

Crisis in Zimbabwe

Coalition

Election Bulletin

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This bulletin has been produced by the Zimbabwe Crisis Committee to communicate perspectives from civil society in the run-up to the 2002 Presidential Elections. The Bulletin will also provide updates on civil society organising for the elections.

About the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition

The Crisis in Zimbabwe initiatives derives from a groundbreaking conference held on 4th August 2001. This Conference produced the most comprehensive statement on the Zimbabwe Crisis to date, as well as a set of 13 resolutions for resolving the crisis. The Committee (Zimbabwe Crisis Committee) was mandated by the Conference plenary to continue to drive the initiative. The Committee consists of:

The National Constitutional Assembly;
The Zimbabwe Election Support Network; The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions; the Women's Coalition; The Media Institute of Southern Africa (Zimbabwe); Transparency International Zimbabwe; Zimbabwe National Students' Union; The Human Rights Forum; The Civic Alliance for Social and Economic Progress.

Zimbabwe Presidential Elections

Implications for Southern Africa

By Takura Zhangazha

The Southern African region does not have a rosy history of electoral transition. From its anti-colonial struggles where millions of lives were lost and whose legacy still lives in liberation movements turned into ruling parties, the politics of various countries in the sub-region are still a long way from delivering democracy. The region has had various ways of dealing with political crises as they occur but the Zimbabwean situation is a unique one. It is unique in that it poses a great deal of threat to the political stability of one of Africa's less violent regions as well as emerges as a test to the regional political leadership as to their commitment to the principle of democracy.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been a very crucial body in terms of dealing with the Zimbabwean governance crises. SADC however has not necessarily lived up to the challenge at hand. It has shown commitment to the sovereignty of Zimbabwe but without addressing the all-important question of whether there is democratic practice and good governance in Zimbabwe. By implication the actions of SADC have shown that it has a great deal of respect for institutions of government and laws that are established by various institutions regardless of whether the laws produced are democratic or not. The rule of law for SADC seems to mean laws that are produced by institutions such as Parliament and obedience to these laws regardless of whether they are democratic or not. It has tacitly endorsed the actions of the Mugabe government without listening attentively to the oppositions or civil society's side of the story. The arrest of civic organisation members from the Crises in Zimbabwe Committee in Malawi without adequate explanation is enough to show the limited understanding that the region has of democracy and democratic process.

An important question that invariably emerges is one that queries what the implications of this political lethargy in SADC are for the region. Fundamentally the indication is that within the region there is a limited cultivation of a truly democratic culture that goes beyond just the setting of institutions that connote democracy. Most of SADC's heads of state have missed the all-important question that was raised by Nyerere, "the mechanisms of democracy are not the meaning of democracy." And we hasten to add that the true essence of democracy is to have institutions and governments that respect the will of the people regardless of whom this will turns out to favour.

The second implication for the region is that there will be less of a moral justification for SADC to challenge any undemocratic tendencies in member states. The softly softly approach that has been undertaken by SADC as well as the African Union has set a precedent where leaders that are clearly undemocratic can still get away with it. Internationally, institutions such as SADC are going to be measured against the actions taken by other international organisations such as the European Union and the Commonwealth, much to the effect that SADC will lose its international standing as a respectable and serious grouping of states.

In conclusion, it is evident that the region stands to lose a lot of ground gained if it does not try to ensure that the elections in Zimbabwe are free and fair even in the little time that is left. The fear that some African leaders have over being seen to be too harsh on a fellow State President is unfounded. Where and when democracy is at stake, old friendships should be put aside and the principle of free, fair and regular elections be upheld for the whole world to envy a decisive region that is looking ahead and not always lamenting about the past.

What do Zimbabweans think?

