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Mugabe ally effectively running election body

Zimbabwe will not have a free and fair election until members of the state security agency [CIO] and former senior soldiers who work for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission [ZEC] have been removed from the secretariat that runs the body.

In an interview with SW radio Africa political commentator Pedzisai Ruhanya said despite the appointment of new commissioners in 2010, their influence is largely limited to setting policy and it was in fact the secretariat, still packed with Mugabe cronies, that does the day to day running of elections.

SW Radio Africa understands Justice Simpson Mutambanengwe who was appointed to chair ZEC is not well and his deputy, Joyce Kazembe, a key ally, is effectively running the commission. Kazembe has been with ZEC for over 15 years and involved in over 5 disputed elections which Mugabe won.

More recently she was part of the discredited election commission, headed by retired brigadier general George Chiweshe. That commission withheld presidential election results for weeks in March 2008, amid reports the period was used to manipulate figures that denied Tsvangirai an outright victory against Mugabe. The current Chief Elections Officer is



Lovemore Chipunza Sekeramayi, a former member of the President's office. The notorious Central Intelligence Organisation [CIO] falls under the President's Office and Ruhanya said Sekeramayi's deployment in such position was deliberate on Mugabe's

part.

The two directors who work under Sekeramayi, Utoile Silaigwana [Operations] and Notayi Mutemasango [Administration and Finance], are former soldiers fiercely loyal to Mugabe. Silaigwana is responsible for polling,

training, election logistics, voter education and public relations for the commission.

Ruhanya said this ZEC secretariat was responsible for the sham election in June 2008, marked by bloodshed, enforced disappearances and egregious human rights violations which were all in violation of the electoral act. Despite this same individuals deemed the one man presidential poll in 2008 free and fair.

The personnel of the Zimbabwe Election Commission and the Registrar General's office should be subjected to public scrutiny with a view to increasing public accountability and transparency. These two institutions and the individuals running them have been part of the crisis the country is faced with, Ruhanya said.

During the 2002 presidential election the recently promoted Major General Douglas Nyikayaramba was the Chief Executive Officer of the commission. He made sure the body was stuffed with soldiers, state security agents and ZANU PF militia. His recruits are still there and will ensure Mugabe wins by hook or crook.

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Kereke versus Gono: The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe in Leadership crisis



Kereke the former adviser to Gono and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe for eight years has come out blazing exposing Gono's malicious activities at the Bank.

These Kereke purported revelations do not exonerate him either from whatever was happening at RBZ. To imagine that he had to wait 8 years to be kicked out by his boss speaks volumes of a man who was part of the events at the Lender of last resort in our economy and was not prepared to let go at any moment. This is just a question of sour

emotions between two looters who have fallen out of each other's favour and are rushing to take defence lines.

This Kereke guy is dangerous and equalling shaming himself simply because no man of mettle waits to spill the beans when things have gone bad for him. And these revelations do not make him the innocent sheep. Remember he was the chief adviser to Gono the person and the RBZ the institution. And for eight years what was he advising on.

This writing is hand written and it is clear on the wall. Now we have all been made to see how all those whom we have entrusted with our national purse are in reality termites feeding off the purse at the expense of the citizens. Whether the termite makes noise after filling its belly and claim that it was specified and personally targeted as Kereke is doing now or continues to munch in silence as Gono and many others in government and the economy are doing is neither here or there. Termites are termites. If you don't make a mill of them I tell you the next moment we all decide to lift and check that sack holding onto our

national wealth we will all realise that even the sack itself would have disappeared into these little bellies of carnivore.

Zimbabwe are we going to be fooled again or we are to realise that our wealth is in serious danger. The danger is not coming from the Imperialists but our very own greed crisis entrepreneurs who are milking our country dry for their benefit. It is high time that Zimbabweans take charge and have concern on how our wealth is being managed.

