



Zimbabwe
HUMAN RIGHTS
N G O F o r u m

POLITICAL VIOLENCE REPORT

February 2008

28 March 2008

A report by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum

OVERVIEW

As Zimbabwe draws close to the harmonised elections on 29 March 2008, politically motivated violence continues albeit at a lower level than in 2007. This report documents widespread and rampant use of violence by members of the various political formations in Zimbabwe especially ZANU (PF) supporters.

Furthermore, there is ongoing evidence that state security agents continue to show impartiality in their treatment of members of the opposition. The Human Rights Forum notes that the occurrences recorded in this report, in which members of the opposition have been arrested and assaulted on the basis of their political affiliation, point to a breach of the regional standards for elections set by the “SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections” adopted in Mauritius in 2004. For instance, Section 2, entitled *Principles for Conducting Democratic Elections*, states among others that ‘SADC member states shall adhere to the following principles in the conduct of democratic elections:

- *full participation of the citizens in the political process;*
- *freedom of association and*
- *political tolerance’.*

However, as this report will show, the Government of Zimbabwe has failed to honour some of these obligations. For example, the ruling party has failed to exercise political tolerance in a number of situations. In February, ruling party leaders, particularly President Robert Mugabe, used inflammatory language during their speeches, which amounts to hate speech. For instance during his birthday speech and at rallies he referred to his presidential opponents as traitors and sell-outs, political witches, political prostitutes, political charlatans and two-headed political creatures. He referred to opposition candidate Makoni as “worse than a political prostitute” and likened him to lice that can be easily crushed.¹

On the freedoms of assembly and association, Zimbabwean security forces continue to criminalise demonstrations and descend violently on demonstrators. This report documents 410 violations of the freedom of assembly and association, a marked increase from the January figure of 96. This marked

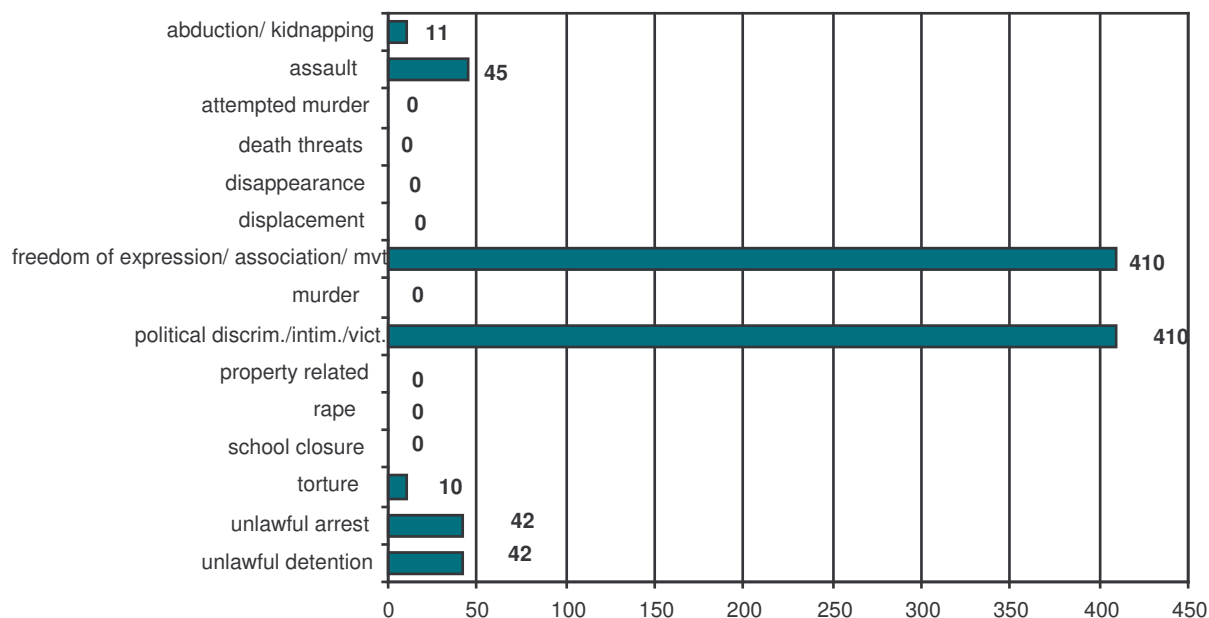
¹ Hate speech has been a serious concomitant of the violence, and its association with violence, both during and between elections, has been a cause of concern for the Human Rights Forum. Here see Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2007), *Their Words Condemn Them: The Language of Violence, Intolerance and Despotism in Zimbabwe*, May 2007, HARARE: ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM.

