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**Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe**  
**Friday June 1<sup>st</sup> – Saturday June 30<sup>th</sup> 2012**  
**Election Watch 2012-7**

## **CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

# **Copac accused of failing the nation**

NEWS of fresh disagreements in Zimbabwe's long overdue constitution-making process was the most significant aspect of the media's coverage of the country's preparations for forthcoming national elections.

Both the government and private media reported the parties in Zimbabwe's Constitution Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac) accusing each other of stalling the exercise.

Matters came to a head when ZANU PF reportedly tabled a 29-page document with over 225 demands that would, according to the other parties, subvert the views of the people gathered during the constitutional outreach consultation phase.

The private media reported the document as containing proposals to overhaul nearly all the 18 chapters of the draft constitution, which ironically had been approved by Copac's management committee that includes senior ZANU PF Politburo members (*The Financial Gazette* and *Daily News*, 7 & 8/6).

*The Gazette* reported that a perusal of the document shows that the party specifically wants to discard the issues of devolution of power, an independent National Prosecuting Authority, the Constitutional Court and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The party also wants the removal of a clause in the draft barring the military from engaging in the political affairs of the country (which exists in Zimbabwe's present Constitution). It further proposes the removal of a clause that demands the President first seeks parliamentary approval before declaring war. ZANU PF proposes that the President should be allowed unbridled powers to declare war. In addition, the party advocates for unlimited ministerial appointments by the President.

The media reported that ZANU PF's proposals attracted outrage from the two MDC formations and some political commentators, who viewed them as an attempt to delay the conclusion of the new constitution, thus enabling Mugabe to unilaterally call for fresh polls under the current negotiated Lancaster House Constitution (*Gazette*, *Daily News*, Radio VoP and *New Zimbabwe.com*, 7 & 8, 15, 16 & 21/6).

Furthermore, the two MDC formations were reported as promising to block ZANU PF's plans during the management committee's three-day retreat in Nyanga during June, aimed at breaking the gridlock over the final draft (*Zimbabwe Metro*, *Daily News*, *Daily News On Sunday*, *NewsDay*, and *The Gazette*, 15, 18/6).

However, all media reported ZANU PF defending its demands and dismissing some of the accusations as **"nonsense"** (*Daily News* and *NewsDay*, 8, 10 & 18/6).

These included claims that the party's Politburo member Jonathan Moyo had authored the document with the assistance of senior military officers.

In one such story, ZANU PF's Copac co-chairman Paul Mangwana was reported saying: **"We never demanded that soldiers be allowed to take part in politics, what we are saying is we do not want a politicized constitution that has reference to the military in every chapter..."** (*The Zimbabwean*, 14/6).

This report was among the 42 stories the media carried on Copac's squabbles. Of the 42 reports, 18 appeared in the government media and 24 in the private media.

The remaining eight reported other political analysts and some civic organizations blaming all the parties for problems in the constitution-making process.

These commentators and civic groups accused the parties of being selfish; lacking national interest; and politicizing the exercise.

In one such case, ZBC (7/6, 8pm) reported National Constitutional Assembly chairman Lovemore Madhuku expressing doubt over Copac's ability to deliver a new constitution: **"There is no constitution that will come from Copac so there is need for government to intervene because precious time has been wasted while millions of dollars have gone under the drain. The whole process should be aborted"**.

The NCA leader said nowhere in the world was a constitution written by political parties and urged the principals to disband Copac and set up an independent body to write the new supreme law of the land as is the trend worldwide (ZBC, 7/6, 8pm).

In another report, the *Daily News* (23/6) reported a coalition of civic groups, the National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (Nango), expressing similar sentiments.

## **No balance in media reports of SADC summit**

NEWS on the Extraordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government, held in Angola, to discuss the political situation in Zimbabwe and Madagascar, made headlines in all the media early this month.

The media publicized the summit's resolutions on Zimbabwe, which were contained in a communiqué, released on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

The summit ***“commended stakeholders for their commitment, co-operation and efforts towards the implementation of the Global Political Agreement and urged the parties to the Global Political Agreement (GPA) to finalize the constitution-making process and subject it to a referendum thereafter”***.

It also ***“urged the parties to the GPA, assisted by the Facilitator, to develop an implementation mechanism and to set out time-frames for the full implementation of the Roadmap to Elections”*** and thanked South African President and SADC facilitator Jacob Zuma ***“for his efforts towards the realization of full implementation of the GPA”***.