By Tafadzwa Maguchu



SADC Must Focus on the Responsibility to Protect Citizens from a violent Zimbabwe

Coordinator's
Note
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Last week Zimbabwe’s justice minister Patrick Chinamasa gave a glowing (but false) account of sterling efforts by his government to promote all human rights. With over three years of the inclusive government and little to show for it in terms of reforms to level the political field and prepare for democratic, non-violent elections, and with repeated calls from president Mugabe and Zanu PF for an early poll, it appears that SADC and Zimbabwe’s neighbours should now focus on prevention of violence during an inevitable election and on activating the international norm coined by the United Nations in 2005; the responsibility to protect citizens.

The responsibility to protect principle rests on three pillars, namely: (1) A state has a responsibility to protect its population from mass atrocities [such as systematic, widespread state-sponsored electoral violence]; (2) The international community has a responsibility to assist the state if it is unable to protect its population on its own; and (3) If the state fails to protect its citizens from mass atrocities and peaceful measures have failed, the international community has the responsibility to intervene through coercive measures such as economic sanctions. Military intervention is considered the last resort.

Instead of continued appeals to president Mugabe and Zanu PF to do the reasonable thing an institute meaningful electoral reforms which they have no intention of implementing, SADC and particularly South Africa, the regional powerhouse, should simply spell it



out to Mugabe and his so-called hardliners that there is no running away from democratic reforms, and that the regional bloc will not stand aside and watch Zimbabwe butcher its citizens again while going through the motions of a sham election. To insist on elections when the environment is not right would be a waste of time and resources because such a process will not bring legitimacy if it is not underwritten by SADC.

We, Zimbabwe civil society organizations under the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition banner, fully support the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mediator for Zimbabwe, president Jacob Zuma and the SADC Organ Troika in their insistence on genuine

preparations for democratic elections in Zimbabwe that are without violence or intimidation. We urge SADC leaders when they meet to discuss Zimbabwe on 11 June to present a clear roadmap to free and fair elections in Zimbabwe that SADC leaders can enforce to ensure full compliance. Implementation of agreed reforms under the roadmap should be in accordance with clear time limits.

In line with activating the responsibility to protect mechanism, SADC should directly engage with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the U.N Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to closely monitor events on the ground and stand ready to rally the international community to

intervene in Zimbabwe to maintain the peace and protect citizens from a predatory state.

We are aware of the slow, and often frustrated efforts to come up with a new constitution, of efforts by parliament to enact electoral reforms legislation and the law to establish the Human Rights Commission. However, key justice administration and security sector institutions remain entrenched and partisan towards Zanu PF. Key mechanisms to prevent violence during elections will be in the form of a strong observation and monitoring presence from SADC, the AU and the UN. SADC should go a step further, once elections dates are announced, to deploy a team of peace monitors to Zimbabwe.

South Africa has the capacity on its own to deploy a strong team of monitors and observers to ensure that there is no repeat of the 2008 scenario where the June presidential runoff election was held under conditions of extreme violence that left over 200 dead. It is encouraging that recently South Africa’s Foreign Minister Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said her country expects the Global Political Agreement (GPA), to be fully implemented with a new constitution approved by referendum before new elections are held. With Zanu PF’s vocal supporter in the ANC – Julius Malema – now thrown out of the party, it is time for Zanu PF to acknowledge the policy-shift by the ANC when it comes to Zimbabwe.

Dewa Mavhinga, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Coordinator

Press Release

ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly says free media a prerequisite to development. The 7th regional African Caribbean and Pacific-European Union (ACP-EU) Joint Parliamentary Assembly has affirmed free media as a prerequisite to development and critical in the promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance.²

The regional meeting (southern Africa), held in Lusaka, Zambia from 22- 24 February 2012, discussed also issues of regional integration, mineral resources and their contribution to development, strengthening democracy and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The affirmation of the need for a free media in southern Africa came after the Media Institute of Southern Africa Regional Secretariat had made submissions



to the joint parliamentary assembly, insisting that the intrinsic relationship between the democratisation project and media freedom, of which the promotion of access to information is an integral part, can only be ignored at own peril by

all stakeholders. On the role of the media, the final communiqué, issued in Lusaka on 24 February, 2012 read in detail:

Members recognised that the media are shaping public opinion, mediating the debate be-

tween the state and civil society, but also acting as a watchdog over public processes, against private gain. Free media are a prerequisite to development in the promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance.

