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**Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe**  
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## **ELECTION WATCH**

# **Constitutional reform suffers further delays**

MUCH of the mainstream media reported news from the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (Copac) that the remaining phases of Zimbabwe's constitutional reform exercise required at least another six months to complete up to the staging of a national referendum on the constitution.

This news – made at a Copac Press briefing announcing the start of the constitutional drafting process (ZTV, 5/12, 8pm and *The Herald & Daily News*, 6/12) – follows the decision by Finance Minister, Tendai Biti, not to make specific provision for national elections in his 2012 national budget presentation.

According to the media, Copac expects the drafting process, which should have started last week (the *Chronicle*, 1/12), to last 35 days; meaning that the draft can only be completed in early January, barring any further delays. Thereafter Copac envisages holding a second all-stakeholders' conference in not less than 20 days and then notifying Parliament within a month. The subsequent referendum is scheduled to be held no less than three months after Parliament approves the draft (ZTV, 5/12, 8pm and *The Herald & Daily News*, 6/12).

Although all the media reported these new timelines, only *The Daily News* (6/12), revealed that according to the revised schedule the earliest Zimbabwe could hold its referendum was likely to be June next year – three months after the date suggested by President Mugabe for the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections.

Mugabe has been widely reported telling different gatherings that Copac should complete the constitution-making process early next year to pave the way for national elections to end the “**dysfunctional**” and “**illegal**” unity government [*The Zimbabwean* & SW Radio Africa (5 & 6/9), *The Standard* (2/10) and *New Ziana* & *The Herald* (1 & 2/12)].

For example, he told ZANU PF’s National Consultative Assembly last September: “**We cannot go beyond March next year. I will definitely announce the date. Once I announce the date, everyone will follow. I have the constitutional right to name an election date with the GPA or no GPA. We cannot continue to have this dilly-dallying**” (*The Herald*, *New Zimbabwe.com*, *The Zimbabwean* and SW Radio Africa, 3, 5 & 6/9).

Revelations by Copac that there were some outstanding constitutional issues, amounting to 20 percent of matters to be sent for drafting, might also undermine the committee’s ability to finish the exercise within its stipulated timeframe (*The Herald* and *Daily News*, 6/11).

The issues include the dispute over dual citizenship, the death penalty, the Attorney-General’s role and systems of governance.

These latest developments in the constitution-making process were contained in 13 of the 33 stories on the administrative aspect of Zimbabwe’s elections. Of these, 11 appeared in the official state media, while the remaining 22 featured in the private media.

# ZANU PF conference gets top billing in State media

ZANU PF's preparations for its annual conference, which kicked off on December 7<sup>th</sup> in Bulawayo, and other political campaign activities dominated the news programmes of the national broadcaster, ZBC, this week.

These issues received coverage in 42 of the 54 reports ZBC carried on the activities of the ZANU PF arm of government. The remaining 12 stories were based on official government events such as the launch of the Schweppes Employee and Management Ownership Trust, but which President Mugabe and other senior ZANU PF officials used to promote the party's policies, such as indigenization.

Eighteen of the 42 reports on ZANU PF's direct campaign activities were announcements. These included one by ZANU PF's secretary for administration, Didymus Mutasa, advising Politburo members to attend a meeting at the party's headquarters on November 30<sup>th</sup> (Radio Zimbabwe, 29/11, 8pm) and another by senior ZANU PF official Abraham Samushonga telling Harare residents to go to Divaris Shopping Centre in Belvedere, to receive farming inputs under the Presidential Inputs Scheme (Radio Zimbabwe, 4/12, 1pm).

The remaining 24 focused on the endorsement of Mugabe as the party's candidate for the forthcoming presidential elections; the invitation of **"revolutionary"** parties from the region to **"grace"** the ZANU PF conference; and recommendations by party officials, some of which were paraded as **"political analysts"**, such as Jonathan Moyo and Retired Brigadier General Felix Muchemwa, that the conference must advocate for early national elections to bring to an end **"the chaotic inclusive government"** (ZBC, 28, 29 & 30/11, 8pm and 5 & 6/12, 8pm).

ZTV (6/12, 8pm) reported Muchemwa saying: **"The lady (MDC) we ZANU PF married is a very ugly lady, with all sorts of connivance with the Western world. We have to actually strategize and come out with a plan as to how we should have a divorce. The only divorce which I understand in this (case) is...an election"**. The same bulletin reported Moyo as saying; **"It's high time ZANU PF uses the conference to part ways with (Prime Minister Morgan) Tsvangirai"** whom he said **"is more preoccupied with gay and immoral behaviour rather than serving national interest"**.

