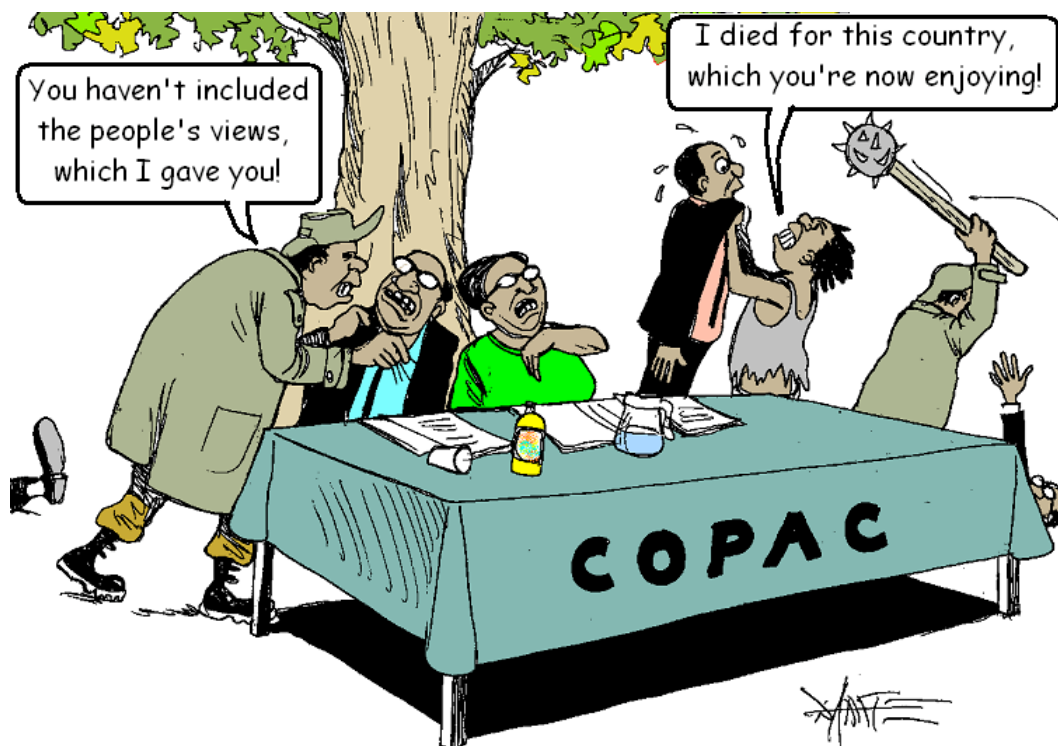




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Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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Election Watch 2011-2



War veterans disrupt constitutional reform

NEWS of fresh problems in Zimbabwe's controversial constitution-making process attracted most attention in all the media during the first two weeks of the New Year.

But this was quickly overshadowed by revelations into the circumstances surrounding the death of the country's first black army commander, Retired General Solomon Mujuru, which seized the media's headlines when the inquest into the general's death opened in the middle of the month.

The media reported the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac) as having run into trouble after the first four chapters of the draft constitution were leaked to the state media. The ZANU PF-controlled daily, *The Herald*, was the first to expose this confidential data. It serialized what it claimed were the first four provisional chapters of the new supreme law between December 29th and January 5th this year.

The contents of these chapters reportedly infuriated the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), who not only threatened to sue Copac for allegedly ignoring the views of "most" Zimbabweans, but also disrupted its Press briefing in Harare on January 13th (*The Herald*, *The Manica Post*, *Daily News* and *NewsDay*, 3, 13, 14 & 17/1 and ZBC, 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 21/1, 1pm & 8pm). They accused Copac and the drafters of the constitution of promoting gay rights, dual citizenship, property rights, devolution of power and opposing land reform.

The government media did not test the veracity of ZNLWVA's allegations with a response from Copac, nor consider whether its decision to publish such provisional work would prejudice the process of drafting the new law.

On the other hand, the private media viewed ZNLWVA's behaviour as part of ZANU PF's efforts to influence the outcome of the draft constitution or derail the whole process. They also viewed this as having the potential to further undermine the credibility of the constitution-making process and chances of its conclusion within new timeframes (*The Financial Gazette*, *Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Standard*, *NewsDay* and *New Zimbabwe.com*, 6, 10, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20 & 23/1).

New Zimbabwe.com and the Zimbabwe Independent (10 & 20/1), for instance, published a dispassionate and incisive article by Tawanda Hove, defending the conduct of constitution drafters and describing public criticism of them as “**unwarranted**”, “**premature**” and “**unfair**”. Hove complained: **“Public attacks of the kind that we have read in the public media reflect cowardly behaviour which undermines the drafting team. It is cowardly because everyone, including those leading the attacks, knows that drafters do not have the same facility to respond publicly to the harsh words and accusations being made against them by ZANU PF politicians”**.

