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The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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Weekly Media Review 2011-14

CORAH seeks radio licence

ANOTHER battle to open up the airwaves to independent broadcasters has spilt into the courts after the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), the licensing authority, reportedly turned down an application to run a community radio station by the aspiring broadcaster, Community Radio Harare (CORAH).

The Zimbabwean on Sunday (10/8) reported CORAH as having taken BAZ and Information Minister Webster Shamu – in his official capacity as the minister responsible for the conduct of the regulatory board – to the High Court seeking relief to have its broadcasting licence issued. CORAH also wants the Court to compel BAZ to call for broadcasting licence applications, which, it says, should be done at least twice a year.

The paper reported that CORAH's lawsuit came after BAZ rejected its application for a broadcasting licence on January 24, 2011 ***“on the grounds that there had been no call for licences as provided for under section 10 of the BSA (Broadcasting Services Act), which states that applications can only be received and processed after BAZ has made an invitation for such applications”***. CORAH'S application was made on September 28 last year.

Last year, *The Herald* (7/10/2010) reported that Shamu had ***“urged”*** the BAZ to licence more radio and TV stations ***“in order to provide remote areas of the country with access to information”*** at a BAZ strategic meeting held in Harare. The paper quoted him saying: ***“Universal access to broadcasting services has remained on the government's wish list for the past two decades, but regrettably little progress has been made in that direction.”***

Earlier last year, *NewsDay* (16/8/2010) reported the minister saying BAZ would start licensing new broadcasters once its disputed board had been reconstituted when commissioning new radio and TV transmission equipment in Plumtree. ***“Once President Mugabe is done with the announcement of that authority's board, we will move to issue licences to deserving radio and television stations.”***

In its court application, CORAH contends that it has not been possible to apply for a licence since BAZ has not called for applications for community radio stations since 2004 and that the authority's failure to call and issue licences ***“is on its own an illegality and must be justified”***.

SADC outburst leads to damage control U-turn

EFFORTS by presidential spokesman George Charamba to limit the diplomatic damage caused by President Mugabe's intemperate response to the SADC Troika's demands that the inclusive government stop all human rights violations and fully implement the terms of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) attracted widespread media coverage.

But while the private media reported on this effort at damage control and analyzed the effects of this U-turn and the official media's initial, offensive assault on the Troika and its chairman, South Africa's President Jacob Zuma, the state media ignored the negative political fallout and concentrated passively on ZANU PF's attempt at appeasement.

The Herald (6/4) published a letter Charamba wrote to the publication "**clarifying**" government's position on the Troika's resolutions on Zimbabwe, vaguely reducing ZANU PF's quarrel with the regional body to one about the "**procedures and style**" of its facilitation and not on the "**substance**" of its findings. No follow-ups were made to clarify what this meant.

And despite ZTV giving Charamba six minutes to further discuss the matter during its main news bulletin that evening, the broadcaster did not seek clarification on whether the "**little procedural differences**" between Mugabe and SADC had been resolved, and the reasons behind Mugabe's reaction if indeed the Troika's resolutions tallied with ZANU PF's position on the need for an election roadmap in the country. The station just reported Charamba blaming the private media for distorting the outcome of the Troika meeting.

The Sunday Mail's story (10/4) on the summit quoted unnamed regional diplomatic sources questioning the integrity of the report the Troika used to make its resolutions on Zimbabwe, which they claimed was "**one-sided**". No official comment from SADC was sought.

The government media studiously avoided examining whether Charamba's statements represented a major climb-down by the ZANU PF arm of government considering Mugabe's initial undiplomatic reaction, which the state media, especially *The Sunday Mail* (3/4), loudly amplified.

And did you notice...?

ENTHUSIASTIC statements by some Western nations expressing a willingness to support efforts to develop an election roadmap following the SADC Troika's resolutions provided the state media with another opportunity to portray the West as hell-bent on achieving regime change in Zimbabwe.

For example, *The Sunday Mail* (10/4) claimed the British government's offer was prompted by its "**misreading**" of the outcome of the Troika meeting in Zambia as "**a victory for the MDC-T**".

ZBC ABUSES CHILDREN FOR POLITICAL GAIN

ZBC's propaganda campaign to whip up emotions ahead of the country's independence celebrations went a step too far during the week when they enthusiastically interviewed children to illustrate their patriotic awareness of the meaning of Independence Day.

