
Post-election violence leads to new waves of displacement in Zimbabwe (No. 3)

30 April – 7 May 2008

Following the elections in Zimbabwe on 29 March 2009, Mugabe's ZANU-PF party has unleashed a campaign of state-sponsored terror to punish MDC activists and voters who are suspected of having voted for the opposition. The violence is resulting in new waves of internal displacement in Zimbabwe.

On 29 April, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, said, "Because of the increasing violence and the number of displaced people fleeing their homes to other places, there is a serious humanitarian crisis." ([IRIN, 30 April 2008](#)).

Below is a list of documented instances of new displacement in Zimbabwe from 30 April – 7 May 2008.

Information on internal displacement caused by post-election violence in Zimbabwe from 29 March to 24 April 2008 can be found [here](#), and information on developments from 25-29 April can be found [here](#).

- The Solidarity Peace Trust has released a [video](#) about post-election violence in Zimbabwe, with images of displaced communities, and several individuals testifying on camera about having been displaced by violence or threats of violence on the part of ZANU-PF supporters or so-called war veterans ([Solidarity Peace Trust, 28 April 2008](#)).
- A report released by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) on 30 April states that in the night of 16 April, the houses of nearly 20 families were set ablaze in Pondoro Village, in Ward 2 of Pfungwe rural area, by ZANU-PF militias who accused the families of being opposition supporters. ([ZimRights, 30 April 2008](#))
- On 1 May, Voice of America quoted sources in Mashonaland Central province as saying that violence continued to escalate there as ZANU-PF youth militia members burned the houses of opposition members. VOA's sources said that homes were torched in Bushu, in Shamva South constituency, and at Butter Farm, in Bindura North constituency. ([Voice of America, 1 May 2008](#))
- On 2 May, The Times reported that hundreds of rural schools are struggling to reopen at the start of the new school term after teachers fled a campaign of

violence against local activists for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and officers for the Zimbabwe election commission. Thousands of teachers took employment as election officers during the school break to supplement their shrinking incomes. In the past week at least 100 teachers, including several school principals, have been arrested on suspicion of electoral fraud. ([The Times, 2 May 2008](#))

- In a statement released on 2 May, UNICEF said that there were “growing reports of children displaced from their homes as a result of political violence.” UNICEF drew attention to the fact that large numbers of NGOs were unable to operate, or were restricted in their humanitarian activities. “We need to ensure an open and safe space for reaching those in need, now more than ever,” said Dr Festo Kavishe, UNICEF’s representative in Zimbabwe. “To see [children’s] suffering increase as a result of the current political tension, through violence or displacement or being unable to receive the aid that is planned and paid for, is a violation of child rights and contrary to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.” ([UNICEF, 2 May 2008](#))
- On 3 May, the Zimbabwe Standard reported that at least four bodies of MDC supporters remained at Guruve Hospital in Mashonaland Central because their relatives had been forced to flee their homes to seek refuge in urban areas, and had therefore been unable to collect the bodies for burial. The four were reportedly killed in Muzarabani and Dande areas by suspected ZANU-PF youth militia, war veterans and soldiers.
- The Standard also reported that several houses belonging to suspected MDC supporters had been razed to the ground around Muzarabani business centre and in Hoya, in Mashonaland Central province. In Centenary and Mvurwi, also in Mashonaland Central, villagers were reported to have been chased away after their houses had been set ablaze by war veterans and ZANU-PF militia.
- Finally, the Standard reported that on Wednesday 30 April, war veterans and youth militia evicted more than 20 families from Chipanza and Goviti farms, accusing them of voting for the MDC. They were given 10 minutes to pack their belongings and leave. More than 60 people, including babies, children, and elderly people, were staying by the roadside along the Mvurwi-Centenary road because they had nowhere else to go. ([The Standard, 3 May 2008](#))
- On Sunday 4 May, the Independent on Sunday quoted a Human Rights Watch researcher as saying that Mashonaland East was “totally inaccessible”. The researcher said, “There are roadblocks everywhere, and nobody is allowed in or out. We have been told of people sleeping in the bush because their homes, crops and animals have been burned.” The researcher said she had seen burnt homesteads in Mashonaland West and Central provinces, and interviewed displaced people in the eastern Manicaland region who spoke of widespread intimidation. ([The Independent, 4 May 2008](#))

- Also on 4 May, the Progressive Teachers Union said 133 of its members had been assaulted, and more than 1,700 had fled amid threats. Many teachers worked as polling officers during the disputed presidential election on 29 March. ([BBC News, 5 May 2008](#))
- On Monday 5 May, the MDC claimed that over 5,000 families had been displaced more than 1,000 homes had either been burnt or destroyed in the course of political violence orchestrated by the ruling ZANU-PF party. ([MDC, 5 May 2008](#))
- The BBC's Orla Guerin travelled under-cover to Zimbabwe and reported that arson attacks, beatings, and killings have driven as many as 1,500 opposition supporters into hiding. In some cases they have been forced to take refuge in the bush. "We sleep in the maize fields because we know there's trouble ahead and we are very scared," an MDC organizer told the BBC. "In the eyes of the ruling party it's a crime to vote for the MDC. They said they had taken control of the area by force in the past, and that was how it would stay." An elderly relative who fled with her said that war veterans had threatened to burn any villages that voted for the MDC for a second time. ([BBC, 6 May 2008](#))
- On 7 May, the BBC reported that the political violence was a systematic attempt to change the political landscape. The BBC said that the aim is "electoral cleansing - to drive opposition supporters from their voting areas, or make them too afraid to vote for the MDC again." ([BBC, 7 May 2008](#))
- In a written statement dated 6 May 2008, the UK Foreign Secretary said, "In the 5 weeks since the elections in Zimbabwe, 7000 people have been displaced." ([Written Ministerial Statement on Zimbabwe, 6 May 2008](#))

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