



Defending free expression and your right to know

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday November 15th – Sunday November 21st 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-45**

Contents

1. The week's top stories
2. The loudest voices

THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

FAILURE by the SADC Troika on Politics, Defence and Security to meet on the sidelines of a ceremony to officially open new regional offices in Botswana, revived debate over SADC's ability to resolve Zimbabwe's political crisis.

The aborted meeting made headlines in both the government and private media at the weekend.

While the official media and the private Press generally viewed this as a snub on the two MDC formations that had allegedly requested the meeting, the private electronic media insisted that SADC was still concerned with Zimbabwe's political crisis, as evidenced by South African President Jacob Zuma's imminent visit.

In other reports, the private media continued to express concern over President Mugabe's call for early elections, insisting that Zimbabwe had to implement comprehensive electoral reforms and stop human rights abuses first.

The government media either ignored these concerns or discredited them as having been motivated by an alleged fear of electoral defeat by the MDC groups.

Fig 1: Topical news distribution in the media

Media	SADC meeting	Election debate	ZANU PF campaigns	MDC activities	Constitutional reforms	Human rights
Official Press	14	6	11	27	1	0
ZBC	14	9	61	0	12	1
Private papers	4	24	18	9	8	47
Private radios	6	5	1	1	1	12
Online agencies	7	5	0	3	3	7
Total	45	49	91	40	25	67

State media feast on Troika's 'snub' to MDC

THE failure by the SADC Troika on Politics, Defence and Security to meet over Zimbabwe's prolonged political stalemate gave the state media another opportunity to discredit concerns by the MDC formations and civil society groups.

The proposed meeting flopped after two members of the troika - Zambian President Rupiah Banda (chairman) and his Mozambican counterpart Armando Guebbuza - failed to turn up under unclear circumstances.

The official media however, narrowly viewed their absence as evidence of SADC's alleged frustration with the MDC groups, which had reportedly planned to raise baseless and "imaginary" complaints to sabotage the coalition to please their perceived Western handlers.

While the private Press also viewed the leaders' absence as tantamount to a snub, the private electronic media insisted that SADC remained worried about Zimbabwe's political deadlock, as evidenced by its decision to send South African President Jacob Zuma to the country (*New Zimbabwe.com*, 21/11).

The Sunday Mail's heavily editorialized front-page lead (21/11) epitomized the official media's biased coverage. The paper, together with the ZBC the previous evening, reported Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his delegation as having left Botswana **"with their tails between their legs"** after the SADC troika failed to meet. The weekly accused Tsvangirai of attempted to take advantage of the official opening of SADC headquarters in Gaborone to **"smuggle...the so-called crisis in Zimbabwe"** onto the agenda and also **"push"** for the postponement of elections scheduled for next year. It discredited Tsvangirai's alleged action as a ploy to **"convince his Western handlers that he is doing something about his imagined crisis in Zimbabwe"**, a position echoed by Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa and unnamed "analysts".

The private media highlighted frustrations by the MDC formations and independent political commentators over the aborted meeting.

These groups interpreted this as evidence of SADC's lack of commitment and capacity to resolve Zimbabwe's political crisis (*NewsDay*, 22/11). While *The Standard* (21/11) speculated that the Troika's meeting was cancelled after the SADC secretariat had "**deliberately mishandled the programme**", *NewsDay* urged the two MDC formations to change their strategy and avoid putting their faith in SADC.

Govt media trash poll concerns of 'West's MDC puppets'

PRESIDENT Mugabe's call for national elections next year continued to receive support from his party and the official media it controls.

While the state media blindly endorsed Mugabe's plans as a way of ending Zimbabwe's uneasy coalition, they ignored the fact that the coalition had not fulfilled many of the preconditions governing the holding of elections outlined in the GPA, or discredited such concerns as having been prompted by the MDC-T's alleged fear of electoral defeat.

This was evident in the 114 stories the government media carried on the proposed elections. Seventy-two (62%) of them were on ZANU PF's campaign activities. Twenty-seven were on the activities of the two MDC formations. The remaining 15 claimed that Zimbabwe had the capacity to hold democratic elections next year.

All their reports on ZANU PF portrayed Mugabe and his party as the only suitable ones to lead Zimbabwe on the strength of their liberation war credentials and policies that allegedly empowered black Zimbabweans, such as the controversial land reform and indigenization programmes. Those stories on the MDC groups, except one that appeared in *Chronicle* (15/11), either blamed them for problems in the coalition or depicted them as unfit to govern, as they were allegedly fronts of Western imperialism.

