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Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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Election Watch 2012-11

ELECTION ISSUES

Chinamasa ‘coup’ threat provokes outrage in the media

REMARKS by Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa that his party and the military would not accept Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai as president in the event that he wins forthcoming national elections attracted condemnation from a wide cross-section of the Zimbabwean society in the month.

Chinamasa, who is also ZANU PF’s chief negotiator in the Global Political Agreement (GPA), was seen on BBC World Television making these comments in an interview with the corporation’s Africa Correspondent, Andrew Harding.

Notably, the official state media censored Chinamasa’s utterances, in what appeared to be an attempt to conceal information that has the potential to damage ZANU PF’s image ahead of elections.

The private media widely reported Chinamasa as having told the BBC that ZANU PF and the army would not accept a **“foreign-sponsored”** victory for Tsvangirai because the MDC-T leader had allegedly promised to reverse the gains of independence (*NewsDay & Daily News*, 15/10).

Chinamasa hinted that the military would stage a coup if Tsvangirai won the elections: ***“Now if anyone is going to say: ‘When I come into power I’m going to reverse that’, they (the military) have every right to say: ‘Please, you are asking for trouble’. You will be asking for trouble”.***

Asked to clarify his use of the word **“trouble”**, Chinamasa told the BBC to make its own interpretation: ***“He (Tsvangirai) will be asking for trouble to seek to reverse the land reform programme. There is no one who is going to accept any enslavement. And if those countries impose for him (Tsvangirai) to win, that result will not be acceptable. We will not accept it. We will just not accept it. Isn’t that clear?”***

The private media viewed Chinamasa's utterances as not only a threat to democracy, but also a reflection of ZANU PF's contempt for Tsvangirai and his MDC-T party.

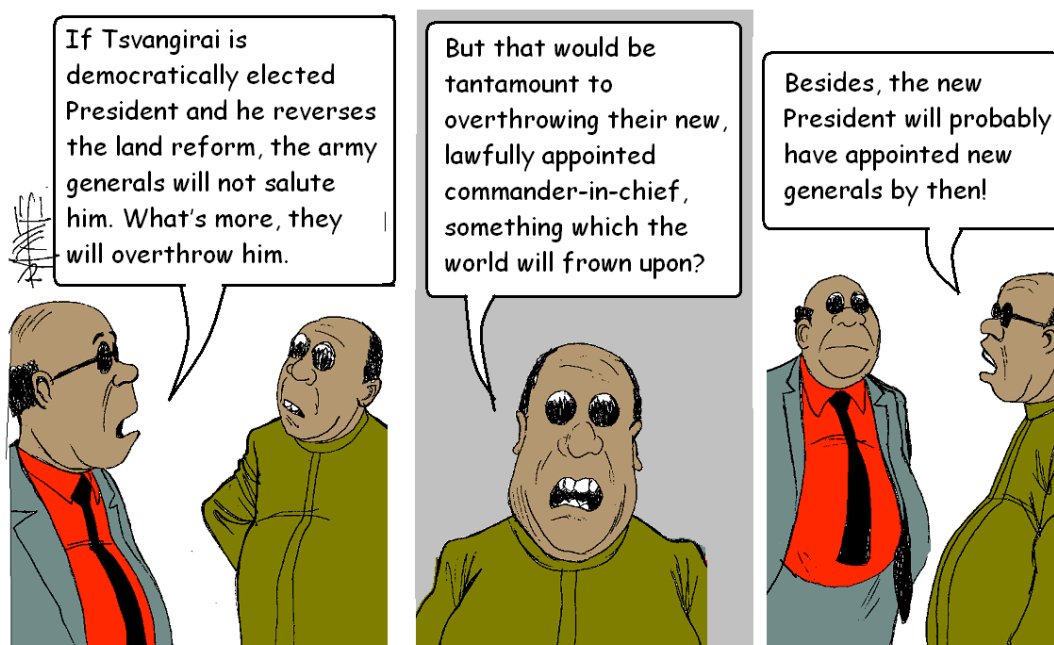
These media warned that such comments had the potential to spark a civil war and urged Mugabe to accept any poll outcome to preserve his legacy.