Results of a survey on the Presidential Elections

Mass Public Opinion Institute

The research set out to find out the views of Zimbabweans on the electoral process with particular reference to the 2002 presidential elections. From the analysis of the data we conclude as follows:

1. Zimbabweans consider elections important and have set their minds on participating fully in the forthcoming presidential election. A total of 94.2% of respondents said elections are important while 84.7% indicated that they are registered as voters. In addition, 86.7% said they intend to vote in the 2002 presidential election. Another outstanding statistic is the 73.0% who consider the forthcoming election as very important. Furthermore, 78.0% of the respondents predict a higher turnout of voters in March than was the case in the June 2000 parliamentary elections.
2. A total of 69.2% believe that their vote influences what a president does. An impressive 90.9% believe their vote to be secret and 96.8% are aware of the 2002 presidential election. These statistics indicate a mature electorate, which is keeping abreast of the goings on in the electoral field. Politicians can therefore only take the Zimbabwean electorate for granted at their own risk.
3. Zimbabweans would like to see a professional and non – partisan military. This is borne out from the 84.3% who said the military should respect the outcome of the elections no matter who wins. Military intervention after the elections is therefore unlikely to find much support from the people.
4. Despite the current economic and political problems besetting this country currently a significant number of Zimbabweans see light at the end of the tunnel, with 62.1% saying they are hopeful about the future of this country.
5. Zimbabweans have a desire to be governed well. Asked to point out what they considered to be the most important issue in the coming election, 40.9% chose democracy and good governance, 33.1% said land and 24.4% said employment.
6. With 68.2% of the respondents saying they are very much in favour of presidential candidates debating on radio and television, it would appear that the Zimbabwean electorate is now more concerned with issues than with mere sloganeering.
7. Apparently there is a high degree of support for the idea of a government of national unity should either Mugabe (68.1%) or Tsvangirai (64.3%) win the 2002 presidential election. Yet the leadership in both parties is polarized.
8. Nor is having participated in the liberation war of any significance; 62.8% said such history is of no importance and 15.0% said it is of minor importance, an effective 77.8% not attaching significance to such credentials.
9. Asked whether Tsvangirai would make a better or worse president, 31.3% said he would be better, 15.0% said he would be worse while 21.2% said he would perform more or less the same as Mugabe. Asked to state the candidate they would vote for if elections were held today, 11.3% said Mugabe, 19.8% said Tsvangirai and 59.7% opted to keep their choice a secret. The task is in the interpretation of the nearly 60% who opted to keep their choice a "secret".
10. Often it is asked should minor opposition parties, ZANU Ndonga in particular, have fielded candidates of their own or form an electoral strategic alliance with any of the two major parties, ZANU PF or MDC. 24.1% said ZANU Ndonga supporters should vote for a ZANU Ndonga candidate, 11.4% said ZANU Ndonga supporters should vote for a ZANU PF candidate, 27.6% said ZANU Ndonga supporters should vote for an MDC candidate but significantly 36.7% said "don't know". Since Mr. Wilson Kumbula has been barred from using the name ZANU Ndonga and it's symbol, the ZANU Ndonga constituency is open terrain to those who will talk to it nicely.

Finally, people want to be interviewed on these and other related issues with 87.3% saying yes interviews such as these are important.

Political Violence Reports

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum is issuing fortnightly reports on political violence throughout Zimbabwe. January 2002 saw the highest number of recorded deaths since March 2002.

The cumulative totals of reported incidents of political violence between 1/1/02 and 16/2/02 were as follows:

Death/execution: 26
 School closure: 40
 Intimidation/threats: 53
 Kidnapping: 97
 Disappearances: 22
 Rape: 2
 Property damage/theft: 77
 Torture: 301
 Unlawful arrest/detention: 6

Of concern is the role of trained youth militias in the perpetration of violence using internationally recognized torture techniques including sexual torture.

The first two weeks of February saw an increase in reported cases of torture, kidnapping, and threats and intimidation, with the level of reported deaths remaining the same.

The Forum has produced its first briefing paper summarizing the main problems in the election.

Contact: Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum

Zimbabwe Election Support Network

Long term observer report

ZESN has compiled an audit of the political environment in Zimbabwe prior to the Presidential Election as adjudged by 240 long term observers. The report covers the period from November 2001 to January 31 2002.

The report looks at the following issues and reports on a province by province basis:

- legislative framework
- voter registration and inspection of the voters' roll
- media
- nomination court
- monitors' observations at registration and inspection centres
- political violence

For a full version of the report contact ZESN at:
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Editorial

African Renaissance ... or the last kicks of a dying horse?

