

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday May 24th 2010 – Sunday May 30th 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-20**

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THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

CONSPIRACY theories targeting Zimbabwe's perceived Western detractors intensified in the government media this week in the wake of a visit by the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme monitor Abbey Chikane and renewed international criticism of President Mugabe.

The Brazil/Zimbabwe soccer match was, however, the most prominent story in the state-run media (See Fig. 1). Although the government-controlled media paid attention to the activities of the country's main political parties, ZANU PF got 79 percent of the coverage, a violation of the "equitable coverage" clause in the Global Political Agreement (GPA). The remaining 21 percent were shared by the two MDC formations. The private media widely reported endless political disputes in the inclusive government, and they also kept an eye on persistent human rights violations.

Fig 1: Topical issues in the media

Media	Power sharing	Chiadzwa diamonds	Brazil/Zim soccer match	Party politics	Human rights
State-run media	25	39	59	34	2
Private media	52	22	5	8	32
Total	77	61	64	42	34

State media turn against diamond monitor

ALL the media speculated on the likely outcome of KP monitor Abbey Chikane's assessment of the government's progress in meeting the standards of the world diamond watchdog.

Earlier reports in the government media speculated that Chikane would give the "green light" to the government to start selling Chiadzwa's diamonds following his second visit to the country. But this attitude changed towards the end of his visit when they attempted to pre-empt a possible negative verdict by accusing the West and its alleged surrogates of trying to influence Chikane to blacklist Chiadzwa's diamonds, citing unidentified documents, sources within the ZANU PF arm of government and its sympathizers.

This was reflected in 35 (90%) of their stories.

The Herald (27/5) & ZTV (27/5, 8pm) claimed to be in possession of documents showing communication between a senior US official Brad Brooks-Rubin and Chikane, in which Brooks-Rubin allegedly "**set out an agenda**" for Chikane, demanding that he address "**seven key issues**" for America's "**own interests**". Among them was the need to meet members of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines and Energy, civic organizations, and two diamond-mining companies, Murowa and African Consolidated Resources (ACR).

None of these media disclosed the nature of the documents and how they obtained them, but they almost certainly provided the ammunition for President Mugabe to threaten that Zimbabwe would pull out of the Kimberley Process "**if the country's detractors continue to frustrate efforts to have its diamonds certified for export**" (*The Herald* & ZTV 8pm 29/5). The next day Chikane's transformation to a pariah appeared complete when *The Sunday Mail* (30/5), citing the same documents, accused Chikane of "**...pandering to the whims of the US government**".

But for readers of *The Standard* (30/5) the mystery of this transformation became clear when the paper reported Chikane accusing state security agents of stealing information contained in correspondence from his bag, which was then publicized by the state media.

Despite this theft of information by what *The Standard* (25/5) quoted him as having described as "**some naughty intelligent person**" in his briefing to reporters on Wednesday, Chikane was also reported to have said, "**Zimbabwe is on track to meet the KP requirements. I am yet to produce my report...in which I will make the recommendation for it to start trading in rough diamonds.**" (*ZimOnline, New Zimbabwe.com, SW Radio Africa & Studio 7, 27 & 28/5 & 1/6*).

Ironically, as Chikane was saying this, SW Radio Africa (28/5) reported a civic human rights organization, Zimbabwe Peace Project, issuing an alert that police were hunting for the head of a watchdog civic group, the Centre for Research and Development, who had given Chikane damning evidence of "rampant" smuggling and human rights violations in Chiadzwa. ZPP was reported saying police were hunting for CRD director Farai Maguwu and had arrested his young

brother after they had failed to locate Farai. None of the state media reported this disturbing news.

Did he walk...or was he pushed?

THE government and private media gave conflicting versions of what transpired at a reception to mark Africa Day in Washington, organized by African diplomats based in the US.

The Herald (28/5) reported Zimbabwe's ambassador to the US, Machivenyika Mapuranga, as having "**walked out**" of the meeting in protest against the comments of US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Johnnie Carson, one of the invited guests. Mapuranga was reported saying Carson had "**denigrated**" President Mugabe and his party. The paper reported Carson as criticizing the ZANU PF arm of government for obstructing democratic reforms in Zimbabwe, which had provoked Mapuranga to describe the black American diplomat as a "**house slave**" before walking out. But it did not view Mapuranga's comments as undiplomatic and racist.

The private media however, reported Mapuranga as having been expelled from the event following his insulting comment.

While *The Herald* (28/9) gave the impression that African diplomats present at the meeting sympathized with Mapuranga and expressed "shock" at "**American attitudes towards the continent**", *The Zimbabwe Independent* (28/5) quoted unnamed sources saying Mapuranga was "**booed**" by other delegates. Studio 7 (27/5) pointed out that the incident was likely to strain already testy relations between Zimbabwe and the US.

Samba Boys get red carpet coverage

THE state media gave lavish publicity to news of an historic visit by the Brazilian soccer team for a World Cup warm-up match against Zimbabwe's national squad, The Warriors, during the week.

Several of their 64 stories and editorials were used to defend Zimbabwe's reputation as a "safe tourist destination" and generally spruce up its political image. Nine of the state newspapers' 11 news stories were given front-page status and they devoted four editorials to news of the Brazilians' visit. The remaining stories appeared on their sports pages.