MISA takes this resolution seriously and intends to intensify its advocacy and lobby efforts on the promotion of access to information within southern Africa as well as ensuring that the media law reform agenda gives birth to legislation that advances media freedom, independence and diversity.

*Released by
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Lesson from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

I am currently in New York attending the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) and it has been an interesting week that has gone by. When I attended one of the sessions that was facilitated by the Government of Zimbabwe, I was left shell shocked and could hardly believe what I was hearing and what was going on. I just thought it would be important to share my experience and facilitate a process of learning around the issues and interventions made on this particular session.

Firstly, the whole of UNCSW is a process where technical partners and also civil society come together to share experiences from their country on what is going on at the ground level and how they think they can improve situations. Moreover, it is a space where women from all over the world and their governments can learn from each other about what exactly is happening at country level. This also means that technical experts at various levels need to make an input into what their country is presenting because the basic assumption is that they are the people

who know the issues very well and clearly. This year at UNCSW the theme was, “the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty eradication and hunger, development and current challenges.” Whatever interventions made were supposed to be made around this topic!

During the Zimbabwe-led session, it was sad to note that we had not really grasped the set standard of doing things when we showcased what we did for International Rural Women’s Day and also shared some one project the country is doing around the global climate change issue. The only problem was that this intervention was not framed within a particular context and framework. Moreover, it missed the point in terms of meeting the expectations of the UNCSW. Embarrassingly, the session seemed to be reduced to political party divides and the issues around the constituency development fund, which am not sure was well understood by the participants.

Going forward it would be critical for civil society and government to put

differences aside and interface where it comes to presenting some country interventions. It is important to learn from each other’s experiences and documents best practices that can assist other sisters from the world over in understanding Zimbabwean women’s experiences. Women from rural Zimbabwe have a lot to share and a major role in hunger and poverty eradication, not to mention development. It is therefore worthwhile to come together as the broader development practitioners to ensure that their story is told and told well.

This session left me disappointed and angry at where we channel our energy towards as a country and also at the caliber of leaders we have. Zimbabwe is way bigger than politics and our political affiliations and hence this should be reflected in all work done on behalf of Zimbabwean women.

Enough with this bickering, it is time to hold hands and take Zimbabwe forward and I am of the view that civic can do this if they too demand for a stake in the national discourse and make a difference! The sky is after all

the limit. I hope this week and next year Zimbabwe will do better at the UNCSW with such reflections!

By Grace Chirenje Nachipo



Elections without reforms in Zimbabwe a recipe for Regional disaster

There is no argument that Zimbabwe’s current political crisis will finally have to end through a free and fair election. And while President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai have all spoken on the need for elections in 2012, there remains a huge chasm on what kind of an election Zimbabwe needs.

There is an understandable sense of urgency in President Mugabe as he tries to beat his age by pushing through an election in 2012, ‘with or without a new constitution’ as he says. He has sworn that this will happen even if the mainstream MDC-T party led by Morgan Tsvangirai boycotts this ‘election’.

President Mugabe is prepared to go it alone even in defiance of the African Union and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) mediation process led by South African President Jacob Zuma. Speaking to the local media on his birthday, President Mugabe had no kind words for Zuma whom he says is overstepping his mandate and warning that ZANU PF will ask for another mediator should Zuma attempt to stop or refuse to endorse the election call. Herein lies the danger that Zimbabwe faces in the coming ten months. This danger is the possibility of another sham election, accompanied by pre and post ‘election’ violence.

