

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday April 5th 2010 – Sunday April 11th 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-13

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COMMENT

Police threaten journalists

THE authorities once again demonstrated their intolerance of a free media seeking to fulfil their mandate as public watchdogs of government propriety when they interrogated local journalists investigating reports of corrupt activities by prominent individuals, including a government minister.

Rather than following up the findings of a special investigations committee set up by Harare City Council to investigate the **“illegal”** and **“irregular”** sale of council land, the authorities instead, questioned reporters Feluma Nleya and Jennifer Dube from the private weekly paper, *The Standard*, and freelance journalist Stanley Gama, who reported on the committee's findings linking flamboyant Harare businessman Phillip Chiyangwa and Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo to the allegedly fraudulent land deals.

According to *The Standard* (28/4) the police intend to charge the journalists with criminal defamation as a result of their stories instead of investigating the allegations contained in the committee's report.

MMPZ considers this to be a blatant attempt to intimidate Zimbabwe's journalist community and discourage them from reporting on corruption by influential members of society.

Not only does this action expose the partisan nature of the police, it also illustrates the need for the urgent removal of an anachronistic and excessively draconian piece of legislation that remains a useful tool of intimidation in the armoury of authoritarian regimes.

THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

FRESH evidence of irregularities in the mining of Chiadzwa's diamonds, which the government media suffocated, and confusion over the troubled constitutional reform exercise attracted significant media attention during the week. But it was the uproar over the visit to Zimbabwe by ANC Youth chairman Julius Malema and his endorsement of ZANU PF at the expense of its partners in the coalition government that continued to attract the widest coverage. The endless haggling over power sharing within the coalition also found significant space in the media.

Fig 1: Topical issues in the media

Media	Power sharing	Malema's visit	Constitutional reform	Chiadzwa diamonds	Human rights abuses
Public media	13	27	32	14	3
Private Media	28	19	11	9	24
Total	41	46	43	23	27

ZANU PF outreach widely covered as Copac stumbles

YET another postponement of the national constitutional outreach consultation exercise due to inadequate funding and continued squabbling among stakeholders over the direction the process should take were the most significant issues in the media's coverage of constitutional reforms.

The government media, however, failed to reconcile contradictory official statements over the state of the exercise and clearly explain the reasons behind donors' reluctance to fund it. Neither did they question the coalition parties' ability to conclude the process within the timeframe set by the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

The Herald (12/4) passively reported the suspension of the outreach programme, which was supposed to start on April 10, due to **"poor funding"** and **"other logistical challenges"** without correlating this with claims by constitution management committee member Welshman Ncube that the Parliamentary Constitutional Committee (Copac) had received the required US\$8,5 million from donors for the outreach programme, which he insisted would start as planned (*Chronicle*, 10/4).

Even though *The Herald* (12/4) quoted MDC-T Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora confirming the suspension of the outreach programme and promising that the exercise would start **"once all resources required were made available"**, it downplayed the problem by passively quoting his ZANU PF counterpart, Paul Mangwana, saying he was **"optimistic"** that the process **"will start soon"** on the strength of a donation of US\$2,1 million by Sweden and the training of rapporteurs.

Other stories on constitutional reforms in the government media comprised favourable reports of ZANU PF officials calling for public participation in the process; the importance of land reforms and the role of traditional leaders in the writing of a new supreme law; and a warning to Zimbabweans to guard **“against entertaining”** civic organizations conducting constitutional outreach programmes (ZTV, 6, 7, 8/4, 8pm).

The private media reported that other problems, apart from inadequate funding, had also bogged down the reform exercise. They also argued that the parties’ failure to conclude the process within the GPA timeline cast a shadow over the timing of the next elections.

While the government media covered ZANU PF’s outreach programmes positively and widely, the private media reported them as being used as platforms to intimidate Zimbabweans to support the adoption of ZANU PF’s views on a new constitution.

Government media distort KPC report

THE government-controlled media continued to report the mining of Chiadzwa’s diamonds as proceeding smoothly and government as having successfully complied with the Kimberley Process Certification (KPC) requirements despite findings of the KPC monitor, Abbey Chikane, highlighting irregularities.

ZBC radio stations (6 & 8/4, 1pm) & *The Herald* (8/4) reported the imminent arrival of Chikane to certify Chiadzwa’s diamonds after government had allegedly met the KPC requirements, citing mines secretary Thankful Musukutwa. They reported that the visit came after Chikane had acknowledged the progress of the two South African-based companies mining Chiadzwa’s diamonds in meeting the KPC requirements.