increase in the denial of these rights and freedoms is an indication of the closing of political space by the Government of Zimbabwe to prevent the opposition and human rights activists from freely campaigning. The Human Rights Forum notes that for elections to be free and fair, all political parties must be allowed to campaign freely in the period leading up to elections. They must have the right to hold meetings and rallies in order to explain their policies to the electorate, from whom they seek votes.

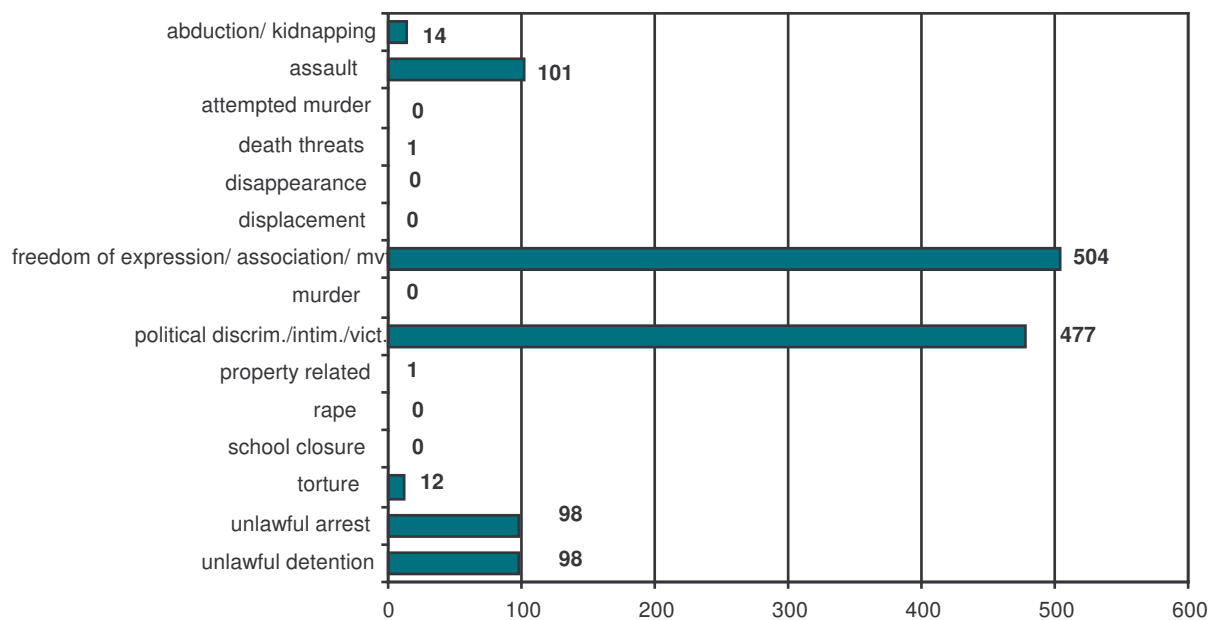
A clear case of the abuse of power was exhibited when alleged ZANU-PF supporters abducted and severely assaulted 9 senior officials and members of the *Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe* (PTUZ) before handing them over to the police. The members were distributing fliers on the deteriorating conditions in the education sector. This report also documents the assault of a man in Budiriro by suspected ZANU PF supporters for wearing an MDC t-shirt. A total of 45 assaults were recorded in the month of February as well as 10 cases of torture, a significant increase from the January total of 2. It is however noted that the number of cases of torture for February 2008 are lower than those of February 2002 another election year. The Human Rights Forum is of the view that this reduction in the cases of torture may be due to the significant amount of publicity given to the violations that occurred during the 2000 and 2002 election periods both locally and internationally.