The private media also reported the MDC-T, civic groups, and several political commentators expressing outrage over Chinamasa's comments, arguing that such utterances vindicated their demand for security sector reform before the next elections.

In one such case, the private media reported the PM's spokesman, Luke Tamborinyoka, saying his boss would take steps to force Chinamasa to retract the "coup" threat (*Daily News & NewsDay*, 15/10). Tamborinyoka declared: ***"Chinamasa will regret that statement for the rest of his life. Chinamasa should know that there is nothing that is bigger than the people's mandate. The ballot will always be superior to the bullet. It is a treasonous statement as it implies that the people's will amounts to nothing"***.

Even worse, the private media considered Chinamasa's threat to be reminiscent of those made by top military officials in the past, especially the one expressed in the run-up to the 2002 presidential elections – that Zimbabwe's state security chiefs would not salute anyone without liberation war credentials, in apparent reference to Tsvangirai (*Daily News & NewsDay*, 15/10).

Barely a week after Chinamasa expressed his intolerance of an MDC-T election victory, the private media reported ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo telling South Africa's *e-News Channel Africa* that it would be ***"messy"*** if Tsvangirai won the elections, warning that ***"hardliners"*** would find it difficult to hand over power to the MDC-T leader (*Daily News, NewsDay & The Standard*, 18, 19 & 21/10).



Security chiefs at it again!

NEWS about several state security chiefs repeating their partisan political statements also made headlines in the month.

Their comments appeared to corroborate threats by Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa and ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo that Zimbabwe's security forces were unlikely to accept Prime Minister Tsvangirai as the country's president if he wins next year's elections.

While all the media reported a number of security chiefs making partisan political comments, the official state media did not view their comments as a threat to the country's constitutional democracy by abandoning their civil service mandate to remain strictly apolitical in executing their duties.

In one such case, *The Sunday Mail* (21/10) reported Army Chief of Staff Major-General Douglas Nyikayaramba warning Zimbabweans that **"Western-sponsored" political parties were "posing serious threats to the country's peace and national security"**. Speaking at the ZNA's Pay and Records 32nd anniversary celebrations in Harare, Nyikayaramba accused these parties of peddling **"Western ideologies"** and having interests that were **"against Zimbabwe's sovereignty"**.

In another, *The Herald* and *NewsDay* (10/10) reported Police Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri defending Zimbabwe's infamous Public Order and Security Act (POSA), while officially opening the ZRP's Provincial Liaison Officers' workshop in the capital. Chihuri claimed: **"Posa is all about creating orderliness within the society and it is those who want to create chaos and confusion that distort it"**. He urged Zimbabweans to be wary of organizations, which sought to usurp Zimbabwe's hard-own independence under the pretence of offering help.

Earlier, *The Herald* (6/10) reported Zimbabwe National Army Commander Philip Sibanda "encouraging" Zimbabweans to stand firm against hardships resulting from illegal sanctions imposed on the country by the West. He warned: **"The intentions of Western countries on Zimbabwe are to push the Zimbabwean population to extremes of suffering so that people can rise up against government to fulfil the Western ultimate objective of regime change"**. Sibanda added: **"This is without doubt what will happen if we allow the British, EU and the Americans to come back and recolonize us through the back door using some of our misguided brothers and sisters as their agents"**.

The private media reported a cross-section of Zimbabwean society criticizing the security commanders for interfering with the country's civil governance and urged them to stick to their constitutional mandate (*The Standard*, SW Radio Africa, *The Financial Gazette*, 14, 15 & 25/10).

They argued that the conduct of the security chiefs were not only a threat to democracy, but also made it difficult for next year's elections to be considered free and fair.