Since its surprise defeat in the Constitutional Referendum in February 2000, the government strategy has been to use the nationalist rhetoric of the liberation struggle to defend its unconstitutional actions to grab land, muzzle the media or obstruct the opposition and generally ride roughshod over the Zimbabwean people's fundamental freedoms. Despite the undemocratic actions of the government, this strategy has gained support from large sections of the population in Africa. Understandably, on the continent, there are large swathes of the population who strongly resent the continued domination of the former colonial masters in the continent, whether this is because of a long history of political interference by Western governments, the exploitative activities of western companies or finally, the indefensible policy prescriptions of the World Bank and IMF, which have laid to waste the social gains of post-independence in defence of the almighty market. Indeed western criticism of the actions of the Mugabe regime are received by Africans with skepticism, perceived as they are as being mainly motivated by the attacks on Zimbabweans of European descent.

The soft line taken by SADC governments in response to the actions of the Zimbabwe government can in part be attributed to the skillful ideological framing of the latter's positions. Despite the negative impact on the region, SADC and African governments seem at a loss for a response to ZANU-PF's assertion that its fight is one of defending Zimbabwe's sovereignty and right to self determination. Issues of race and land have been skillfully played to delegitimise any protest that might come from within or outside. To criticize the Zimbabwe government's stand is to appear to be supporting Western arrogance, racism and indifference to the plight of Africa's people.

The truth however is that in Zimbabwe, as in the rest of Africa, behind the veneer of various governments' claims to be defending the high ideals of pan-Africanism lies a story of capitulation to the dictates of the international financial institutions, at the expense of the country's black majority. This capitulation has been in the face of popular resistance to structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank and IMF. Indeed, during the 15 years of implementing SAPs, government has actively suppressed resistance, including from social movements such as trade unions. Such protests were castigated by the government for chasing away foreign investors and giving a bad external image of the country.

Much as in theory its own ideological positioning fell in line with the working class and peasantry, the government continued to pursue and defend ESAP, not least because to do otherwise would compromise the accumulative tendencies of the ruling class. For ESAP opened the way for increased enrichment for a section of well-connected black elite through corrupt processes of privatization of state assets. And despite the rhetoric in support of indigenisation to create greater racial balance in the share of the formal economy, the government has been conspicuously lethargic in taking forward widespread demands for indigenisation policies which facilitate the entry of more black Zimbabweans into the formal economy. Rather, indigenisation has amounted to little less than a means to extend patronage of party supporters, while the privileges enjoyed by the business elites and multi-national corporations remained intact. Redistribution is a word that has long been dead in the Zimbabwean discourse, such that the inequalities between the rich and the poor are more gaping than they were at independence.

The agenda for democracy on the one hand - meant to guarantee people's fundamental rights - and that of fighting what is clearly hostile globalisation and corporate imperialism are not mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary. Governments that genuinely seek to shelter their countries from the latter can only do so if they actively nurture and are sensitive to the expression of popular will. There should be no doubt that Zimbabwean voters are clear that social justice must of necessity include political and civil rights and freedoms and that this is a principle they are going to the polls to defend.

The State in Crisis Authoritarian nationalism and distortions of democracy in Zimbabwe

By B. Raftopoulos

"Three points can be stressed about the political crisis in Zimbabwe. The first concerns the pervasive violence of the state. In the early 1980's Mugabe regime used the war veterans to consolidate its control of the state, and then proceeded to demobilise this force when its power base was more secure. Similarly, the state attempted to marginalize the influence of traditional authorities, as it extended its power to local government level. After two decades of independence, and in the context of a massive loss of state legitimacy, there have been certain reversals in this process. The embattled regime has once again turned to the war veterans to enforce party dominance

Secondly, it is clear that a severe break has developed between the discourse and politics of the liberation struggle, as channelled through party ideologies, and that of the civic struggles for democratisation in the post-colonial period. This friction has developed, on the one hand, in the context of a declining liberation movement that has drawn a lethal distinction between a violently driven, 'anti-imperialist' project, centred on the land question, and the politics of human rights which it has characterised as an imposition of global imperatives. Any sense of a national ownership of such rights issues is lost in this characterisation.