Students continue to be treated as a political threat to national security as they agitate for the Government of Zimbabwe to resolve the problems plaguing the tertiary education sector in Zimbabwe. Seven students were assaulted and arrested in Bulawayo during a demonstration while three others were arrested and subsequently tortured in Harare on the same day during another student protest. The Human Rights Forum strongly condemns the criminalisation of student activities and calls upon the ZRP to desist from the unnecessary use of force on peaceful demonstrations.

Totals: 1 February – 29 February 2008



Cumulative Totals: 1 January – 29 February 2008



The graph should be read along with the table depicting the monthly totals of violations for February 2008 on page 12.

Key Abbreviations

AIPPA – Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act	WOZA – Women of Zimbabwe Arise
CIO – Central Intelligence Organisation	ZANU PF – Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
MDC – Movement for Democratic Change	ZCTU – Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
MP – Member of Parliament	ZNA – Zimbabwe National Army
NAGG - National Alliance for Good Governance	ZPS – Zimbabwe Prison Service
NCA – National Constitutional Assembly	ZRP – Zimbabwe Republic Police
OVT – Organised Violence and Torture	ZNLWVA – Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association
POSA – Public Order and Security Act	ZIMTA – Zimbabwe Teachers Association
PTUZ – Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe	ZUPCO – Zimbabwe United Passenger Company
UMP – Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe	ZINASU – Zimbabwe National Students Union

Sources: The information contained in this report is derived from statements made to the Public Interest Unit of the Human Rights Forum, its members and statements taken by a network of human rights activists and newspaper reports,

Notes to the tables:

Torture:

All cases of torture fall under the definition of torture according to the general definition given in the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment and Punishment.

The four elements of torture are:

- 1 **Severe** pain and suffering, whether physical or mental
- 2 **Intentionally** inflicted
- 3 With a **purpose**
- 4 By a state official or another individual acting with the **acquiescence of the state**.

Those individuals referred to in point # 4 as state officials include the ZRP, ZNA,

Unlawful arrest and detention:

Arrest by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) with no reasonable suspicion that an offence has been committed. Detention thereafter for a period exceeding 48 hours without access to redress through the courts or subsequent release without charge.

Abduction/kidnapping:

A kidnapping by a member(s) of an organised group that is not the ZRP, ZNLWVA, ZNA, ZPS and the ZNLWVA (as a reserve force of the ZNA).

Disappearance:

Kidnapped persons whose whereabouts remained unknown at the time of reporting.

Property related

These are incidents in which property rights have been violated. This includes arson, property damage and destruction and theft.

Cases of Political Violence

Note: The identities of victims whose names have not been published in the press and are not public officials are protected. This is done in order to protect the victim from further violence, intimidation and possible recriminatory attacks.

The purpose of this report is to record the nature of the politically motivated violence and intimidation that continues to prevail in the country. The Monthly Political Violence Reports are primarily based on victims' accounts, accompanied by medical evidence where possible, obtained from member organisations of the Forum and other partner organisations. Use is also made of press reports.

The Report cannot be considered as the exhaustive record of all incidents of politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe in the period under review. Nevertheless, every incident reported to the Human Rights Forum directly or through its members is meticulously documented and included in the reports. Care is also taken to record the incidents in the language in which they were reported to the Forum.

The situation prevailing in the country is such that it has not been possible to verify all of these accounts. The Human Rights Forum has done what it can to verify the reports, and is satisfied that the vast majority of them are substantially true. It is also not possible to rule out whether a victim's account is exaggerated or contains inaccuracies.

All reports derived from the press are denoted with the symbol Σ .

BULAWAYO

Bulawayo East

13 February 2008

Seven student leaders were arrested and several injured while protesting in Bulawayo against the deteriorating conditions in tertiary institutions and the general standards in the higher and tertiary education sector. More than 100 students reportedly took part in the march and several were injured when anti-riot police descended on them. Those injured included Zimbabwe National Association of Student Unions (ZINASU) Secretary for Gender, Privilege Mutinga, who sustained a broken arm after she was assaulted by riot police during the demonstration. She was 4 months pregnant at the time.

HARARE

Glenview

4 February 2008

The male victim reports that he was arrested and subsequently tortured for being in possession of a poster that had the picture of a ZNA officer in uniform. The victim had reportedly inscribed 'MDC' on the forehead of the man in the picture. He was taken by the police from his workplace at Glen View shopping center to Glen View Police Station. On the way to the police station the victim was verbally abused and threatened with assault for being an MDC supporter. At the police station he was beaten with a baton stick under his feet and on the right side of the temple causing him to lose consciousness briefly. The victim was then detained overnight and released the following day.