The Herald (17/11) quoted Patrick Chinamasa, ZANU PF's negotiator in the power sharing talks, saying Mugabe's call for early elections was justified as it was "**simply a fulfilment of the MDC-T's wishes**". He claimed that while ZANU PF and the smaller MDC faction had wanted a five-year coalition during the inter-party talks, this was "**met with stiff resistance from the MDC-T**", which "**insisted on giving it a fixed lifespan**". Chinamasa also defended Mugabe's directive on the grounds that the coalition was allegedly no longer working.

The following day *The Herald* (18/11) distorted Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's Press statement after meeting president of the Chiefs' Council Fortune Charumbira. It claimed that Tsvangirai had said his party was "**not ready**" for the elections and "**now wants a rethink on the matter**". The paper suffocated the reasons why the MDC-T was reluctant to participate. These included traditional leaders' involvement in partisan

politics, which Tsvangirai insisted violated the terms of the GPA, and worsening relations among the coalition parties.

ZTV (21/11, 8pm) quoted **“analysts”** such as Goodson Nguni and Chris Mutsvangwa accusing the MDC-T of being **“afraid of the elections”** and **“backing down”** after having realized that **“losing was inevitable”**. Earlier, the same station (16/11, 8pm) broadcast offensive utterances by a senior ZANU PF official in Masvingo, Josbe Omar, accusing MDC-T officials of promoting gay rights in Zimbabwe. He claimed: **“Homosexuality is rife within the party, we are not surprised by this because they have lost their culture”**.

The private media continued to express concern over Zimbabwe’s electoral environment, which they insisted was not conducive for credible elections.

They cited as proof the alleged militarization of ZANU PF’s campaign machinery, its reluctance to implement the SADC roadmap for democratic elections and the alleged increase in election-related incidents of political violence.

These media also quoted global economic watchdogs such as the UK-based Economic Intelligence Unit arguing that the proposed elections were likely to slow down Zimbabwe’s economic recovery (*ZimOnline*, 15/11).

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

MMPZ observed glaring differences in the coverage of similar events by the country’s two daily papers, the state-controlled *Herald*, and privately owned *NewsDay* this week.

This left readers of both papers wondering what really transpired and who was telling the truth.

MMPZ identified two such stories. One of them was a report based on Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai’s meeting with the president of Chiefs’ Council Fortune Charumbira. The other was on a court case involving Chief Serima of Gutu and MDC-T Deputy Youth Development Minister Tongai Matutu.

In the first story *The Herald* (18/11) reported Tsvangirai as having met Charumbira to **“explore ways of improving relations”** between his party and the country’s traditional leaders. It reported the Prime Minister as having requested the meeting to express his concern over traditional leaders’ **“open support”** for President Mugabe and his party during the recent chiefs’ council meeting in Kariba. Tsvangirai reportedly told Charumbira that the chiefs’ actions violated the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

In response, Charumbira reportedly defended the chiefs’ actions. He told the Prime Minister that his members supported ZANU PF because it had **“the history that we know”** and respected traditional leaders, unlike the MDC-T, which disrespected, confronted, and sometimes assaulted them.

NewsDay (23/11) gave a completely different version of the event under its front-page lead: *PM summons chiefs...reads Riot Act*.

It reported Tsvangirai as having been **“incensed”** with traditional leaders over their decision to endorse Mugabe’s candidature for next year’s polls. The private daily claimed that the Prime Minister **“ordered”** the chiefs to **“stop dabbling in politics”** during his **“no-holds barred meeting”** with Charumbira.

In the other, *The Herald* (19/11) carried a brief story on its second page announcing the beginning of Matutu’s trial on allegations of assaulting Chief Serima.

The paper reported Serima as having **“made fresh claims”** before a Masvingo magistrate by alleging that he had been **“slapped and punched”**. Initially, he claimed that Matutu had **“poked”** him **“in the face”**. Asked by defence counsel Douglas Mwonzora why he was telling the court a different version from his initial one, Serima claimed that the police had **“wrongly recorded his statement in the first instance”**.

NewsDay gave an entirely different account.

It reported Matutu’s trial as having **“got off to a hilarious start”** after Serima **“refused to answer questions”** from Mwonzora. This forced the magistrate to adjourn court proceedings to allow the prosecutor to **“advise the chief on court proceedings”**.

NewsDay reported that the problem started when the chief, **“who appeared bossy throughout court proceedings”**, refused to be asked questions by Mwonzora on why he had given two statements to the police. Serima allegedly **“demanded to be asked questions by the magistrate, leaving the court in stitches”**.

Serima allegedly brought the packed court down in laughter when he claimed that he was **“illiterate...on the day of the alleged crime”**. Asked why he did not sustain injuries if Matutu and a group of MDC-T activists had assaulted him, Serima replied: **“Do you wish me to get injured?”** The defence also asked him why he never sought medical treatment, to which he said he **“administered traditional herbs at his home and took some pain-killing tablets”**.