Another danger is the obvious regression in the reform agenda that Zuma and the three parties to the government of national unity in Zimbabwe have made so far. While tottering on the brink of collapse and faced with many hurdles, the constitutional process still offers a window of both hope and opportunity for a peaceful settlement to the Zimbabwe crisis, more so if the new constitution can address the issues of the role of the security sector and provide for a fairly conducive election environment. While a lot has remained the same if not worsened regarding human rights in Zimbabwe, at least a few independent newspapers are on the streets and reporting and access to in-

formation on Zimbabwe has slightly improved. All this will go should there be an arbitrary call for elections in the absence of reforms. The call for an election without reforms is a ZANU PF agenda being pushed by a minority but powerful group backed by securo-

The call for an election without reforms is a ZANU PF agenda being pushed by a minority but powerful group backed by securocrats

crats. This group only sees hope in the name of President Mugabe and want to give him room to manoeuvre his succession without having to contend with the noise from either of the two MDC parties and the nonbelievers in ZANU PF. This is narrow and selfish agenda that has wider consequences for the political stability of Zimbabwe and ultimately that of Southern Africa. I say Southern Africa because political

instability in Zimbabwe, more so instigated by the security sector is likely to see another 3-5 million Zimbabweans streaming into neighbouring countries mainly South Africa. This likelihood is neither farfetched nor day dreaming as there is now more to the Zimbabwe

crisis than the contest for political power.

The discovery of diamonds is game changer in Zimbabwe’s political structure. The securocrats can now fund their ‘war’ without having to ask MDC -Treasurer and Finance Minister Tendai Biti for a dime. Not only is political power necessary to hold on to the loot but you also need military power.



The combination and coming together of the political sector and the securocrats to the feeding trough is a recipe for disaster likely to worsen if SADC blinks and allows President Mugabe to railroad his agenda in 2012.

The Southern Africa community both in civil society and governments must be aware that Zimbabwe is a huge security risk, not only to its people but the rest of the region. Zimbabwe needs a free and fair election that result in a democratically elected government acceptable to the people of Zimbabwe and the international community. This is only possible if SADC and the international community maintain pressure on the need for electoral and constitutional reforms.

There is need for unequivocal statements from the international community that they will not brook another chaotic electoral process in Zimbabwe. On its part civil society need to maintain pressure by continuously documenting and publicizing the ongoing politically related human rights violations as well as raising awareness within citizens on the need to hold firm to a peaceful end to the Zimbabwe crisis.

There is need for civil society to put-out a clear, consistent and unified message across the region that citizens of Zimbabwe need help to exercise, what should arguably be the simplest of all democratic practices, voting and having the vote respected.

There is need for SADC to be aware of the negative impact that Zimbabwe has on regional developmental aspirations, more so that a combination of diamonds and guns is a powder keg likely to explode and engulf not only Zimbabwe but the rest of the region. Elections yes, but after reforms and a clear guarantee that the winner will be allowed to assume and exercise power.

Rashweat Mukundu is a Zimbabwe Journalist and Human Rights activist.

Government should improve maternal and child healthcare

Child mortality and maternal health remain a challenge for Zimbabwe and indeed most developing countries despite the explicit call to focus on these critical areas through millennium development goals number four and five which call for steps to be taken towards the reduction of child mortality rates and improvement of maternal health care service provision. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) of the 3.1 million deaths that occurred in 2010 amongst newborns, a quarter to half occurred within the first 24 hours after birth.

WHO also states that labour, birth and the immediate postnatal period are the most critical for newborns and maternal survival and argues that in many low and middle income countries, mothers and new born babies do not receive optimal care during these critical periods.

It is therefore important to understand that a failure to provide the best care for both a mother and her new born soon after delivery is a risk on both their lives. The reported detention of mothers and their children at Mpilo Hospital for failure to pay their full hospital fees (Chronicle 17 January 2012) is disturbing in light of the fact that not only does it deny the mother and child the opportunity to bond in a healthy and conducive environment that allows them to regain their strength, but it also places the mother and infant under immense mental strain. While hospital officials have denied ever having detained anyone for not paying their bills, some victims who spoke to the press and this writer have confirmed that this is an on-going issue which while not in hospital policies has been effectively applied for years to get mothers to settle their bills with the institution.

