

ZIMBABWE BRIEFING

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Voters queue up at a polling station in Harare on 29 March 2008

pic: www.zimbabwepictures.com

Election 2011: Is Zimbabwe Ready?

Recently, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition issued a press statement directed at the African National Congress (ANC). In the presser, the Coalition called upon the South African ruling party and its allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) to “insist that political parties in Zimbabwe, particularly ZANU-PF which controls the country’s security forces, must strictly adhere to principles of democracy and respect for the basic rights of all Zimbabweans.” Addressing the ANC was not out of place.

Indeed, the crisis in Zimbabwe has effectively become South Africa’s domestic problem. Zimbabweans still cross the Limpopo in search of a normal life with bare necessities, the proverbial greener pastures. A lot more are mak-

ing their stay in the country quasi-permanent, only going back as far as the Beitbridge border post to renew their visitor’s permits when they expire. Some have even stopped doing that altogether. That the South African government has introduced a new visa regime targeted at Zimbabweans alone shows a significant recognition of the problems and challenges the crises (social, economic and political) in Zimbabwe have presented on Pretoria’s doorstep.

Whilst this new regime has been widely welcomed, especially by the Zimbabweans who have been granted amnesty and are currently being issued with permits visas allowing them to work, study or run businesses in South Africa, greater premium needs to be placed on seeking a lasting solution to the Zimbabwe crisis so

that none of these Zimbabweans ever have to find themselves in this position again. As the Coalition put it in the press statement; “it is in South Africa and the southern Africa region’s interest to ensure that the situation in Zimbabwe is resolved before it leads to regional instability.” With all parties to the Global Political Agreement (GPA), signed two years ago expressing exasperation and seeking ways out of the current arrangement, negotiated outcome of the March 2008 poll, all indications are that Zimbabwe will go to the polls at least once in 2011 – for the referendum following the writing of a new constitution.

But then again, President Robert Mugabe has equivocally stated that he would call for an election with or without a new constitution.

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Coordinator's Note

Welcome to the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Office's inaugural weekly briefing report on developments in Zimbabwe and our regional activities! The purpose *Zimbabwe Briefing* is to provide, not just updates on Zimbabwe, but also political analysis, interpretation and commentary on the developments in Zimbabwe.

We seek to provide alternative information on Zimbabwe with the expectation of getting the region and the international community to influence positive change in Zimbabwe; change that leads to respect for basic rights of all Zimbabwe and to sustainable socio-economic development.

The current Inclusive Government dispensation has not, as many had hoped, ended the polarization, conflict and intolerance that has characterized Zimbabwean politics and society in recent times. President Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF continue to wield control over key state institutions, including our security forces, which remain highly politicized and partisan. For instance, the police made no arrests when violence, mainly by ZANU-PF supporters, rocked constitutional reform outreach meetings in



Dewa Mavhinga

Harare on 18 and 19 September, leaving at least one person, Chrispen Mandizvidza of Mbare, dead.

Violations of civil and political rights by the police throughout the country are seriously undermining prospects for free, fair, and credible elections, possibly in 2011. On several occasions in recent weeks the police have barred the MDC from holding public meetings and rallies. On 30 October, 2010, police arrested, on unclear charges, several senior MDC officials and two journalists at a constitutional outreach meeting in Harare.

A serious risk of electoral violence remains. SADC and the AU, guarantors of Zimbabwe's Global Political Agreement, must do more to prevent or prepare for likely security challenges. SADC and AU should deploy their own peace-makers to Zimbabwe to protect the people, prevent violence and ensure peace. Zimbabwe cannot go it alone. We need the assistance and support of the regional and international community to return to normalcy.

Best Wishes,
Dewa Mavhinga (Regional Coordinator)
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Can Zimbabwe go to the polls?

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Violence and politically motivated arrests marred consultations on the new constitution which ended this past week. process of making consultations on the Last time around, the Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac) which was charged with running the process, at one time suspended the exercise after incidents of violence occurred in Harare and Bulawayo.

This violence and intimidation witnessed during this consultation process are sure indicators of things to come in Zimbabwe. It is clear the machinery for violence are still running, well-oiled and serviced. It has been the Government of National Unity (GNU) most glaring failure – to effectively expose the operators of such machinery, their locations (militia camps) and unmask their identities. Now they have engaged fifth geared and put foot to pedal in a bid to bludgeon anyone who does not subscribe to their school of thought into 'line'.