Budiriro

12 February 2008

The male victim reports that he was assaulted by ZANU (PF) supporters for wearing an MDC t - shirt. Close to 20 ZANU (PF) supporters, some of them wearing ZANU (PF) t – shirts, arrived at Budiriro shopping centre where the victim was drinking beer. The ZANU (PF) supporters also bought some beer and sat under a tree close to where the victim was sitting. Some members of the group noticed the victim was wearing an MDC t - shirt and incited the others to attack him. He was assaulted on the head with a log, a brick and clenched fists. The assailants only stopped the assault when passers - by intervened.

Harare Central

7 February 2008

Fifteen members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) who had to come to Harare from Bulawayo to attend the Peoples' Convention meeting, were arrested at Africa Unity Square whilst waiting to check into Meikles Hotel. Due to delays at the hotel, the victims were not able to check in and the hotel staff asked them to wait in the Africa Unity Square grounds. It was during their wait, that the anti-riot police squad approached them and searched their belongings. Despite informing police that they were in Harare to attend the People's Convention, about which the police had been notified, the group was arrested and taken to Harare Central Police Station.

10 February 2008

The male victim reports that he was assaulted by two officers of the ZNA and later arrested and detained on false allegations. He reports that he was having a conversation with his colleagues in which he mentioned police brutality and violence by ZANU PF supporters. Two soldiers then approached the victim and allegedly told him that it was taboo to speak negatively of ZANU (PF). The soldiers then assaulted him and took him to Harare Central Police Station. When they got to the police station, the soldiers reportedly accused the victim of assaulting them and the police refused to hear his side of the story. The victim was detained from 10 February 2008 to 11 February 2008. The victim was also denied medical attention during his detention despite having asked for it.

13 February 2008

Approximately 250 members of WOZA and MOZA were set to march through the streets of Harare during lunchtime. When the group had gathered at Rezende Street, near the Town House to start the peaceful protest, the group was set upon by a truckload of riot police who threw teargas canisters to disperse the crowd. Several members were badly beaten with baton sticks by riot and uniformed police officers after they regrouped. Fourteen members required medical attention and were treated at a private clinic in Harare. Leaders of WOZA and MOZA called for a further regrouping at the Harare Post Office half an hour later. Approximately 80 - 100 members managed to start and march peacefully up George Silundika Avenue. The procession progressed past the police post on First Street, where officers were given red roses and Valentine cards, arriving at the Herald Newspaper Offices. At the Herald, WOZA's National Coordinator, Jenni Williams, addressed the group. The group then peacefully dispersed. As they dispersed, two trucks with over 30 riot police arrived but were too late to effect any arrests.

13 February 2008

The male victim reports that he and the aspiring MDC parliamentary candidate for Mabvuku were arrested and assaulted while in custody on allegations of being involved in the planning a demonstration. The two were standing outside Harvest House, the Headquarters for the MDC when riot police came and forced them into a truck and assaulted them with baton sticks on the back and hands. They were taken to Harare Central Police Station where they were interrogated and locked up in cells. They were released on the same day without charge.

13 February 2008

The police assaulted and arrested student leaders who were taking part in a march to petition the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education to look into the deteriorating conditions in tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe. As they marched towards the Ministry's office, they were intercepted by police at the corner of Nelson Mandela Avenue and 1st street. They explained the reason for the march and as they were doing so a truck load of police officers arrived at the scene, and the officers began to assault the students. Three students report that they were bundled into a police truck and taken to Harare Central Police Station where they were submerged in water and then assaulted with baton sticks on the back and buttocks. The students were also forced to balance on their heads and perform press - ups with their knuckles. The students were released without charge at 20:00 hours on the same day.

18 February 2008

A male victim reports that he was assaulted by 8 police officers after being found in possession of an NCA membership card and a picture of MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai. The victim was walking along Nelson Mandela Avenue at around 21.45 hours when the police officers, 8 of them in plain - clothes and one in uniform, approached him and asked him why he was walking around at that time of the night. He was searched and accused of causing havoc in the city center. The victim was then ordered to lie down on the tarmac with his face down and subsequently assaulted with baton sticks. He managed to escape and reported the matter at Harare Central Police Station but the police took no action.