Media give mixed signals over Stakeholders' Conference

THE Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee's second All-Stakeholders Conference, held at the Harare International Conference Centre on October 22nd and 23rd, was the highlight of Zimbabwe's long-delayed constitution-making process.

Most private media outlets initially described the two-day conference as a success, citing the absence of the chaos and violence that characterized Copac's First All Stakeholders Conference in July 2009, and the fact that delegates were allowed to debate and submit their views freely (*Daily News* and SW Radio Africa, Nehanda Radio and *ChangeZimbabwe.com*, 23, 24 & 25/10).

However, *The Herald* (24/10) emphasized **"disagreements"** among delegates **"on nearly all contentious issues"** in the draft constitution under the headline: *Copac: Still no deal on sticky issues*. Notably, these issues were raised by ZANU PF when the party rejected the Copac draft last July and proposed extensive amendments to it, a move vehemently opposed by the two MDC formations.

Among the **"sticky issues"** were debates on whether executive authority should be vested in the President or shared with Cabinet; the appointment of judges; introduction of presidential running mates; creation of a National Prosecuting Authority and a Constitutional Court; security sector changes; dual citizenship; devolution and protection of minority rights (*The Herald*, 23/10).

The following day, *The Herald* (25/10) joined the private media and the national broadcaster, ZBC, in presenting the event as largely **"successful"**, citing Copac co-chairpersons, political commentators and the three coalition parties, including the Welshman Ncube-led MDC formation, which boycotted the start of the event in protest against the inclusion of Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara on the programme for the official opening.

Apart from expressing **"satisfaction"** with the outcome of the conference, these media also contained stories **"praising"** President Mugabe and Prime Minister Tsvangirai for calling for non-violence during the official opening ceremony on October 22nd (ZTV, 23 & 24/10, 8pm and *Daily News*, SW Radio Africa, *The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail*, 23, 24, 25 & 28/10).

NewsDay, Studio 7, *The Financial Gazette*, *The Standard* and *Daily News On Sunday* (23, 24, 25, 28 & 29/10) criticized Mugabe for declaring that only the coalition principals - and not MPs driving the constitution-making exercise - had "the final say" over the process. They viewed Mugabe's comments as having confirmed long-held fears that Zimbabwe's constitutional reforms were not people-driven.

But a more critical examination of Copac's second All-Stakeholders' Conference appeared in the *Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Standard* (26 & 28/10).

The *Independent* dismissed the event as a “**farce**”, “**charade**”, “**drab affair**”, “**damp squib**” and “**talk-shop**”, as delegates were stripped of decision-making powers and the mandate to debate contentious issues in the draft, while the *Standard* reported analysts complaining that the conference ended without “**clarity**” on how outstanding issues would be resolved, as well the next steps in the constitution-making process.

Although *The Standard* (28/10) reported that Copac’s management committee was set to meet on October 29th to deliberate on issues raised at the conference, these analysts, including Irene Petras of the Independent Constitutional Monitoring Project (ICMP), predicted more deadlocks in subsequent constitutional stages, citing, among others, deep-seated divisions between the parties.

RIGHTS ABUSES

Media warns of worsening violence

NEWS of worsening violence in some parts of the country, such as Manicaland, Midlands, Harare and Masvingo Provinces made headlines in the private media this month.

Ironically, this coincided with President Mugabe’s call for Zimbabweans to “**tolerate each other’s political and social preferences**” ahead of next year’s elections (ZBC, 8/10, 8pm & *The Herald*, 9/10). Mugabe made this appeal while addressing mourners at the burial of Higher Education Minister Stan Mudenge at the National Heroes Acre in Harare.

The media recorded 31 incidents of violence. Of these, 29 (94%) appeared in the private media. The remaining two featured in the official state media.