ZTV (9/4, 8pm) interviewed several children in Harare on this issue in a way that promoted ZANU PF's political agenda.

In one of these, a boy of about eight years old, recited a poem rebuking Zimbabweans for forgetting the sacrifices made by liberation fighters to free the country. In apparent reference to Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, the boy chastised Zimbabweans for **"wanting"** a former **"tea boy"** to replace President Mugabe, who had liberation war credentials.

MMPZ views this conduct by the broadcaster as promoting intolerance and disdain for legitimate national leaders and amounts to a gross abuse of children in its propaganda offensive to promote ZANU PF.

Media struggle to report MDC-T factionalism accurately

REPORTS of MDC-T factionalism took centre-stage in the media in the week as the party held provincial elections before its national congress at the end of the month.

The government media carried 26 reports on the matter and the private media published 12.

The government media's reports exclusively used the factionalism to present the MDC-T as violent, confused and disunited.

For example, ZTV (4/4, 8pm and 5/4 7am and 8pm) reported "analysts" claiming that the intra-party clashes during the MDC-T provincial elections were **"likely to widen"** ahead of the party's national congress. It recorded Zimbabwe Lawyers for Justice national coordinator Martin Dinha (who is also the ZANU-PF appointed governor for Mashonaland Central) accusing the party of **"lacking cohesion"**, saying the party had **"no ideology"** as its members were **"not bound by any sacred principles of a shared history hence the current clashes are set to split the party at its congress"**.

However, the private media was shy to report the violence between the MDC-T factions and either censored this news or downplayed the divisions in the party. Of the 12 stories the private media carried on the issue, eight downplayed the factionalism (mostly in the online agencies), while only four tackled the problem with any degree of clarity. These appeared mostly in *The Standard* (10/4). But it also quoted political analyst Pedzisayi Ruhanya, portraying the cracks in the MDC-T as **"benign"**, saying factionalism in the country was usually taken **"negatively"** because **"it is usually associated with ZANU PF, a party which spills blood"**. Ruhanya argued that **"healthy"** factionalism **"prevented concentration of power on one group"**.

Violence grabs the headlines – and gets censored

THE wanton and unprovoked attack by riot police on worshippers in a Glen Norah church on Saturday (9/4) grabbed the headlines in the private media at the end of the week. But this news was completely censored in the state media.

The police tear-gassed the congregation who were attending an event that had been organized to pray for an end to political violence, and beat the terrified parishioners as they fled the premises. Others, including clergymen, were arrested. News stories and opinion pieces expressing outrage at the violence featured in the private media throughout the following week.

But it was an earlier fracas at Warren Hills cemetery between MDC-T activists and ZANU PF supporters that occupied the attention of state media.

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and MDC-T party members had gathered to unveil tombstones for five MDC-T activists murdered in the brutal 2008 presidential election campaign. But violence broke out after Tsvangirai's departure.

The Herald (8/4) quoted eye witnesses and the police accusing MDC-T supporters of wantonly attacking ZANU PF supporters who had gathered to bury a colleague at the same cemetery. Its front-page headline, *Violence: MDC-T caught in the act*, sought to portray the party a violent organization.

The incident compounded earlier reports of violence at MDC-T provincial election events and allowed ZTV (7/4, 8pm and 8/4, 7am and 8pm) to claim that the incidents had **“left egg on the MDC-T leader's face”** and was **“a clear demonstration of the violent nature of the MDC-T youths”**.