According to the media reports, new mothers are asked to provide their own food and bedding if they have not paid their fees. It is quite obvious due to the strain of delivery that new mothers and their babies need all the support they can get to fully recover. Asking these mothers therefore to make their own food provisions and sleeping ar-



rangements in a common room may be a difficult task due to the special care and attention needed. Placing them in one room with no guarantee of bedding and food may leave these children at risk of malnutrition and catching diseases like pneumonia amongst others.

This is sad considering that the government announced late last year that it had secured \$430 million in funding to support free maternal health care at public hospitals. The fund was reportedly secured through the European Union (EU), UNICEF, and other donor agencies and well-wishing countries. These efforts have also been backed by other donations made early this year by the Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khuphe who facilitated the rehabilitation of critical equipment at Mpilo, including the institution's incinerator.

It is unfortunate that these efforts and positives have not yet trickled down to the ordinary beneficiaries who are still being detained for none payment of fees. Added to this, the fact that these mothers are being forced to leave their children's birth records before they can be discharged, is in itself a viola-

tion of the child's right to identity and full existence.

According to the National Action Plan on Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC), birth records cannot be withheld by any hospital as this deprives the child of important documents like birth-certificates. Patricia Tshabalala of Vulindlela Orphanage also weighs in and states that of the 500 plus children she takes care of, a large majority does not have birth certificates because these were withheld by health institutions for none payment of fees. Enquiries made with the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), revealed that a hospital contract in this case is between the mother and the hospital and does not include the child. Therefore, withholding the child's birth-record, and detaining the child with the mother is tantamount to violating the child's rights while at the same time depriving them of a healthy environment to develop in the first few days of their lives.

It must also be noted that detaining the mother and child for none payment in exclusion of the father indirectly presumes that the mother is the only one responsible for the existence of the

newborn. It is interesting that Mpilo has so far failed to use the same mechanisms it uses for its other services in this instance. For example, ambulance fees are placed on the water charges bill forcing the patient to pay the debt when paying for their water bills. Is it not possible to also include these charges in the rates bills even if these are not under council's services. It would be better to give the new mothers an option of payment plans which will allow them to pay off their arrears without exhausting all of their financial sources of income and compromising the newborn's health.

While taking them to the debt collectors would be an extreme method, at least the hospital would be guaranteed of interest being charged on overdue amounts while someone else puts the pressure on debtors. It will also allow the mothers to go back home and find means of paying the debt while taking better care of their babies than when they are stuck in a hospital ward. Nevertheless it must also be made clear why it is so expensive for mothers to give birth at government hospitals. If council clinics can charge US\$30 for the same service that the hospital charges up to US\$200 for, then the extra special services being offered by the hospital must be made clear to the patients.

It is also important that the government of Zimbabwe and respective institutions take serious steps towards being part of the solution than part of the problems that stand in the way of fully meeting the MDGs by 2015. Instead of harassing new mothers, health institutions must instead put such pressure on the Ministry of Finance to release the funds promised in the 2012 budget statement.

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ZIMRIGHTS APPLAUDS THE PROSECUTION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON CORRUPTION

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association applauds the on-going probing and prosecution of some constituency leaders over the misuse of Constituency Development Funds.

Culprits to the 65 audited constituencies so far are Marvellous Khumalo



Marvellous Khumalo (MDC-T)

(MDC-T) of St Marys Chitungwiza and Magunje legislator Franco Ndamakuwa (Zanu-PF). The two failed to account for the US\$50 000 given to them for the development of the respective communities they represent. However, prospects are to encircle more on the remaining 145 constituencies.

We embrace the developments as a relief to the disadvantaged communities. It is disappointing to note that some unscrupulous Members of Parliament who got into office on the ticket of the public are now feasting at the expense of those who entrusted them with their votes.

We recommend the anti-corruption commission for finally responding to the calls of many civilians who had for long demanded explanations on the use of the funds.

The exercise is a very good step doing

away with corruption and we are convinced that the developments will send a message to others who have the same habit. The hope is also that these people will be punished as anyone who abuses public funds and or a public office should pay for his/her deeds.



Franco Ndamakuwa (Zanu-PF).