The constitution-making process constituted the bulk (98) of the 132 reports the media carried on the administration of election-related issues. The remaining 34 were on debate on the need to implement other reforms to facilitate free and fair elections. While the private media quoted political commentators, civic organizations and sections of the international community expressing their support for such reforms (*The Financial Gazette*, SW Radio Africa, *Daily News On Sunday* and *The Standard*, 6, 16, 19 & 20/1), the official media reported ZANU PF and its allies ruling out changes, especially in national the security services sectors, on the grounds that they were unconstitutional and undermine the country’s security (*The Herald*, 5 & 13/1).

State media accuse Tsvangirai of bribing private media

FABRICATIONS by ZANU PF and the state media it controls that Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his MDC-T party were bribing the private media to give them favourable publicity ahead of forthcoming national elections were the highlight of the media's coverage of party political activities in the month.

These unsubstantiated allegations first appeared on the national television station, ZTV, on January 4th on its 8pm main news bulletin. The station claimed, without providing a shred of evidence, that the Prime Minister ***“has once again come under the spotlight”*** after it emerged that he had ***“bribed three editors”*** from the local private Press ***“to stop the negative reportage of his party and his promiscuous behaviour”***. ZTV reported Tsvangirai as having offered the three editors ***“thousands of dollars”***, in what it described as Tsvangirai's ***“latest desperate attempt to redeem his soiled image, which has seen him being condemned for supporting gay rights and his glaring failure to handle his bedroom politics”***. It also claimed that the PM ***“ordered”*** the editors to ***“redirect their negative reports to ZANU PF and attack officials who dare question (his) blundering recklessness...”*** such as Presidential spokesman George Charamba and ZANU PF Politburo member Jonathan Moyo.

Instead of seeking comment from Tsvangirai and his party or the ‘three editors’, ZTV attempted to give some credibility to its claims two days later (6/1, 8pm) by roping in pro-ZANU PF commentators such as Gabriel Chaibva and Goodson Nguni ‘confirming’ the allegations. These sources, which ZTV paraded as ***“political analysts...privy to the issue”***, identified the bribed editors as Stanely Gama (*Daily News*) and Brian Mangwende, Faith Zaba and Nevanji Madanhire (Alpha Media Holdings, publishers of the *Independent*, *The Standard* and *NewsDay*).

These allegations were contained in seven of the 20 stories the government media carried on the activities of the MDC-T. Seventeen (85%) of these 20 stories were negative, while the remaining three were neutral.

The official state media allocated 102 reports to ZANU PF, 90 (88%) of which were positive. The remaining 12 were neutral. The smaller MDC formation, led by Industry Minister Welshman Ncube received coverage in one report, which was neutral. The report was a follow-up on the defection of five MPs from the MDC-N (*Chronicle*, 24/1).

Forty-three (42%) of the 102 reports on ZANU PF were on its provincial

elections for the Mashonaland West, which John Mafa won, and preparations for the president's birthday by the 21st February Movement. Another 25 were news stories reporting ZANU PF allies, such as Anglican Archbishop Norbert Kunonga expressing support for President Mugabe and his ZANU PF party. The remaining 34 reports were mostly opinion pieces, news features and editorial comments depicting ZANU PF as the champion of the interests of the black majority, citing its controversial black economic empowerment programme; anti-gay stance, and the provision of farming inputs to underprivileged farmers.

On the other hand, the private media gave Tsvangirai and his party and the editors from the private Press the opportunity to respond to the bribery allegations. All of them dismissed the claims as false and a ploy by ZANU PF to discredit its critics ahead of national elections (*Daily News* and *The Standard*, 6, 7 & 8/1).

In addition, the private media assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the policies of the three coalition parties, as well as their readiness for elections. For instance, these media quoted a wide cross-section of Zimbabweans questioning the implementation of the indigenization policy and complaining that most of the party's campaign tactics were bordering on coercion and vote-buying, as the party reportedly intensifies its efforts to reclaim lost constituencies, especially in rural areas. They cited as proof the provision of farming inputs; partisan food distribution; alleged coercion of villagers to attend meetings; and reports that the party was doling out positions to villagers during its ongoing restructuring exercise (*Zimbabwe Independent*, *NewsDay* and *Daily News*, 13, 16 & 25/1).

The private media (and the official media too) criticized the MDC-T for its lack of public relations skills, recently exposed by Public Service Minister Lucia Matibenga's angry reaction to *The Herald* (19/1), which had asked her to give an update on what her ministry was doing to avert the civil servants strike (*The Standard*, Radio VoP and *Daily News*, 22, 24 & 25/1). In response, Matibenga was quoted as telling the government daily to leave her alone, provoking outrage from civil servants' unions, analysts and opposition political parties, who viewed her actions as **"in bad taste"** and a reflection of **"arrogance"** and lack of commitment to the welfare of civil servants (*The Herald*, 19/1 and ZTV, 24/1, 8pm).

This was reflected in the 74 reports the private media carried on the activities of the country's main political parties. Fifty-three (72%) of them were on ZANU PF, while 12 were on the MDC-T. The remaining nine were on the MDC-N.