The government media allocated five reports to the activities of the two MDC formations. Of these, two were on the main MDC-T formation, while the remaining three were on power struggles in the Welshman Ncube-led faction. The reports on the struggle between Ncube and Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara were balanced.

Both reports on the MDC-T were negative.

# Tsvangirai 'marriage' mystery remains unsolved

REPORTS that Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai had been summoned to appear before a traditional court this weekend after "marriage" rites were performed on his behalf in November, a month when such cultural practices are taboo in Zimbabwe (*The Herald* and *NewsDay* 8/12), served as a vehicle for the media to try and revive flagging interest into the mystery surrounding Tsvangirai's "marriage" to Locadia Karimatsenga Tembo.

Although the media widely reported a recent Press statement by Tsvangirai, attempting to clear the air on the marriage saga, none has gone beyond the Press release and challenged him to clarify his vague pronouncements on his relationship with Locadia to confirm whether or not he had married her.

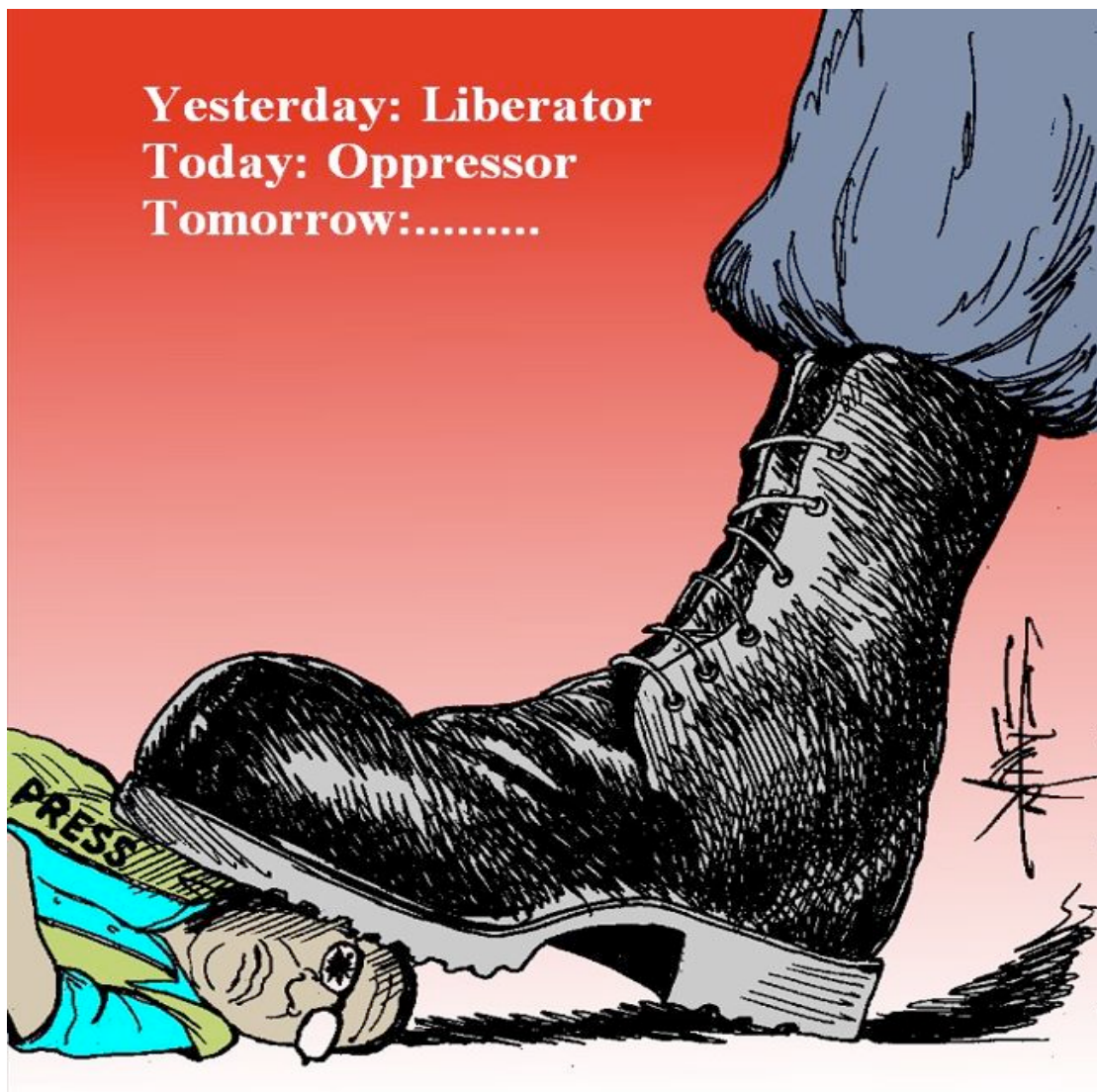
For example, while *NewsDay* (5/12) reported Tsvangirai accusing "**too many stakeholders**" of complicating his search for a new wife, while addressing guests at a wedding ceremony for MDC-T Masvingo provincial chairman Wilstaf Sitemere; the paper did not take the opportunity to pin him down on the status of his relationship with Locadia.