Apart from distorting the outcome of meeting, the government-controlled media also presented it as representing a victory for ZANU PF over its coalition partners.

For example, *The Sunday Mail* (3/6) reported the summit as having ***“refused to interfere in Zimbabwe’s issues by throwing back the ball into the court of the three GPA parties, leaving it possible for elections to be held this year”***.

Under its front-page lead: *Ball in your court, SADC tells Zim*, the official weekly reported Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi amplifying this distortion, saying the summit had told Zimbabweans to ***“go back home and resolve your issues”***.

Mumbengegwi presented the summit as having endorsed ZANU PF's position on elections: ***“We still want to hold elections this year...SADC wants processes leading to elections to be expedited. They are saying elections are overdue”*** (*The Sunday Mail*, 3/6).

The paper also reported the two MDC formations as having come out of the summit with ***“egg on their faces”***. It reported that Zambian President Michael Sata ***“stole the show”*** on ***“several occasions”*** when he gave MDC leaders ***“a torrid time, suggesting to them openly that they were afraid of elections because they did not have a message to go with to the electorate”***.

This report was among the 39 stories the government media carried on the SADC summit.

The private media's coverage of the topic was largely sensational as reflected in most of the 56 stories they published on the matter.

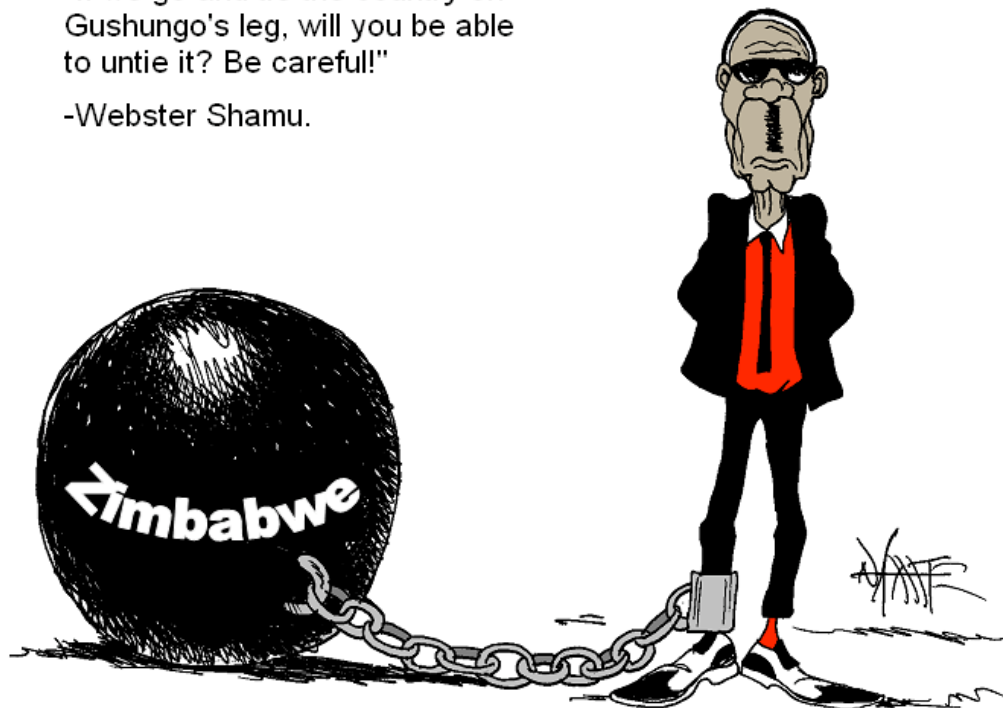
Not only did they view the summit as representing a slap in the face for Mugabe and his party, but they also regarded it as signalling the death knell for ZANU PF without clearly explaining how.

*The Standard* (3/6), for instance, ran a front-page story: *Mugabe faces end of political career*, but failed to substantiate this.

The following day, the *Daily News* (4/6) splashed another front-page headline: *SADC dumps Mugabe*, under which it reported that **"Mugabe returned home during the weekend a humiliated man after his plans and push for elections this year were rejected"**.

"If we go and tie the country on Gushungo's leg, will you be able to untie it? Be careful!"

-Webster Shamu.



## **PARTY ACTIVITIES**

### ***Media feast on tensions in rival parties***

NEWS of the alleged defection of 84 MDC-T members in Bulawayo to the rival MDC faction led by Industry Minister Welshman Ncube and alleged divisions in President Mugabe's ZANU PF party were the highlight of the media's coverage of the activities of Zimbabwe's main political parties.

