import duties and Human Rights Watch honouring a Zimbabwean Human Rights activist.

You can find more details about ACTSA's campaign work on Zimbabwe on the [ACTSA website](#)

SADC summit affirms position on Zimbabwe but no decisive action

The SADC summit in Angola affirmed the position adopted at SADC meetings in Zambia in March and a summit meeting in June in South Africa, calling (again) for implementation of the Global Political Agreement the parties signed in September 2008 and a road map to address outstanding issues, understood as a reference to a process and timetable for elections. South Africa remains facilitator for the Global Political Agreement (GPA), although Zanu PF have lobbied they should not be, as South Africa took on the key role as chair of the SADC organ on Politics, Defence and Security. Civil society views on the outcome of the meeting were mixed, Dewa Mavhinga, regional coordinator of Zimbabwe in Crisis Coalition commented "We left Angola reasonably satisfied that, contrary to our fears and concerns, regional leaders who met...in Angola on August 18, did not heed Zanu PF's desperate lobbying". Phillip Pasirayi also of the Zimbabwe Crisis Coalition said however, that "The SADC has to show it has the power to enforce its resolutions. So far there have been no decisive steps to ensure that".

Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos, seen as a friend and ally of President Mugabe, stated: "In terms of the [Global Political] Agreement, a new constitution must be passed then a referendum which will lead to the holding of elections. That is SADC's position".

Ahead of the summit several regional civil society activists were detained and deported upon arrival in Luanda. Members of Zimbabwean civil society groups who were admitted to the country had the publications they were carrying confiscated at the airport. The civil society members were hoping to attend the 7th Southern Africa Civil Society Forum, which is held annually in the SADC country that will be hosting the SADC Heads of State Summit.

EU calls on Zimbabwe government to probe diamond torture claims

In light of the BBC *Panorama* programme claiming there was torture and human rights abuses in the disputed diamond fields of Marange region, the European Union has called on the Zimbabwe government to investigate the allegations. Civil society groups have claimed that the resumption of mining in the region will call into question the nature of ethical diamonds on the market, with both consumers and retailers uncertain if what is being sold are in fact ethical diamonds. Annie Dunnebacke of Global Witness told *The Guardian*: "At this point, the consumer has no idea what they're getting at jewellery stores...And retailers have no way of telling consumers if a diamond has been produced without human rights abuses". The World Diamond Council (WDC), which represents the diamond traders interests in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) decision urged its members to stay away from Marange diamonds for the time being: "The WDC urges all members of the trade to deal only in rough diamonds that are accompanied by KP certificates that comply with the consensus decisions of the Kimberley Process".

Abducted MDC official found dead in Zhombe

Maxwell Ncube, MDC director of elections in the Midlands province, was found dead on 8 August in Zhombe. Ncube had been abducted at gunpoint on 5 August as he returned from shops.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Air Zimbabwe purchases new planes

Air Zimbabwe has purchased two new Airbus passenger planes from France. The struggling airline has faced mounting debt problems as well as an obsolete fleet. The two planes were purchased following apparent funding from one of the Marange diamond firms. Concerns have been raised as it appears the deal has bypassed official government channels and been done outside the control of the Treasury, which is headed by Finance Minister Tendai Biti of the MDC. Some have also raised whether it breaches EU measures on Zimbabwe.

WOZA march on Parliament

300 members of Women and Men of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) marched on parliament on 24 August with a petition calling for an end to the monopoly on electricity by the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA). WOZA claim people are unhappy at proposed rate hikes and fixed charges despite power cuts. The marchers were blocked by police en route to parliament and had to find alternate routes to present their petition. In June, police destroyed much of the petition, at which point WOZA estimated they had over 1 million signatures.

Uncertainty over Mujuru death continues

Solomon Mujuru, a hero of the independence struggle and the first black general in post-independence Zimbabwe, died in a fire at his farm on 15 August. Although no longer part of Zanu PF's political structures, Mujuru was seen as a very powerful figure within the movement. His wife Joice is currently Zimbabwe's Vice-President and although they were estranged for a number of years, both aided each other in their political and economic pursuits. Solomon's political clout was credited with helping Joice become one of the leading candidates to replace Robert Mugabe as leader of Zanu PF and both had benefited from their extensive government contacts, becoming extremely rich in recent years. It is uncertain what effect Mujuru's death will have on his widow's attempts to succeed Mugabe, with some analysts suggesting it may well benefit her rival, Defence Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa. Rumours have abounded of foul play in Solomon Mujuru's death, and Mrs Mujuru has called for a police probe into his death.

ZCTU holds 7th Congress

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) held its 7th congress in Bulawayo between 19-20 August. Some ZCTU affiliates, notably the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), launched a legal challenge against the proceedings which failed and then did not attend; also not in attendance was incumbent President Lovemore Matombo who said "the whole process was rigged and thus unions that did not meet the criteria set by the constitution were offered more delegates than the well established unions". Press reports indicated eight affiliates boycotted the Congress. Matombo insists that he is still the legitimate President of the ZCTU despite the election of a new executive and that a new Congress will be held "at a date to be announced before December 31".

The congress elected George Nkiwane as the new President of the ZCTU. Japhet Moyo is now the ZCTU Secretary General, with former Secretary General Chibebe moving to become Deputy General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in Brussels. Moyo denied reports of widespread disunity within the union movement, saying "The bickering is now history and those who were my 'enemies' before the congress are now my friends". He went on to say that the idea of a "split was only coming from media reports".

Reporters Without Borders: intimidation of journalists on the rise

Reporters Without Borders has noted a sharp rise in acts of intimidation against journalists within Zimbabwe during the month of July and August. Between 12 July 12 and 12 August, the organisation learned of 11 violations of the freedom or safety of journalists, all of which have gone unpunished. The organisation say draconian security legislation is being used to harass and intimidate journalists who are willing to report on Cabinet activities, with 'officials...preparing to gag the media by using articles in the criminal code or the Official Secrets Act, which bans disclosure of anything that may be "prejudicial to the safety and the interests of Zimbabwe" '.

Dignity! Period

Access to sanitary products for women in Zimbabwe is worse than ever, for many women sanitary protection is a luxury they can no longer afford. Women have been forced to use newspaper, rags or leaves as a substitute for sanitary pads which can cause serious infections for which there is no available medication.

ACTSA's Dignity! Period campaign provides sanitary towels to women in Zimbabwe, just £3 a month provides sanitary towels for 3 women for a year.

[Visit the Dignity! Period pages of the ACTSA website to make a donation or learn more.](#)

Government restores import duties

Finance Minister Tendai Biti has restored import duties on a host of household goods, three years after these were suspended. A number of basic commodities such as cooking oil, maize meal and jam are subject to the new duties; those on rice, salt and flour will remain suspended until the end of the year. However, Biti held out the possibility of some of the duties being scrapped further down the line and urged local retailers to respect the efforts made by the Government to encourage local productivity.

Human Rights Watch honours Zimbabwe activist:

Zimbabwean Farai Maguwu will be one of seven recipients of HRWs annual Alison des Forges awards for Extraordinary Activism at a ceremony in New York later this year. Maguwu is the Director of the Centre for Research and Development which has documented human rights abuses in the disputed Marange region. Maguwu has suffered intimidation and incarceration at the hands of the state security forces, and was arrested and imprisoned in May 2010 for his documenting of abuses.

New book on Zimbabwe: Catastrophe: What Went Wrong in Zimbabwe?

Richard Bourne, Zed Books £14.99. 302 pages. Published August 2011; Very readable, provides historical and contemporary analysis of how and why Zimbabwe is in the mess it is.