19 February 2008

ZANU-PF supporters reportedly abducted and severely assaulted nine senior officials and members of the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) before handing them over to the police. The members were distributing fliers on the deteriorating conditions in the education sector. Members of one of the teams distributing the fliers near 4th Street bus terminus were abducted by ZANU (PF) youths and taken to the ZANU (PF) provincial headquarters at 4th street. On receiving the information about the abduction of their colleagues, the other members, including PTUZ Secretary General Raymond Majongwe, went to enquire about them. After identifying themselves with the PTUZ they were immediately attacked by the ZANU (PF) supporters with clenched fists. They were taken into a small room where they were assaulted with sticks, iron bars, open hands and booted feet. They were assaulted in the presence of a police officer named as Zvoushe. The unionists were also made to sing songs in praise of the President and denouncing Tsvangirai. They were later taken to Harare Central Police Station before being taken to Harare Hospital and later to a private clinic.

22 February 2008

Two members from a singing group called the Rainbow Warriors were arrested and subsequently tortured for composing songs for the launch of the MDC 2008 campaign. The victims were arrested at the Harare railway station while waiting for the train to Mutare where they were due to perform at the MDC launch. They were waiting for the group's manager when a member of the CIO apprehended them and force-marched them to Harare Central Police station. Initially the two were charged with piracy but the following morning they were charged with undermining the President. They were

assaulted with clenched fists, booted feet and open hands. The male victim reports that his head was banged onto a table and his dreadlocks pulled. During the 4 day detention the victims were forced to accompany the police to their homes in Chitungwiza where they would carry out searches. They were taken to court on 26 February 2008 and remanded out of custody.

Hatfield

21 February 2008

Four MDC members were apparently arrested and subsequently tortured on allegations that they had participated in a demonstration that had taken place the previous day. One of the victims was moving his property to his new home with the assistance of his colleagues when two police officers and six ZANU (PF) youths came to the house and arrested them. They were initially taken to a police sub-station in Epworth and later to Domboromwari Police Station where they were assaulted with open hands. They were then taken to Harare Central Police Station where a female police officer assaulted them with a high-heeled shoe and open hands. The victims were accused of destroying property belonging to a woman in Epworth, trying to unseat the government and insulting the president. They were detained for five days and denied food during this period. They were released without charge on 26 February 2008.

Norton

5 February 2008

Two male victims were reportedly abducted at gunpoint and subsequently assaulted by two suspected war veterans and members of the National Youth Service. The two were on their way to Hunyani River to fish when the war veterans and the youth militia approached them questioning them on what they were doing in the area, as it was no longer an MDC area, approached them. They were then forced to go to Black Barn Farm where they were locked in a toilet for 7 hours. When the assailants returned and found that they had relieved themselves in the toilet, they threatened the victims with assault and told them that it was not an MDC area. Both victims were assaulted under the feet and back and forced to cut grass around the farmyard. One of them complained of a sore leg and asked to be relieved of the punishment but instead was forced to fetch water. He managed to escape but his colleague remained in the custody of the assailants.

Zengeza

12 February 2008

Six MDC supporters, 2 male and 4 females were arrested, assaulted and detained in Zengeza, for carrying out door-to-door campaigns for the MDC (Tsvangirai) parliamentary candidate for Zengeza. On the evening in question, while carrying out the campaigns they were followed by the police in a truck without headlights and when the police got to them they jumped out of the truck and assaulted the activists. The victims were forced into the truck and taken to Makoni police station. At the police station, the ZANU (PF) candidate for Zengeza, Mr Nota allegedly came and threatened the victims and encouraged the police officers to assault them. They were detained until 13 February 2008 and released on payment of Z\$100 000 000.

MASHONALAND CENTRAL

Bindura

18 February 2008

The MDC (Tsvangirai) council candidate for Bindura and a colleague were assaulted by suspected ZANU (PF) supporters while in the process of organizing the candidate's nomination papers. As they were walking towards Chipadze Township, four men who suddenly appeared from behind a bush attacked them. The assailants accused the victims of diverting ZANU (PF) supporters into supporting the MDC candidate. The victims were assaulted with clenched fists and booted feet before the assailants disappeared into the bush again. The matter was reported to the police.

