

ZANU PF anti-sanctions campaign floods state media

A SUSTAINED campaign by ZANU PF and the public media to portray alleged Western sanctions against Zimbabwe as the greatest hindrance to the country's progress, exposed the extent of abuse of these media by the ZANU PF arm of government.

In an attempt to give this campaign a national appeal, the official papers carried misleading full-page advertisements inserted by ZANU PF but masquerading as a Zimbabwe government initiative, urging Zimbabweans from all walks of life to support it.

The adverts appeared for three days leading up to the launch of a "national anti-sanctions petition campaign" rally in Harare this week, which was beamed live on national television for approximately five hours.

President Mugabe delivered a 90-minute speech at the event, which echoed ZANU PF's election campaign propaganda.

Zimbabwe's most popular political party, the MDC-T, was accused of lobbying for the imposition of sanctions, which are allegedly bleeding the economy, hurting ordinary Zimbabweans and threatening the inclusive government.

This was reflected in 68 stories the state media carried [ZBC (48) and official papers (20)].

Although the government media hinted that the two MDC formations were likely to boycott the event (*The Herald*, 2/3), they suffocated their reasons for doing so and discredited the move as an indication of their lack of commitment to the Global Political Agreement, which urges the three coalition parties to campaign against sanctions.

The private media quoted the two MDC formations expressing their reasons for the boycott. They viewed the event as a ZANU PF project, accused the party of insincerity and demanded an end to political violence and the release of detained political and human rights activists (*NewsDay* & *New Zimbabwe.com*, 2/3)

They also reported that ZANU PF supporters coerced people, especially Harare residents, to attend the event (*Studio 7*, *NewsDay* and *Sokwanele.com*, 1 & 2/3).

The private media also doubted whether the campaign would influence the West to change its perception of Zimbabwe (*Studio 7*, 1/3).

This was reflected in some of the 14 stories they carried.

ZBC all but ignores Libyan uprising

THE mass uprising by the Libyan people last month, following similar ones in neighbouring Arab nations in North Africa, received widespread prominence in the private and international media.

But the official papers did not give this popular revolt against Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year reign as much prominence as they did to the Egyptian and Tunisian upheavals. They carried 26 stories on the Libyan revolution since its outbreak mid-last month. Only three of them were self-generated. The remaining 23 were foreign news stories, published in their foreign news sections.

One of the self-generated stories was about Defence Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa "denying" reports that the government had deployed soldiers to Libya (*The Herald* and *Chronicle*, 25/2). The remaining two were opinion pieces that defended Gaddafi and dismissed the popular revolt as a Western-sponsored ploy to effect illegal regime change.

The national broadcaster, ZBC, virtually ignored the extraordinary events unfolding in Libya.

It carried only two stories; one of them appearing in its foreign news section, which was repeated four times. The other was a report on a statement by Foreign Affairs permanent secretary, Joey Bimha, saying the government would evacuate Zimbabwean nationals in Libya if the situation deteriorated. (ZTV 23/2, 8pm and repeated on ZBC's three radio stations 24 and 25/2, 6 & 7am & 8pm).

ZBC's foreign news story was on the US and UN Security Council's intention to impose sanctions on Gaddafi and his close associates. It also reported Gaddafi's intentions to crush the uprising, which he discredited as foreign-sponsored.

ZBC censored Gaddafi's brutal attempt to put down the revolt and the reasons behind the Libyan protest, which the international media described as a reflection of Arab anger against dictatorship. It also avoided or discredited any suggestions that what was happening in Libya might also happen in Zimbabwe.

ZBC censored images of Libyans protesting against their government and the massive use of violence to suppress it. These images only appeared on international television stations and in the domestic private media.

The official papers also stifled debate over whether Zimbabweans had the ability to rise up against their government in the same way people in the Arab world had done.

For instance, *The Sunday Mail* (27/2)'s columnist Jonathan Moyo - a ZANU PF Politburo member – scoffed at such suggestions as **“sickening to the very core”** and a **“poisonous wish”**, which **“has no chance in heaven of ever materializing”**, as President Mugabe and his party allegedly still enjoyed majority support among Zimbabweans

The private media carried 43 stories on the Libyan revolution during the same period [private papers (41) and private electronic media (two)].

Sixteen of them were self-generated, while the remaining 25 were foreign news stories.

These media quoted a wide cross-section of Zimbabwean society giving divergent views on the events in Libya and how they related to Zimbabwe.

Among them political analysts told *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* (27/2) that such protests were unlikely in Zimbabwe because of **“a weary opposition movement”** and **“the military’s willingness to descend heavily on dissent”**.

The *Zimbabwe Independent* (25/2) insisted that Zimbabweans could revolt if government continued to violate people’s rights. It argued: **“The repression that ignited the revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, and now Libya, has become a feature of Zimbabwean life. People have been arrested and detained for exercising their constitutional rights... Zimbabweans are witnessing almost daily cases in which rights are trampled on and law-enforcement is arbitrary, partisan and unprofessional. That is a terrain for profound public dissatisfaction...”**

No publicity for SADC team's visit

THE visit by SADC mediator Jacob Zuma's facilitation team to find ways of ending Zimbabwe's protracted power-sharing dispute received little attention in the government media.