RIGHTS ABUSES

Private media report subversion of rule of law

ANY hopes Zimbabweans might have had that the New Year would herald an improvement in the country's political situation appeared to have been dashed by reports in the private media, exposing the continued breakdown of the rule of law around the country.

These media reported ZANU PF youths as having taken over council properties such as bus terminuses and market places under the guise of their party's controversial black economic empowerment programme (*Zimbabwe Independent*, *NewsDay* and *Daily News*, 13, 21 & 25/1). This practice was reported as rife in Harare's Central Business District and its high-density suburbs of Mbare and Highfield. After taking over these facilities, these youths would reportedly demand fees and rent from traders and transport operators.

As if that was not enough, the private media also carried news of the disruption of MDC rallies, especially in Matabeleland's provinces, as well as civil society meetings by state security agents and ZANU PF supporters, and the rounding up of vendors, mostly MDC-T supporters in Harare's CBD, under the guise of a clean-up campaign to stamp out music piracy (*NewsDay*, Radio VoP and *Daily News*, 12, 13 & 25/1).

The private media viewed these developments as a campaign by the ZANU PF arm of government to get rid of its political opponents ahead of forthcoming national elections. They cited as proof the arrest of two MDC MPs, Lynette Karenyi (Chimanimani West) and Bednock Nyaude (Bindura South), on various charges and the ongoing prosecution of civil society leaders, among them National Constitutional Assembly chairman Lovemore Madhuku and Munyaradzi Gwisai, coordinator of the local chapter of International Socialist Organization (ISO).

These cases were among the 29 incidents of rights violations the media carried this month. Most of them (25) appeared in the private media, while the remaining four featured in the official state media.

They included:

- The arrest of 50 MDC-T youths in Bulawayo for planning a demonstration against the continued detention of their leader, Solomon Madzore (*The Standard & Daily News On Sunday*, 15/1).
- The arrest of more than 16 members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) in Bulawayo for planning a demonstration against **“increased police repression”** (SW Radio Africa and *Daily News*, 18 & 20/1), and
- The arrest of a bookseller, Sinikiwe Matore, in Victoria Falls for selling Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's book: *At the Deep End*, and the victimization of prison officers at Rusape prison for reading the PM's newsletter (*NewsDay* and SW Radio Africa, 5 & 23/1).

Language of intolerance

“It comes as no surprise to anybody that you see editors, the likes of

Nevanji Madanhire, Brian Mangwende, Stanley Gama, Faith Zaba and a multitude of many others, not on any single occasion do they write negative about (Prime Minister) Morgan Tsvangirai. Even his sexual promiscuity, his botched up marriage, his stance on homosexuality, his flip-flopping, they don't say anything at all and the reason is very clear to any right thinking Zimbabwean. Reason is they are chewing steak in their mouths" - Pro-ZANU PF commentator Gabriel Chaibva responding to bribery allegations against Tsvangirai (ZTV, 6/1, 8pm).

"...The constitution-making process has become a dead and already stinking donkey given that the MDC formations and their founders and funders are now using the drafting process to subvert the views of the people gathered during the Copac outreach process" – ZANU PF Politburo member Jonathan Moyo (*The Sunday Mail*, 8/1).

"This is fraud at its highest level. Your conduct forces us to be hard on you because you have no brains and you don't think all the five of you leading the process" - Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association representative Denias Dzedze accusing Copac of ignoring the will of the people (*The Herald*, 14/1)

"Had it not been for ZANU PF machinations and the childishness of its representatives, the drafters would have completed their work on 20th January" – Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora exonerating his committee from any wrongdoing (SW Radio Africa, 2/1).

"You people, the Western countries, you taught us that democracy is elections. Now somebody (President Mugabe) wants elections and you say no. There will be elections and Mugabe will go and someone else will takeover, but not someone imposed by Western countries. We don't know the politics of Morgan – he has other people speaking for himself" – Zambian President Michael Sata is quoted by Britain's *Telegraph* as having dismissed Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai as a "stooge" (*NewsDay*, 25/1).

"We are going to elections, and we must choose between life and death. We will choose life over death. When you give land, and other critical resources to the indigenous people, oppose homosexuality and sanctions, then you are doing what God has willed for Zimbabweans, you are giving life to your people, and we will choose you. If what President Mugabe and ZANU PF are doing resonates with the Bible and empowerment will of God for his people, then what can prevent us from

supporting them. They are offering life, but if you are offering death to our people by calling for imposition of sanctions then that is evil, and we will never support, but reject you” - Archbishop Norbert Kunonga declaring his support for Mugabe and ZANU PF while addressing about 200 clergymen at an annual retreat at St. Augustine’s Mission (*The Manica Post*, 13/1).

“Unfortunately, the British and Americans have polluted our politics, unfortunately all the MDC formations are puppet political parties, unfortunately history clearly shows that the MDC formations can’t control their hooligans and unfortunately the MDC formations put the interest of their sponsors first” - *The Sunday Mail*’s comment (8/1) questioning the commitment of the two MDC formations to end violence.

Ends/

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