The report epitomised the 48 reports the media carried on the PM's marriage saga this week, 15 of which appeared in the state newspapers. All of them were mostly based on speculation and written from the perspective of unnamed sources or those from the MDC-T, the Prime Minister's Office and the Karimatsenga family.

These reports were mostly a continuation of their criticism of Tsvangirai's allegedly promiscuous exploits, complaining that such behaviour was irresponsible and undermined his status as Prime Minister and his candidature to challenge for the post of national president (*The Herald*, *Chronicle* and *NewsDay*, 30/11 and 2, 3 & 5/12).

The only time ZBC reported on the issue was when it quoted President Mugabe urging the media to leave Tsvangirai alone as African culture allowed a man to marry as many women as he wanted (ZTV, 30/12, 8pm). The Press on both sides of the political divide also reported Mugabe's remarks.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**



### **MMPZ staff arrested and detained**

THE arrest and detention on Monday of MMPZ's advocacy officers, Fadzai December and Molly Chimhanda, and the organization's Public Information Rights Forum (PIRF) committee chairman for Gwanda, Gilbert Mabusa, at Gwanda police station for allegedly contravening section 25(1)(b) of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), and other charges under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act was among the 11 incidents of rights violations and related issues the private media recorded this week.

The police raid on MMPZ's offices on Tuesday by four detectives from Harare Central's Law and Order section attracted front-page lead headlines in *The Herald* on Wednesday. They came with a search warrant looking for DVDs "**containing Gukurahundi information**" that contained "false information prejudicial to the state..." an offence under section 31(a) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. The police seized 127 copies of a DVD MMPZ had produced for its advocacy work, essentially calling on the media to promote peaceful elections by discouraging hate language, promoting political tolerance and exposing those responsible for political violence. They also picked up MMPZ's director, Andrew Moyse, for questioning at Harare Central but released him six hours later after he had made a statement regarding the Project's activities.

Only *The Daily News* reported the initial detention of Molly and Fadzai.

*The Herald* inaccurately reported that Molly and Fadzai had been arrested and taken to Gwanda by the police when in fact, they had responded to a police request to "assist with their inquiries" and had driven down to Gwanda from Harare under their own volition and presented themselves at Gwanda police station.

Other incidents included:

- The arrest of two *Daily News* journalists, Stanley Gama and Xolisani Ncube, on criminal defamation charges over a story published on November 10<sup>th</sup>, claiming that Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo had bragged about his wealth while talking to visiting officials from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (SW Radio Africa and Radio VoP, 2, 4 & 5/12), and
  - The arrest of three officials from the Welshman Ncube-led MDC in Bulawayo for holding an illegal political gathering under the guise of a soccer tournament (*The Standard*, 4/12).
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## What they said...

***“The recent budget, some say it has a better allocation for agriculture, but it is only figures, it is realization that matters. So the inflation of figures (in the budget) is meant to generate hope...that is a false picture because those figures will not be met at the end. Well, that is the result of the inclusive government. The result of our poor performance in the 2008 elections”*** – Mugabe addressing the same meeting (*The Herald*, 2/12).

***“We have realized that other parties are no longer interested in the elections and they are hiding behind the issue of completing the new constitution. We know they are enjoying being in the inclusive government. They are deliberately delaying the process...the West also does not want the elections”*** – ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo (*The Herald*, 8/12).

***“My genuine intention has been betrayed and hearts have had to search long and hard to the true meaning of this well-choreographed drama that has now been hijacked to cause political damage on my person and character”*** – Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai explaining why he was terminating his “12-day marriage” to Locadia Karimatsenga Tembo (*New Zimbabwe.com*, 30/11).

Ends/

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