While the private media saturated their news pages and bulletins with reports exposing factionalism in ZANU PF, they paid less attention to similar problems in Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC formation. Most of these media either downplayed the problem or reported senior MDC-T officials denying its existence. This was evident in nine of the 21 (43%) stories the private media carried on MDC-T's activities.

On the other hand, the official state media either suppressed reports of infighting in ZANU PF or reported the problem as under control in 21 of the 119 reports they carried on the party. Eleven were based on senior ZANU PF officials condemning the problem, which emerged during ZANU PF's ongoing restructuring exercise. The remaining 87 (73%) reports praised Mugabe and his party for being sensitive to the plight of the majority of Zimbabweans, as evidenced by policies championed by ZANU PF in government, such as the Grain Loan Scheme and the controversial black economic empowerment drive. These stories gave the impression that ZANU PF still enjoyed widespread regional and international popularity, epitomized by recent separate visits by the Chinese Communist Party and SADC liberation movements to express their solidarity with the party (ZBC, 7, 8, 11, 15, 20 & 21/6, 8pm).

Seven of the 46 reports the state media carried on the MDC-T were on factionalism in Bulawayo. Eight were on divisions between senior MDC-T officials in government, councils, and party structures in other parts of the country. The remaining 31 (67%) discredited the MDC-T as being a pawn of Western imperialism; having nothing to offer Zimbabweans; derailing the constitution-making process; and being violent, corrupt and afraid of elections (ZBC, 11, 12, 13, 14 & 19/6, 8pm).

The *Chronicle* (18/6) broke the news of defections from the MDC-T. It reported the **“disgruntled”** party members accusing Makokoba MP and Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe of **“greediness”**, **“treating them inhumanely”**, and of being corrupt and **“a ZANU PF mole”**.

The *Chronicle* gave Khupe, who is also the deputy president of the MDC-T, an opportunity to respond: **“This is absolute rubbish. I do not know those people. They have never been in our structures and are just a gimmick to gain political mileage for their parties. I do not even recognize their names. I can sue them for spreading malicious lies”**.

The *Chronicle* (23/6) ran a follow-up story: **“Stung by defections from his party to the rival MDC faction led by Welshman Ncube, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has reportedly called for a crisis meeting with the defectors in Bulawayo next week”**.

The report, which appeared on the front-page, claimed Tsvangirai was **“afraid the defections would trigger an exodus from his party”** and had sent **“shockwaves”** through the MDC-T.

The official daily reported some of the alleged but unidentified defectors confirming Tsvangirai's request and complained that some MDC-T youths were threatening them, adding that they were **“now sleeping with knives and other weapons under their pillows”** for self-defence. One of the alleged defectors was reported saying: **“MDC-T will never abandon their culture of violence”**.

The private media was mostly preoccupied with the alleged scramble between two ZANU PF factions; one reported led Vice-President Joice Mujuru and the other by Defence Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa, to succeed Mugabe. This was the subject in most of the 32 reports the private media carried on ZANU PF's activities.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**

THIS month the media recorded 27 incidents of rights violations. Twenty-four (89%) of them appeared in the private media, while the remaining three featured in the official state media.

Among the incidents were:

- The brief detention of five employees of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) on June 25<sup>th</sup> by police in Karoi after attempting to hold 'legal clinics'. The police however claimed the group convened a meeting without notifying them (SW Radio Africa, 26/6).
- Reports that the ZANU PF-aligned Chipangano gang had threatened workers to stop construction of a ZESA substation in Mbare. The substation would serve a complex under construction that includes a service station and food court, which would bring development and jobs to the suburb. But the gang has reportedly blocked this because they accuse the developer, Alex Mashamhanda, of supporting the MDC-T (SW Radio Africa, 26/6).
- The arrest of MDC-T Matabeleland South youth provincial chairperson Morgan Ncube, for insulting President Mugabe, and the arrest of the party's Bulawayo Central organizing secretary, Nyengerai Makundidze, for possessing a cell phone containing songs with lyrics that insulted Mugabe (*Bulawayo24.com*, SW Radio Africa and *AllAfrica.com*, 8 & 11/6), and
- The arrest of over 100 members of the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) pressure group by the police in Bulawayo, as they conducted a sit-in protest calling for the immediate release of a draft Constitution (SW Radio Africa, 27/6).

Ends/

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