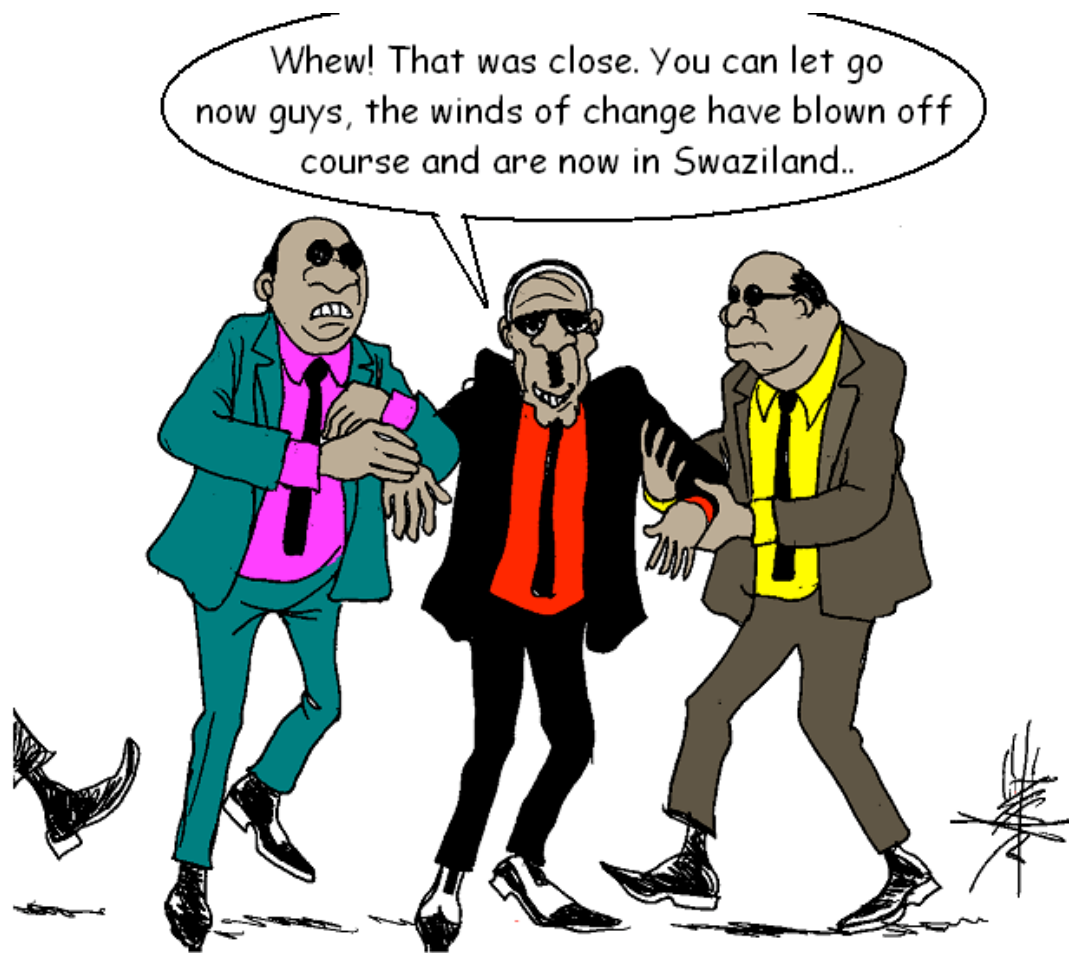
While the private papers reported MDC-T youths as having attacked the ZANU PF supporters in retaliation to the provocative behaviour of the ZANU PF supporters at Warren Hills, they presented this as no justification for the ensuing MDC-T violence (*NewsDay* and *Daily News*, 7 & 8/4).

The private electronic media however, mostly concealed the fact that MDC-T youths had attacked a ZANU PF supporter and blamed ZANU PF and the police for the fracas, which allegedly resulted in 14 MDC-T supporters sustaining serious injuries (Radio VoP, SW Radio Africa, *The Zimbabwe Metro* and *The Zimbabwe Mail*, 6 & 7/4).

All 15 state media reports of violence were based on alleged MDC-T violence, seizing on the outbreak of pockets of factional fighting in the party during its provincial elections ahead of its national congress later this month.

The private media carried 10 reports of rights violations by the MDC-T (two reports) and ZANU PF and state security agents (five stories), and they particularly viewed the police attack on the prayer meeting in Glen Norah as having given credence to allegations that the police were a source of violence and underlined the need for drastic reforms in Zimbabwe's security sector.

WINDS OF CHANGE...



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Journalists are not afraid of the truth...

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If you are not happy with a story

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If you think a story is unfair, unbalanced, inaccurate

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Address: Post Office Box 2905 Causeway Post Office, Harare, Zimbabwe

Telephone: 04 78826-8; Fax 04 788288

Email: mediacomplaints@gmail.com; info@vmcz.co.zw

Website: www.vmcz.co.zw. Our complaints procedure is available on our website together with the Media Code of Conduct.

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