On the other hand the civic opposition has espoused its agenda largely through the language of citizenship rights, articulated most clearly in the campaign for constitutional reform. However this politics of democratisation has not sufficiently negotiated its connections, as well as its differences, with the legacies of the liberation struggle.

The third point relates to the ways in which the role of politics had been articulated in Zimbabwean politics. For a dominant faction of the ruling party, violence in the post-colonial period has been viewed as an extension of its use during the liberation struggle: a necessary means to achieve a political agenda. The dehumanising effects of this strategy on the citizenry have been considered part of the modality for maintaining state power. The forces of opposition have, in response, used their critique of this violence as a pivotal part of their demand for an alternative politics.¹ This critique, however, has not confronted the systemic violence that post-colonial states like Zimbabwe, continue to be subjected to by the forces of global finance. This lack of a critical scope on globalisation remains a weakness of the opposition perspective. As a result opposition groups are not sufficiently preparing for the difficult confrontations and choices that any government in a marginalized state will have to make in a project of economic and political reconstruction. These ambiguities in Zimbabwean politics are the terrain on which any attempts at a post-nationalist politics must contend.

Excerpts from a paper "The State in Crisis: authoritarian nationalism, selective citizenship and distortions in democracy in Zimbabwe. B. Raftopoulos, Associate Professor, IDS, University of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions Stakeholders Conference Resolutions

We the undersigned organisations gathered at an all stakeholders' conference held in Harare on the 16 February 2002 note the following:

1. that there is widespread violence and intimidation of the electorate by organised state sponsored forces targeted mostly at members of the opposition and civil society
2. that there is unequal access to national media (both print and electronic for parties contesting the Presidential elections
3. that as a result of state sponsored violence, there is unequal access to the various constituencies throughout the country
4. that there is a deliberate effort to disenfranchise those sections of the Zimbabwean community suspected of being sympathetic to the opposition. This is done through:
 - confiscation of identity cards
 - barring of Zimbabweans in the diaspora from voting
 - displacements through violence
 - legislative restrictions.
5. that the state has sponsored and pushed through draconian legislation calculated to severely restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of Zimbabweans
6. that there has been a deliberate selective application of the law by state agencies and officials. In particular the Zimbabwe Republic Police seem to have abdicated their responsibility to protect all Zimbabweans. The Zimbabwe National Army has through its hierarchy openly threatened not to respect the will of the people of Zimbabwe to choose a leader of their choice.
7. That all these problems emanate from a defective constitution and a refusal by the state to engage in an all inclusive national process of constitutional reform

In the light of the foregoing, we as representatives of civil society demand the following:

- a. The immediate cessation of all state-sponsored violent activities. This must entail the disbandment of the youth and other militia. The immediate closure of the so-called "re-education camps" and bases used by such militia.
- b. The equitable access to both print and electronic media for all presidential candidates
- c. That the ZRP must play their rightful role in ensuring equitable access to all the 120 constituencies by the presidential candidates and their political parties
- d. That Zimbabweans in the diaspora should be allowed to exercise their suffrage rights, without any restrictions
- e. The immediate repeal of the five offensive repressive pieces of legislation
- f. That there be no-partisan enforcement of the law by all state agencies, including impartial investigation and prosecution of cases of political violence
- g. The army should remain impartial and professional vis-à-vis the electoral process. The defence chiefs should retract their threat against the electorate.
- h. That the state should protect the rights and freedoms of all Zimbabweans, irrespective of their political affiliations or persuasions.
- i. That the issue of constitutional reform is more fundamental now than ever before in the resolution of the national crisis. We call up all candidates in the presidential election to make this one of their highest priorities both before and after the elections.
- j. That civil society be allowed to monitor the election

In the event of the fore-going demands not being attended to satisfactorily, we undertake to take the following specific actions:

- mass stay-aways
- public demonstrations for peace and justice
- mass prayer for peace
- regular briefings with local, regional and international partners
- dialogue with state authorities on the above demands.