ELECTION TALK STOKES VIOLENCE

THE private media recorded 17 new incidents, a 106 percent increase from last week’s eight incidents.

Ten (59%) of them were related to next year’s proposed elections. They mostly emanated from campaign activities by Zimbabwe’s political parties, following President Mugabe’s call for early elections.

The official media censored these incidents as they disproved their editorial position that the country’s political situation was conducive for elections.

Among the incidents were:

- Alleged attacks on Mwenezi villagers by soldiers for attending an MDC rally. At least nine people were reported injured (*Daily News* and *Voice of the People*, 16 & 18/11).
- Coercion by ZANU PF of MDC supporters in Chimanimani to renounce their party membership by the end of this month (*The Zimbabwean*, 18/11), and

- Harassment and assault of two MDC-T MPs, Ian Kay (Marondera Central) and Jefferson Chitando (Masvingo Central), by suspected ZANU PF supporters (Voice of the People & *The Zimbabwean* 18 & 22).

THE LOUDEST VOICES

ZANU PF remained the most frequently quoted party in the official media this week.

This vindicated concerns that ZANU PF was abusing these media to obtain an advantage over its political opponents.

Out of the 144 times that Zimbabwe's coalition parties were quoted in the state media, ZANU PF was heard 116 times (67%), a move that gave credence to concerns that Zimbabwe's media and political environment was heavily tilted in favour of ZANU PF. In contrast, the two MDC formations were accessed 28 times: [MDC-T (18) and MDC-M (10)].

Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa made the loudest noise in the official media.

He was heard nine times, followed by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai (six), ZANU PF's Muzarabani MP Edward Raradza (five) and Industry and Commerce Minister Welshman Ncube (three).

Chinamasa and Raradza vilified the MDC-T for allegedly developing cold feet over next year's proposed elections and accused the party of undermining the inclusive government. Tsvangirai urged Zimbabwe's traditional leaders to be impartial and reiterated that his party would not participate in elections under present conditions. Ncube urged the coalition parties to cease hostilities.

MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa topped the charts in the private media.

He was quoted nine times. Tsvangirai (six) and ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo (five) trailed.

Chamisa and Tsvangirai accused ZANU PF of undermining the Global Political Agreement (GPA), while Gumbo attacked the MDC formations.

What they said...

A CLEAR indication of the increasingly abusive nature of relations in the coalition government can be found in the comments made by politicians and so-called "political analysts" given publicity in the ZANU PF-controlled state media.

Article 19e of the Global Political Agreement states: ***"that the public and private media shall refrain from using abusive language that may incite hostility, political intolerance and ethnic hatred, or that unfairly undermines political parties and other organizations."***

Judge for yourself whether this selection of comments violates this clause in the GPA:

“We have been with a very unfaithful partner who panders to the whims and caprices of a Western paramour. In the two years our unfaithful partner did nothing to consummate the marriage. They continued to act as a party in opposition...and did nothing on sanctions (and) pirate radio stations...They are not committed to constitution-making, to economic turnaround, and the proper functioning of the State....” – ZANU PF negotiator in the inter-party talks Patrick Chinamasa justifying the need for early national elections (*The Herald*, 17/11).

“Our committee feels that those who called for sanctions should have death sentences imposed on them because their actions have destroyed the national economy” – ZANU PF’s Manicaland provincial sub-committee chairman Brigadier-General Douglas Nyikayaramba (*The Manica Post*, 19/11).

“The MDC is a banana party so they want to convert Zimbabwe into a banana republic and the people of Zimbabwe have noticed that the MDC has nothing to offer...” pro-ZANU PF political commentator Goodson Nguni (ZTV, 21/11, 8pm).

“Now they (MDC-T) are discovering...that their chances of winning the elections are very thin if not absent on the grounds that their agenda is unpopular with the people of Zimbabwe. We can’t stand for homosexuality, you can’t vote for the restoration of racist white tyrant rights, all these things have made them very unpopular” – ZANU PF “analyst” Chris Mutsvangwa (ZTV, 21/11, 8pm).

End/

The MEDIA UPDATE was produced and circulated by the Media Monitoring Project
Zimbabwe, 9 Knight Bruce Road, Milton Park, Harare, Tel: 263 4 741816 / 778115, E-mail:
monitors@mmpz.org.zw

Feel free to write to MMPZ. We may not be able to respond to everything but we will look at each message.
For previous MMPZ reports, and more information about the Project, please visit our website at
<http://www.mmpz.org/>