Among the incidents were:

- Reports of the deployment of soldiers in some of parts of the country to conduct rallies and meetings on behalf of ZANU PF. These soldiers were said to be threatening violence against anyone opposed to ZANU PF, while declaring that no MDC meetings were allowed to take place (SW Radio Africa and *Zimbabwe Independent*, 4 & 12/10).
- Reports of a Kwekwe resident, Admire Kadamoyo, being hacked to death in a pub on October 9th by a member of the notorious ZANU PF militia that calls itself ‘*Al shabab*’. The terror group, reportedly led by Defence Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa’s alleged henchman, Owen Ncube, attacked members of the Utakataka Express band five days later, accusing them and their late lead singer Tongai Moyo of belonging to the MDC-T (SW Radio Africa, 11 & 15/10).
- The alleged petrol bombing of the home of MDC-T ward chairman Nelson Bvudzijena in Zaka Central by suspected ZANU PF members. Reportedly, Bvudzijena was seriously injured, along with his wife, in the attack (*Daily News* and SW Radio Africa, 10 & 11/10), and
- News of the police in Gwanda assaulting residents in what they believe to be revenge attacks, following the murder of a police officer at a local pub on October 15th. According to Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), police invaded bars, nightclubs and homes, attacking patrons and residents and firing teargas. Twelve people were seriously injured in the process (SW Radio Africa, 17/10).

What they said...

"I can say it will be a mess that is what I can tell you, it will be messy. We will be asking for too much from our guys (the military) to accept these people who we all know fought against them and were responsible for the deaths of many comrades" – ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo warning about possible bloodshed if Prime Minister Tsvangirai wins next year's presidential election, while speaking with South Africa's e-News Channel Africa (Daily News, 18/10).

"They (hardliners) are human beings; they feel pained by the actions of the opposition and also by the West. I have told people several times that look, we laughed at what happened in Libya and we laugh at what is happening in Syria. These things can also happen here. There will be deaths. People could be killed and maimed and so on" - Gumbo (Daily News, 18/10).

"Most of them (service chiefs) acquired farms during the land reform programme. They will retire to their farms and will be guaranteed protection of the wealth they accumulated while in office. We have to manage the transition and say let sleeping dogs lie. He (Tsvangirai) is ready to pardon them although he doesn't say that what they did was good" – unidentified close adviser to the PM (NewsDay, 10/10).

"Tsvangirai cannot win. He has been campaigning and mobilizing against the interests of Zimbabweans on many issues, whether talking about land, seeking to reverse the gains of the liberation struggle" - Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa speaking in an interview with the BBC (Studio 7, Daily News and NewsDay, 12 & 15/10).

"While ZANU PF is claiming to be fighting for the empowerment of the majority, the reality is that the party is pushing for provisions which ensure that it retains control over natural resources. The MDC on the other hand believes the current constitution is a stumbling block and is therefore fighting for an environment that makes its quest for power possible" – UZ political science lecturer Shakespeare Hamauswa accusing Zimbabwe's coalition parties of using the constitution-making process to advance partisan agendas (The Standard, 21/10).

"It is extremely rare for political parties to fight for interests of the nation. There are no national interests involved when the parties are fighting for particular individuals to govern the country. ZANU PF wants to remain in power, while the MDCs want to get into power" – NCA Lovemore Madhuku agreeing with his UZ counterpart Hamauswa (The Standard, 21/10).

“I will not step on dead bodies or walk past burnt houses to State House, as long as I am living and as long as I am still MDC-T president. I will not burn down a building to get a rat” - Prime Minister Tsvangirai addressing villagers in Zaka (*The Standard* and *NewsDay*, 7 & 8 /10).

“We told them (Sadc facilitators) that we are ready for elections, but the other parties said they are not. I don’t know whether they need a caterpillar to level the ground they say is not level. What is important is that the people vote without pressure, and on our side we will ensure that there is no pressure as we go for elections. Those who don’t want elections will not be forced” – President Mugabe declaring that elections would be held next year whether the two MDC formations liked it or not. Mugabe said this while addressing his party’s Central Committee meeting in Harare (ZTV, 12/10, 8pm and *NewsDay*, 13/10).

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