Women's Coalition - Peace Vigil – 8 March 2002

The Women's Coalition is to hold a peace vigil on the eve of the elections on International Women's Day. Gender disaggregated figures of political violence are not available, but there is growing concern about the increasing cases of sexual torture as a tool of political intimidation. This is one of the most hidden forms of violence as the victims are the least likely to report violations. However beyond this, the climate of violence has limited women's participation in political activities of all kinds. Regardless of this, large numbers of women are working to defend the principles of democracy and popular sovereignty. The peace vigil is not only a call from the women's movement for a peaceful election, but equally, a call for a new maturity in the political cultures of the country and region.

Crisis Alert

from the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
22 Feb 2002

APPEAL TO REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

As the 2002 Zimbabwe Elections approach, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Committee would like to appeal to civil society organisations in the SADC region to lobby the governments of the region to take a firmer stand on the political crisis in Zimbabwe.

There is very little that can be said in mitigation of the actions of the government in relation to its conduct since the race for the Presidential elections in 2000. Thousands of Zimbabweans are being affected by human rights violations of every kind, including torture, rape, abductions and detentions. The government is training youth paramilitaries who are harassing civilians in rural areas and high density populations, demanding that travelers show party cards and chant ZANU-PF party slogans. There is no public access to the state media which has been turned into a propaganda machine for the government. Citizens can no longer expect protection from the police, who have made few arrests in response to state-sponsored violence. All manner of tactics are being used by the government to influence voting and large numbers of the population have been disenfranchised by the passing of new electoral laws.

Despite efforts by the international community and the governments of the region, there has been no improvement in the political situation. However it is critical that governments continue to put pressure on the Mugabe regime to respect fundamental principles of human rights and dignity and put an immediate stop to state-sponsored terror. We stress that while the need to address landlessness is a legitimate issue around which there is broad national consensus, but this is not a justification for the state to victimize its own citizens.

All claims by the government that it is respecting the rule of law, and that it is the opposition that are the "terrorists" need to be compared against the facts on the ground as have been witnessed by credible civic organisations and citizens.

We appeal to regional civil society organisations to pressure their governments, acting within the framework of SADC, Commonwealth or ACP Group structures to:

- recognize the extent of the crisis in Zimbabwe, and objectively assess the role of the government in this process
- review the policy of quiet diplomacy that has been the position to date in favour of a much harder line, starting with an outright denouncement of the government's actions
- broaden their range of interlocutors to include other sectors of society outside the government, in terms of finding a solution
- ensure a permanent presence on the ground of external observers

We believe that the long term political stability of the region depends on our ability to ensure effective regional interventions wherever there are violations of human rights and basic democratic principles. The SADC region must be built on principles of social justice, equity and respect for human dignity. We all need to play a part in ensuring that governments make these principles a priority and have the integrity and courage to intervene where violations of

Election monitoring: voter education at a price, restrictions on civil society monitoring

The Electoral Supervisory Commission has trained and will deploy some 25,000 observers drawn from the public as well as civic organisations including the Zimbabwe Election Support Network. 153 external observers have been accredited so far. There will be 4 monitors in each poll, but only Zimbabwean public servants are accredited as monitors. Legislation has been amended so that monitors and polling agents will now be able to travel in the same vehicles as ballot boxes and remain with the ballot boxes until they are opened.

Civic groups will observe this poll at a cost of Z\$1000 per observer (USD 20). ZESN has fielded 12,000 observers, effectively meaning that the government has received Z\$12 million from civic groups. Election monitoring has always been civic society's contribution to democratization of this country. Now the groups have to buy their way to be able to carry out a national duty.

In the 2000 elections, a monitor was a Zimbabwean citizen appointed by the ESC, while an observer was a foreigner or a representative of a foreign country or international organisation and appointed by the Election Directorate on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The law has now changed so that civic groups can only be accredited as observers. Observers who detect irregularities has no power to ensure that corrective action is taken.

The Commission has conducted a voter education campaign, but this relates mainly to encouraging people to vote. More practical information about the voting process and requirements is lacking. The amendments to the draconian amendments to the Electoral Act have put more obstacles in the path of civil society activity in the elections in that the law now states that "no person other than the Commission, or a person appointed in terms of Sub-section 3, a political party, or person registered in terms of this section shall provide voter education." Therefore information that the ESC does not deem worthy of voter education will not be taken up for civil society groups.