MASHONALAND WEST

Chegututu

15 February 2008

The male victim reports that he was assaulted and chased around the city center by a group of ZANU (PF) supporters for being a member of the MDC. He was coming from the Nomination Court after accompanying an MDC candidate to file his nomination papers. The victim was tripped and kicked by the assailants and later chased around Chegututu town center by a truck full of people who were verbally assaulting him.

Mubaira

24 February 2008

The MDC (Tsvangirai) parliamentary candidate for Mhondoro/Ngezi was detained at Mubaira Police Station for 34 hours on allegations that his campaign team had used abusive language during a campaign session. The victim was summoned to Mubaira Police Station where he was informed of the allegations and told that he was responsible for the actions of his campaign team. He was informed that he would be detained pending further instruction by a senior police officer who was said to be attending a workshop in Norton. No formal charges were made against the aspiring legislator and he was released after spending 34 hours in police custody.

MIDLANDS

Gweru Urban

15 February 2008

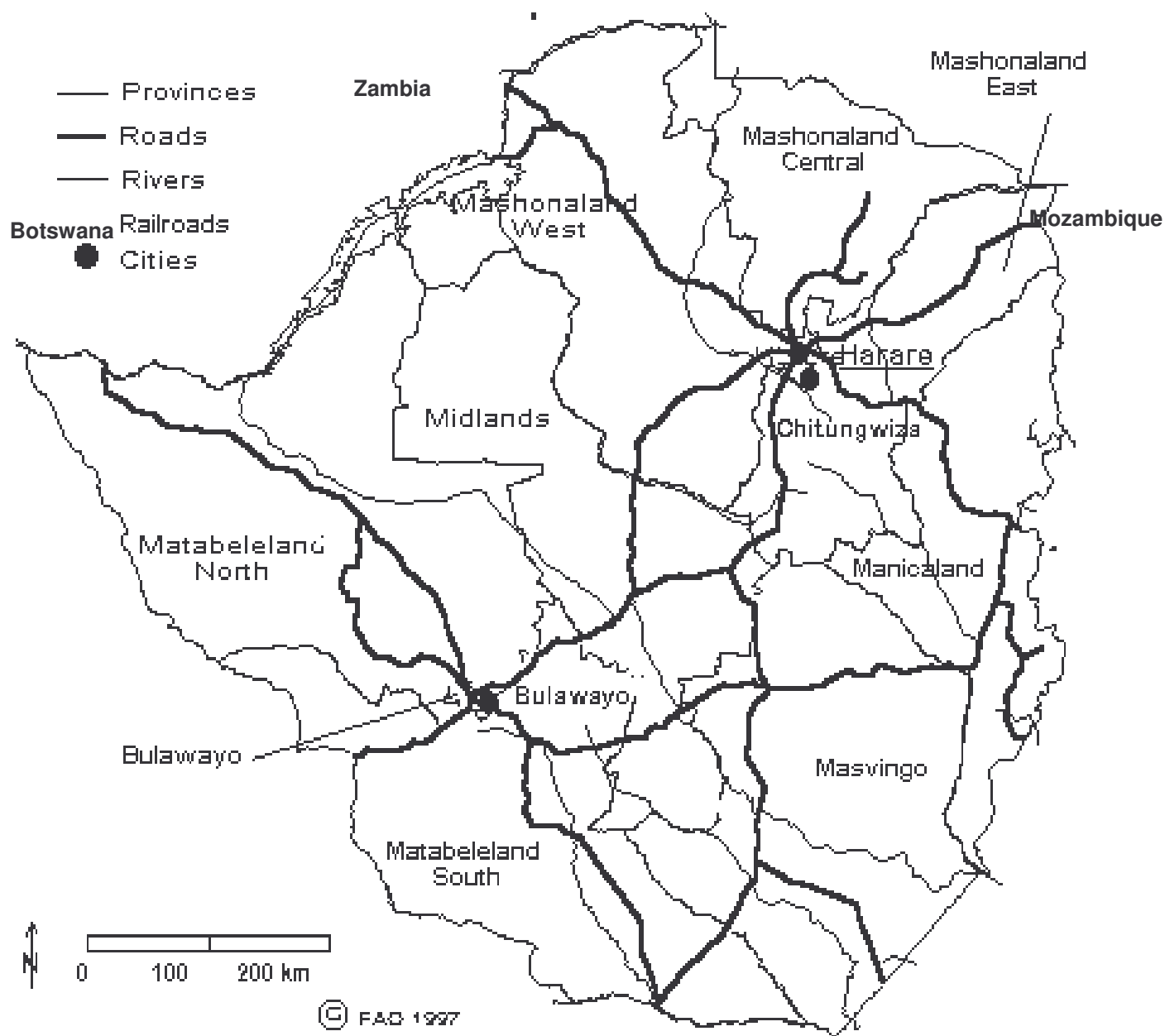
Mr. Muchengeti of the Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET) in Gweru was reportedly summoned to the Gweru Central Police Station following a Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ) public meeting held at the Gweru Theater on 14 February 2008. The police argued that during the meeting, people made subversive statements against the government. Muchengeti was allegedly accused of being a 'puppet of Non governmental Organizations (NGOs)'. The police also allegedly threatened to ban meetings in Gweru if anybody spoke against the incumbent government. No charges were preferred against Muchengeti.