The government media, especially their editorials, described the match as a huge coup for Zimbabwe. *The Sunday Mail's* comment (30/5), for example, described "**the prophets of doom as having been proven wrong**" by Brazil's visit, which it claimed had also put paid to "**all the lies about Zimbabwe being an unsafe destination**", "**all the nonsense about security concerns**", and "**all the hogwash about a bad Zimbabwe...**"

In contrast, the private media showed little interest in the friendly, publishing just five stories, all of them in the sports section.

However, none of the media bothered to investigate whether Brazil's trip had cost Zimbabwe's hard-pressed taxpayers, or question where the money to pay for the event was coming from. The state media simply quoted Tourism Minister Walter

Mzembi saying government would not disclose the cost, citing confidentiality (*The Herald*, 31/5). But, as a government-organized event – part of its tourism revival campaign – the media didn't bother to challenge Mzembi over his right to claim confidentiality.

Eventually, figures of about US\$1.8 million appeared in alternative media sources relating to the cost of staging the prestigious friendly, but even though *The Herald* did report that government would cover “30% of the costs” and that mining giant Zimplats and banking barons, CBZ, were “partnering” government (among other, smaller sponsors) none of the media bothered to ask them how much they contributed.

DISTORTION OF THE WEEK

THE Sunday Mail (30/6) carried a heavily distorted and editorialized front-page story that appeared to have been included on the strength of its potential for intensifying public disaffection against the United States. The stale story, such as it was, headlined, *When Biti met Carson*, accused US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson of being on “**a rabid crusade to divide**” the inclusive government “**despite the willingness**” of Zimbabwe's coalition parties to “**work together**”. The report was based on Carson's reiteration during his meeting with Finance Minister Tendai Biti in Washington last April that the US would maintain sanctions against ZANU PF until it restored democratic governance in Zimbabwe. Apart from the story being old news, this crude piece of propaganda failed to explain how Carson's comments were proof of his relentless pursuit of “**the West's regime change agenda**”.

MISSING STORIES

THE state media censored the following stories:

- Calls by Australian for President Mugabe to step down (the *Zimbabwe Independent* & SW Radio Africa, 28/5)
- MDC-T rallies across the country to update Zimbabweans on key national developments (*The Zimbabwean*, 28/5).

MOST POPULAR VOICES

ZANU-PF remained the most dominant voice in the government-controlled media, reflecting their proclivity to report political developments in government from ZANU PF's perspective.

Sixty-three (89%) of the political parties' voices these media quoted were ZANU PF while eight (11%) belonged to the two MDC formations.

The government media also widely used unidentified sources (11 times) to vilify the MDC-T as a “Western puppet” or to discredit a possible negative report by KP diamond monitor Abbey Chikane. Although the government media gave space to analysts (18) and the international community (17) to express their

views on topical issues, these were mostly quoted in the context of proving the existence of a Western plot against Zimbabwe.

President Mugabe and Chikane were the most quoted individuals in the public media. They were heard 12 times each. Tourism Minister Walter Mzembi (eight) and Mines Minister Obert Mpofu (six) closely followed.

Chikane was quoted **“expressing satisfaction”** with progress made in complying with KP standards. Mugabe was quoted speaking at different functions, including a gathering to commemorate Africa Day in Harare, and threatening that Zimbabwe could sell its diamonds without the KP’s approval. Mpofu was heard accusing the West of attempting to manipulate Chikane, while Mzembi was commenting on the Brazil/Zimbabwe soccer match.

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai joined Mugabe and Chikane as the most quoted individuals in the private media. They were all quoted 10 times each, followed by MDC-T vice-president Thokozani Khupe and spokesman Nelson Chamisa (four times each). Chikane was quoted expressing mixed sentiments over progress made in complying with KP standards, while Mugabe accused the West of trying to block Zimbabwe from benefiting from its resources.

Tsvangirai, Chamisa and Khupe were quoted complaining about the snail-paced political reforms.

Human rights abuses

PERSISTENT rights violations against perceived opponents of the ZANU PF half of government, which were mostly reported by the private media, exposed the coalition parties’ failure to eradicate such abuses.

Only the private media reported new incidents, a total of nine during the week. These included:

- Torture of two employees of the Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe (GALZ) while in police custody (SW Radio Africa, *NewZimbabwe.com* & *ZimOnline*, 25/5)
- Police raid on the offices of a civic organization, Centre for Research and Development in Mutare, who allegedly wanted to question its director Farai Maguwu. After failing to find Maguwu, they proceeded to his Chipinge rural home where they arrested his brother (Studio 7, SW Radio Africa & *The Standard*, 28 & 30/5), and
- Coercion of traditional leaders to attend war veterans’ meetings in Manicaland (*The Zimbabwean*, 27/5).

What they said...

“Despite Zimbabwe’s modest recent progress, Australia remains deeply concerned that ZANU PF is not motivated to adhere to its obligations under the global political agreement. Many of its actions are designed not merely to frustrate but to sabotage key aspects of the agreement. For that reason, Australia’s long-standing position on financial and travel sanctions will not change” – Australia’s Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 28/5).

“Government has no intention of expropriating the mining industry. No mine has been nationalized since independence. The implementation of the empowerment initiative will take cognisance of the need to promote the growth of the mining industry...” – President Mugabe speaking during the official opening of the Chamber of Mines of Zimbabwe annual general meeting in Victoria Falls (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 28/5).

Ends/

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