YOUTH PARAMILITARY TRAINING BASES

"No go areas", "curfews" and "militia road blocks" have become part of the vocabulary of the 2002 Zimbabwe Presidential elections, particularly in urban high density areas and the rural areas. The following is a list of the ZANU-PF 're-education centres' and where youths are reportedly being given paramilitary training. The list also includes some of the 'hot spots' where political violence has been at its most extreme.

Mashonaland West: Chinhoyi Old Hospital; Hunyani Township; Cold Stream; Cherima Township; Chikonono Township; Muzaki Suburbs; Alaska Mine; Shakington; Lions Den; Zvimba South; Chirau Hall; Mboma Township; Beer Engine; Uzande; Murombedzi Growth Point; Gonzo Guzha Hall; Chikaka Township; Jari Shopping Centre; Potta Farm; Makonde; Zumbake; Mukhowe Valley

Masvingo Province: Zaka District Office; Chinyabako

Mashonaland East: Mhembere Shops; Mutowana Shops; Ngwerume Shops; Njedza Township; Murewa Centre; Dandara Shops; Muchinjike Township; Muhume Shops; Chemapango Shops.

Manicaland; Chiware Growth Point; Tera Township; Charamba; Nyanga; D.C. Mutasa; Murambinda Growth Point; Buhera North; Marange; Mutare West.

Mashonaland Central: Nzvimbo Growth Point; Gweshe Business Centre; Kanyemba Township; Guest House Nyota; Musakara Shopping Centre; Bare Business Centre; Madombwe; Manhenga Growth Point; Chiveso Township; Chireka School; Chirikadzi Township; Supa Muchapondwa Business Centre; Nyara Business Centre; Mupandira Business Centre; Bradley, Madziva; Guwa Township.

Mashonaland East: Crossbooks Murenge Township; Tsiko Primary School; Chief Nzvimbo Chinjenje; Nyamuzuwe Road; Nyamuzala Business Centre; Nyamutumbu School.

Harare: Epworth Farm Domboramwari; Kambuzuma Section 5; Dziwarasekwa Extension; Muchembere Bar; Thembanis House Mufakose.

Chitungwiza: Mubaiwa Business Centre; Nyamweda Township, Goka Township; Rural Council (Mhondoro); Dema Business Centre; Jonas Primary School; Charakupa; Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre; Ruwa Training Centre

Those areas where the largest numbers of bases are reported are also those where the levels of violence are highest.

POLICE STILL REFUSING TO PROTECT PUBLIC FROM HARASSMENT

A number of civic organisations, wishing to hold public meetings (voter education, public debates) have been refused permission to do so by the police on the basis that this is a threat to public order. This is being done under the recently passed Public Order and Security Bill which requires four days' notice to be given for public meetings of this nature. However the Bill does not authorize police to bar the holding of such meetings.

ZANU-PF organized meetings and marches are authorized despite the unruly behaviour of demonstrators, including damage to property and harassment of passers by. The same police disperse marches that are organized by groups labeled "opposition groups."

The refusal of the police to protect citizens who are harassed by party militias and war veterans has long been a complaint in these elections. Over the past months alone, the list of incidents where police have stood by and watched killings, beatings and harassment of people accused of being opposition members runs into thousands and has now become the norm rather than the exception. Many of the perpetrators are known and named in police reports but no action is taken against them.

Violence during the polling period is therefore likely to be widespread unless the police begin to take their role as a public protection force seriously.

The impunity with which the perpetrators are committing their crimes is also likely to fuel reprisal attacks and prolong the crisis beyond the elections.

RURAL AREAS CLOSED OFF

As the election approaches, some rural areas have been completely closed off, particularly to urban travelers.

In most areas of the country, rural traffic is being disrupted by militia road blocks. Travellers are ordered to show their ZANU PF party cards and chant Zanu-PF slogans. Vehicles are searched for opposition or civil society campaign materials.

In addition, militias are confiscating identity cards of travelers to prevent them from voting during the elections.