Monthly totals of human rights violations from 1 January 2008 – 29 February 2008

Table 1

	Jan	February	Total
Abduction/ kidnapping	3	11	14
Assault	56	45	101
Attempted murder	0	0	0
Death threats	1	0	1
Disappearance	0	0	0
Displacement	0	0	0
Freedom of expr/ass/mvt	94	410	504
Murder	0	0	0
Political Discrim/ intim/vict	67	410	477
Property related	1	0	1
Rape	0	0	0
School closure	0	0	0
Torture	2	10	12
Unlawful arrest	56	42	98
Unlawful detention	56	42	98
Monthly Totals	336	970	1 306

	MAIN EVENTS 2008
January	
22	MDC ' <i>Freedom March</i> ' is banned by the police.
23	Morgan Tsvangirai is picked up and detained by the police from his home in the early hours of the morning.
	MDC members are assaulted and arrested as they march towards Glamis stadium for a rally.
25	Members of <i>Restoration of Human Rights Zimbabwe</i> are arrested and detained following a peaceful demonstration.
February	
13	Student leaders are arrested and assaulted for demonstrating in Harare and Bulawayo.
	The MDC Tsvangirai faction Mabvuku Parliamentary candidate is arrested outside the party's headquarters allegedly for planning a demonstration.
19	Nine members of the <i>Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe</i> are abducted and assaulted by suspected ZANU (PF) supporters before being handed over to the police.
24	The MDC (Tsvangirai) parliamentary candidate for Mhondoro/Ngezi is detained at Mubaira Police Station for 34 hours on allegations that his campaign team had used abusive language during a campaign session.

ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF ZIMBABWE

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (also known as the “Human Rights Forum”) is a coalition comprising 17 member organisations. It has been in existence since January 1998 when non-Governmental organisations working in the field of human rights joined together to provide legal and psychosocial assistance to the victims of the Food Riots of January 1998.

The Human Rights Forum has now expanded its objectives to assist victims of organised violence, using the following definition:

“Organised violence” means the inter-human infliction of significant avoidable pain and suffering by an organised group according to a declared or implied strategy and/or system of ideas and attitudes. It comprises any violent action, which is unacceptable by general human standards, and relates to the victims’ mental and physical well-being.”

The Human Rights Forum operates a Research and Documentation Unit and offers legal services to assist victims of organised violence and torture claim compensation from perpetrators through its Public Interest Unit.

Member organisations of the Human Rights Forum are:

- Amnesty International (Zimbabwe) (AI (Z))
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)
- Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ)
- Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa (SAHRIT)
- Legal Resources Foundation (LRF)
- Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)
- Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ)
- Nonviolent Action and Strategies for Social Change (NOVASC)
- Transparency International (Zimbabwe) (TI (Z))
- Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA)
- Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of the Offender (ZACRO)
- Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR)
- Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET)
- Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights)
- Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)
- Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)
- Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA)

The Human Rights Forum can be contacted through any member organisation or through:

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