They only referred to this important news in four reports.

In one, *The Herald* and *Chronicle* (25/2) dishonestly buried news of this visit in a report about power struggles in the smaller MDC. In this report the party disclosed that it had informed the country's political principals and the South African president that Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara, who lost party leadership to former secretary-general Welshman Ncube, no longer represented the party. The report then mentioned in passing that the South African facilitation team was in the country and separately met Mutambara. It claimed ***"while Prof Mutambara's status featured prominently"*** in these discussions, ***"the general focus was on a roadmap for elections expected later this year"***.

In the other, President Mugabe revealed that he had met the facilitation team and told them that his party wanted national elections this year while speaking at his birthday celebrations in Harare (*The Sunday Mail*, 27/2).

ZBC only reported this visit once, whose agenda it dishonestly claimed was to ***"tackle the issue of sanctions and the MDC-M feud"*** (ZTV and Radio Zimbabwe, 22/2, 8pm).

Although the visit by South African facilitators did not receive any prominence in the private media compared with previous visits, they did provide more details of the visit and assessed the effectiveness of SADC's mediation.

Radio VoP, the *Zimbabwe Independent* and *NewsDay* (24, 25 & 26/2) reported the facilitators, the two MDC groups and the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee as having agreed in separate meetings that conditions in Zimbabwe were not yet conducive for democratic elections.

However, none of these media quoted the South African facilitation team shedding light on their visit.

Official papers prejudice fair trial

AN OLD tendency by the government papers to presume those standing trial to be guilty before they are convicted has begun to resurface.

In 2007 *The Herald* referred to “MDC terror bombers” when the accused appeared in court. None were ever convicted.

More recently former MDC MP Munyaradzi Gwisai and 45 others were arrested on charges of plotting an Egyptian-style uprising to oust the Zimbabwe government.

In *The Herald* story (23/3) reporting news of the date Gwisai and his alleged accomplices were due to appear in court, the paper simply referred to those arrested with the former MP as “**accomplices**” explicitly implying their guilt as accomplices in an alleged plot.

The next day, the *Chronicle* covered the first court appearance of the accused under the headline: *Gwisai, 45 others in court for plotting uprising*, which avoided treating the charges as allegations.

By committing these offences the papers violated well-established reporting rules prohibiting the media from presuming accused persons guilty before their conviction. In the *Chronicle*’s case the all-important inverted commas should have been inserted to indicate that ‘plotting uprising’ was merely an allegation.

These papers also deliberately censored other important elements of the Gwisai trial, such as allegations by the defence counsel that Gwisai and 11 others were tortured in police custody (the *Zimbabwe Independent* and *NewsDay*, 25/2).

COALITION TENSIONS FUEL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

THE latest onslaught against Zimbabwe’s perceived enemies by ZANU PF and the state media, which culminated in the launch of an anti-sanctions campaign this week, coincided with an upsurge in politically motivated violence and other human rights abuses across the country.

The media recorded 18 incidents, 16 of which appeared in the private media. The official media however, avoided cases in which ZANU PF supporters and state security agents were accused of being offenders, exposing its selective treatment of this issue.

Among the incidents were:

- The burning of homes belonging to ZANU PF supporters by suspected MDC-T youths in Nyanga (Spot FM, 24/2, 1pm).
- Alleged torture of former MDC MP Munyaradzi Gwisai of the International Socialist Organization and others while in police custody (SW Radio, Studio 7, *ZimOnline*, & *Daily News*, 21, 24 & 25/2).
- Assault of a traditional chief by suspected ZANU PF youths in Masvingo. The chief was reportedly battling for his life in the intensive care unit of a private hospital in Masvingo (Radio VOP 22/2), and
- Coercion of teachers by war veterans’ leader Jabulani Sibanda to buy ZANU PF membership cards in Masvingo (Radio VOP, 24/2).

WHAT THEY SAID...

"Nestle refused to buy milk from Gushungo dairies. I told (Indigenization Minister Saviour) Kasukuwere to begin with them and tell them he was sent by Gushungo (President Mugabe). We should deal with them; let them get out of the country" – President Mugabe speaking at his birthday celebrations in Harare (*The Standard*, 27/3).

"Zimplats has never given us any substantial money. They are taking all the money to South Africa and that is why I have told Kasukuwere to deal with those mines. We have got to bring companies to account" – President Mugabe (*The Standard*)

"What we have realized is that instead of arresting the perpetrators of political violence, police are arresting victims of political violence...We are calling for the disbanding of structures of violence before elections are held. The violence is systematic. It is organized" – Philip Pasirayi, spokesman for Zimbabwean civic groups organizing protests against the inclusive government (*NewsDay*, 1/3).

"Being the DPM and being an MDC president are two different things. When they are in government they do not act as ZANU PF, MDC-T or MDC, but as President, PM and DPM. They are officers of the State" – Constitutional law expert Lovemore Madhuku repeating his views that the ouster of Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara from party leadership would not affect his position in government (*The Herald*, 25/2).

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