It has also been the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) failure. There has been no sense of urgency in dealing with the Zimbabwe crisis from this body. Yet they have a key role to play, especially in ensuring that Zimbabwe holds a free and fair poll that will result in a democratic retention or transfer of power to the eventual winner. SADC still has an opportunity – a huge one. Hence, this body must insist on full compliance of its guidelines on elections.

Secondly, SADC needs to understand that the absence of gunshots does not mean the absence of conflict. Therefore, the body needs to make preparations to send 'peace-keeping monitors' – well ahead of time – to Zimbabwe so that they can monitor the situation and prevent the prevalence of violence and intimidation. Lastly, SADC should be appalled by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's (ZEC) position that it is ready to conduct

elections in Zimbabwe. There is no possible way that ZEC can deliver a credible poll under the current circumstances. Capacity constraints hampered by a lack of technical support mean that efficiency will suffer in the whole process. Just recently, the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) urged the "complete overhaul and restructuring of ZEC secretariat with a view to reform the institution into a professional body that is non-partisan." ZESN further called for ZEC to be "capacitated and resourced to improve its ability to manage elections efficiently and effectively." At the end of the day, what Zimbabweans really want is a credible process that can restore the confidence and trust which has been lost at every election in the recent past.

Can Zimbabwe truly and honestly give that to her people under the current conditions? No.

DIRECTOR'S MEMO

As we proceed to 2011 to look for solutions to the crisis in Zimbabwe, we do so with a new challenge and a new consciousness. One that entails that we need to rethink our struggle for democracy, and ensure that the measures that we advocate to be put in place are able to ensure that in the long run, Zimbabwe emerges as a Democratic Developmental state.



McDonald
Lewanika

A state in which democracy is not just about elections and political processes; but also delivers the social and economic needs of the people. We continue to work and advocate for a Zimbabwe that is characterized by democratic state institutions and de-militarised political processes, that ensure that the people are not subjected to harm by the bodies that are responsible for their protection.

We are buoyed by the positive political developments in countries on the continent including but not limited to Kenya and Ghana, and emerge from this year towards our 10th year of existence believing now more than ever before that, indeed; *Another Zimbabwe is Possible.*

Child Labour

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by stipulating that a farmer taking over a farm must accommodate all the workers and by reducing the costs of education."

Currently rural schools are charging between US\$10 and US\$30 per term. Then there is an additional US\$1 – incentive for teachers. But even if you are employed, your US\$42 per month is not enough to send one child to school.

The sun sets on Chigwell Farm, burying Lazarus' dreams of a Big City life. Darkness sets. The dream is now about catching enough mice to survive tomorrow.

– Tapiwa Zivira, General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ)



LIVING LEGAL: Farai shows off his receipt which shows that he has applied for a permit and has tendered all the required documents. He will wait 10 days before receiving his permit.

Zimbabweans in S.A get legal

As Farai Gonzo walks out of the Department of Home Affairs building on Harrison Street in central Johannesburg, he can at last afford a smile. Anxiety over the past few weeks has robbed him of a great amount of peace. But today, he is a relieved man who clearly looks like he has had some weight lifted off his shoulders.

He agrees to speak to this journalist after thoroughly making sure that he is not speaking to an operative of the Zimbabwe government. His skepticism is not misplaced.

If you want evidence in the breakdown of civic trust between a government and its people, look no further than the Zimbabwe situation.

When news broke that Zimbabweans living illegally in South Africa would be allowed to get documentation – for free and without any reprimand – from the South African government, conspiracy theories spread like veld fire. There was going to be a crackdown on Zimbabweans living in South Africa. The ZANU-PF part of the inclusive government had entered into a deal with the Zuma government so that it could surrender names of Zimbabweans to increase its options for manipulating the voters' roll ahead of the upcoming elections.

If you want evidence in the breakdown of civic trust between a government and its people, look no further than the Zimbabwe situation. Needless to say, the

rumours are still circulating.

But Farai's act of faith has brought him where he is today. "I just want a better life for me and my family. I'm not running away from anyone in Zimbabwe, just the poverty," he says. And he is not too optimistic about the situation back home either; "The prospects are not yet

as good as they are here. Four years is a long time and what I will achieve here in that period is different from what I'll achieve back home."

