

## Zimbabwe Update June 2010

In this edition of the Zimbabwe update we focus on the ongoing controversy surrounding the nation's diamond mining practices. The Global Political Agreement remains largely in stalemate while there have been some positive steps with regard to print media. Also covered are the arrests of students' union leaders and the attempted commemoration of the 1972 mining disaster.

You can find more details about all of the stories covered on the [ACTSA website](http://actsa.org).

### Kimberley Process maintains diamond mining suspension

Kimberley Process (KP) representatives have continued the export ban for rough diamonds from the Marange area of Zimbabwe after failing to reach a consensus at a meeting held in Israel on 21-23 June. The outcome was welcomed by the KP civil society coalition as the 'least bad' outcome. The KP is meant to monitor the production of diamonds to ensure that those offered for sale are produced in conflict-free areas.

The meeting discussed the continued human rights violations in the area including the arrest and detention of Farai Maguwu, Director for the Centre for Research and Development (CRD), who had highlighted Zimbabwe's poor adherence to the KP. According to Human Rights Watch, police officials "beat up, arrested, and detained members of Maguwu's family" before doing the same to him. "If Zimbabwe is jailing activists for writing about abuses connected to diamond mining, then it is hardly meeting the minimum standards for Kimberley Process membership." Talks are scheduled to resume on July 14 – 15 in St Petersburg.

### Global Political Agreement (GPA) remains in stalemate

The GPA between ZANU-PF, the MDC-T and the MDC-M, continues in its stalemate position. A South African negotiation team continues to monitor the situation but has been unable to assist with the deadlock. The Elders, a group of former heads of state, Nobel Peace Prize recipients and prominent human rights defenders, criticised the lack of progress, suggesting that it was impossible and even dangerous for Zimbabwe to hold elections in the current political situation.

The EU head of delegation to Harare, Ambassador Xavier Marchal, stressed that Zimbabwe's relationship with the EU cannot be built upon while breaches of the agreement are widespread. "Everything is based on the successful implementation of the GPA," he said.

### A new era for Zimbabwean Media?

The newly established Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) has granted the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) the right to publish its newspaper, 'The Worker', weekly, rather than monthly. The ZMC has also given the Daily News, Daily Gazette, The Financial Gazette and The Mail licenses to publish in a move widely heralded as an end to ten years of media censorship. Over the last decade Zimbabweans have only had access to Sunday weeklies, and in more recent times, the strongly oppositional 'Zimbabwean', though this was printed outside the country.

There are still reservations about the body set up to overcome the suppression of the media enforced by President Mugabe. Mr. Mahoso, the Chief Executive of the new ZMC was formerly the secretariat of the controversial Media and Information Commission, which closed four newspapers. Television and radio censorship also remain outside the jurisdiction of the new body.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### EU Aid targets Health and Child Welfare

A 17.5 million Euro grant for the Zimbabwean Ministry of Health and Child Welfare from the European Commission (EC) was announced on June 18. EU Ambassador to Harare Xavier Marchal said the EC's allocation is a result of a short-term strategy designed to address the urgent needs of the Zimbabwean population.

#### Zimbabweans still top asylum seeker lists

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has reported that there were 158,000 applications for asylum by Zimbabweans in 2009, the highest from any nationality worldwide. Nine out of ten applications were processed in South Africa. Economic and political turmoil were cited as the reasons for the number of applications.

#### Staff cuts at Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe may be forced to cut up to three quarters of its staff to prevent insolvency. Creditors are said to be calling for their investments back.

## **ZINASU leaders arrested in protests**

Alec Tabe and Godfrey Kuraune, Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU) leaders, were arrested after they mobilised students to protest about fees in Masvingo Polytechnic University at the end of May. Both suffered abuse whilst in custody and Godfrey Kuraune was hospitalised after receiving a severe beating to the soles of his feet.

The peaceful protests were sparked when students were told that they would not be able to register as students unless they paid both examination and tuition fees in a lump sum. The pair were arrested on charges of inciting violence amongst the student body.

ZINASU President, Obert Masaraure and Secretary General, Joshua Chinyere led protests on the same issue at Masvingo Polytechnic. ZINASU members stopped an assault on the Principal after he refused to address the students, but riot police responded by beating a number of students before cordoning off the campus. Protests ended in early June when many students paid their examination fees.

## **COPAC Outreach Programme at mercy of ZANU-PF**

The Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (COPAC) outreach programme to gather public opinion on the new constitution is being manipulated by ZANU-PF according to the MDC. Soldiers have been sent to rural areas with specific orders to instruct villagers what to say during the outreach programmes ahead of official COPAC meetings. According to the Zimbabwe European Network (ZEN), COPAC has managed to source 265 vehicles, 210 megaphones, 210 audio recorders and 70 video recorders for use during the information gathering process. It is expected to run for 65 working days from the 23<sup>rd</sup> June. COPAC is, however, severely under-funded leading to doubts as to whether it can complete the task within the timeframe. The head start ZANU-PF soldiers have had on COPAC representatives, coupled with poor funding, may affect the findings of the outreach project, and ultimately, the constitution at the next elections.

## **Ghost workers responsible for high inflation**

The ZCTU has contested Finance Minister, Tendai Biti's claims that the country has an unsustainably high civil service wage bill. Wellington Chibebe, Secretary General of the union said "the issue of the high civil service wage bill is as a result of ghost workers whom government admitted exist. If one Ministry has more than 10,000 ghost workers, what of all the ministries?"

According to the ZCTU few increments have been awarded since 2009 to the 10 per cent of Zimbabweans in formal employment and so is unlikely to be fuelling inflation. Meanwhile prices in the country have continued to increase. Wellington Chibebe added "It said the only people earning 'real wages' are company executives with some earning more than US\$10,000 coupled with unlimited perks, while the least paid worker takes home a paltry US\$30. If at all government was to make noise about wages, their first port of call should be the executives' salaries and perks."

## **ACTION**

### **Stop the Harassment of Trade Unionists!**

Trade unionists in Zimbabwe continue to face intimidation and harassment from the state. Members of GAPWUZ were arrested and General Secretary Gertrude Hambira has been forced to seek refuge in South Africa.

Join Amnesty International's [Urgent Action](#) to put pressure on Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa to stop the harassment of trade unionists.

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

### **World Cup inhibits ZCTU**

#### **commemorations**

The ZCTU was prevented from commemorating the 1972 Hwange Colliery Disaster on June 12. Police stopped the commemoration going ahead saying they were otherwise engaged with World Cup duties and have banned further demonstrations until the end of the tournament. The Union was threatened by the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) if it went ahead with its plans. The union's acting Secretary General Japhet Moyo said this was unconstitutional since POSA has no implications for trade unions.

### **Ministerial changes**

Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the MDC, is replacing four ministers in a performance review at the end of June. Tsvangirai said as explanation for the need to make ministerial changes; "I am acutely aware that these and other challenges have led to the loss of confidence in the new administration."