Four years is the maximum limit for

any permit that is being issued under this special dispensation for Zimbabweans. For Farai, it is enough to work and gather property before an imperative return to Zimbabwe one day, perhaps not in the too distant future. "Let's see what happens after the elections in 2011. Although my heart is in Zimbabwe, my livelihood is here in South Africa," he says, signaling that he must be starting off to work now.

Looks of admiration or envy or both guide Farai outside the DHA gates and past the meandering queue of Zimbabweans also waiting their turn. At least hope is alive here.

– Levi Kabwato, Media and Communications Officer, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Office.

A day in the life of a child labourer

Children are silent victims of the chaotic land reform programme in Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe has conveniently kept mum regarding the plight of children, most of whom are left homeless after reallocation of farmlands.

Here at Chigwell Farm, just outside Chegutu, along the Harare-Bulawayo Road, life has become a daily nightmare for seven year-old Lazarus Kabefu (not his real name). He should be spending the day with other children in a grade two class. Instead he is helping his brothers work on the neighbouring farms.

Lazarus' parents were displaced from a nearby farm at the height of the land reform programme in 2005. Unfortunately, they succumbed to the AIDS pandemic two years ago, leaving the little boy in the care of his two brothers, both aged under 18.

Nothing guarantees the Kabefu's' settlement here at Chigwell, a farm now owned by former deputy minister of Information, Bright Matonga. Together with another 150 people – also displaced – they have made abandoned tobacco barns their home. Only until Mr Matonga decides to put the barns into use, if he ever does.

Lazarus, clad in a visibly mucky grey cotton t-shirt and a pair of tattered shorts, is busy digging the ground. His hope: to find mice to sell along the busy roadside. His day – like any other – started at five o'clock in the morning. Along with his brothers, he went out into the now idle fields to search for mice holes. Again, there are no guarantees there will be enough catch for them to eat and to sell.

On a good day, they make US\$5 – enough to buy sugar (2kg), cooking oil (750ml) and salt. 'We sell the mice at 50cents each so that we can get some

money to buy food," he says. He continues to dig.

At least 1000 Lazaruses live in Zimbabwe, silent victims and sufferers of the pains of eviction and retrenchment on Zimbabwe's farms. A survey conducted at 10 farm schools in Chegutu by the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) revealed that about 400 children had dropped out of school mostly because their parents were victims of the displacements caused by a wave of farm invasions, some as recent as 2009.

Land reform has reversed the fight against child labour as children are forced out of school when their parents lose their jobs. "Once a child is out of school they are prone to child labour because they have to help supplement family income by taking up the low paying part time jobs, especially during the peak of the agriculture season," says GAPWUZ General Secretary Gertrude Hambira. She now lives in exile, having been hounded out of the country by state operatives.

GAPWUZ estimates that less than 60 000 people are currently employed in the agriculture sector, compared to the 300 000 before the land reform programme started in 2000. Other reasons for the rise in child labour, Hambira says, include the lack of serious HIV and AIDS awareness programmes and non availability of anti retroviral medication (ART) to farming communities.

"Displaced people are not accessing ART and that means they die early, creating a large number of orphans who eventually go into child labour," she says and then demands that; "Government must put up measures to combat child labour

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UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

18-20 November:

Civil Society Consultations - Maputo, Mozambique

22-24 November:

Civil Society Consultations & Meeting with SADC Secretariat - Gaborone, Botswana

25 November:

Launch of 16 Days of Activism (Gender Programme) - Pretoria, South Africa

Launch of Zimbabwe Dialogue Series + Seminar - Johannesburg, South Africa

27-30 November:

Civil Society Consultations - Lusaka, Zambia

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the [constitution-making] process has already been compromised the harare bulawayo meetings are no longer meaningful we are already mooting for a vote no for now we wait and see what will transpire.

it would have been a miracle of biblical proportions if mugabe had implemented anything at all or if sadc had bothered him. remember the whole idea behind the gnu is to legitimize mugabe. and how can sadc expect 2 antagonists to implement the gnu without outside intervention? sadc is the biggest joke of the century. zimbabweans must now realize that it's up to them to free their country.

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