However, there was no proof in these media to support this. Even though *The Herald* (8/4) published excerpts of Chikane’s report, none of them suggested significant progress in fulfilling the standards as claimed by the government media. The closest Chikane came to doing so was when he said: **“Policies, process and procedure applied”** by Mbada, **“are world [class] in theory”** and there was therefore a need for the company to **“build the necessary capacity to implement them”**. *The Herald*, however, censored the second sentence of the same paragraph: **“The company also needs to inculcate a culture of full compliance with Kimberley Process minimum requirements”**.

It also dishonestly presented Chikane’s criticism of government’s various failures as mere “recommendations”. Meanwhile, ZTV (9/4, 8pm) weighed in with its own partisan report discrediting criticism by African Consolidated Resources (ACR) over government’s withdrawal of its mining licence as being part of **“efforts by the country’s detractors to stifle the country from benefiting from the resource”**, citing pro-ZANU PF commentators, Vimbai Chivaura and Sheunesu Mupeperekwi.

Full details of Chikane’s report appeared in the private media, which interpreted it as condemnation of government for failing to meet KPC standards. The private media also reported the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines and Energy’s plans to visit Chiadzwa again to investigate the goings-on there (*The Standard*, 11/4).

CENSORED STORIES

The government media censored the visit by US Congressman Donald Payne to assess progress made in the implementation of the GPA (*New Zimbabwe.com*, *ZimOnline* & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 9 & 11/4).

And while the government media gave front-page status to ANC Youth League leader, Julius Malema's attacks on the MDC-T and endorsement of ZANU PF's policies during a press conference in South Africa (*The Herald*, 9/4), only the *Chronicle* (12 and 13/4) reported news of South African President Jacob Zuma criticizing Malema's partisan statements, which he said undermined South Africa's mediation in Zimbabwe. But even this was hidden away in the foreign news section of the paper.

MDC-T dominates private radios

IN the month between March 12 and April 11 SW Radio Africa and Studio 7, the two private radio stations broadcasting into Zimbabwe from abroad monitored by MMPZ carried 44 reports on power-sharing issues in the coalition government [SW Radio Africa (24) and Studio 7 (20)] stories). But ZANU PF was only quoted six times compared to the MDC-T, which was quoted on 23 occasions and the MDC-M just twice.

There was no indication in the 38 reports that did not access comment from ZANU PF why this voice was missing.

Zimbabwean spreads the news

DURING the week the three weekly papers in *The Zimbabwean* stable, *The Zimbabwean On Tuesday*, *The Zimbabwean* and *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* carried a total of 56 news stories on topical issues. However, 29 of them (52%) were sourced entirely from other news media, such as SW Radio Africa, Studio 7, *ZimOnline*, Voice of the People (VOP) and the *Legal Monitor*. While this promotes the spread of important news carried mainly by the alternative electronic media in Zimbabwe's restrictive media environment, it also illustrates the difficulties of publishing a newspaper based outside Zimbabwe's borders. It is to be hoped that *The Zimbabwean* group of newspapers has joined the queue to get their publications registered with the Zimbabwe Media Commission.

THE MEDIA'S MOST POPULAR VOICES

ZANU PF's views continued to dominate the government-controlled media compared to those of the two MDC formations. They accessed comment from ZANU PF nearly three times more than its coalition partners (See Fig. 2).

The private media was also guilty of the same offence. Their sourcing was biased in favour of the MDC-T by almost the same margin. KPC monitor Abbey Chikane joined South African President Jacob Zuma and Julius Malema as the most quoted foreign voices in both the government and private media. The private media widely cited unidentified sources criticizing ZANU PF's interference in Chiadzwa and speculating on the outcome of the ZANU PF/MDC talks.

ANC Youth League leader Malema was the most quoted individual in the government media (21 times). President Mugabe (nine); Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora (six); Indigenization Minister Saviour Kasukuwere (five) and KPC monitor Abbey Chikane (five) trailed.

Mugabe was quoted speaking about power sharing issues, while Mwonzora was highlighting problems dogging the constitutional reform process. Kasukuwere was quoted justifying the black empowerment programme and insisting that it was irreversible, while Chikane was quoted as having endorsed progress in fulfilling the KPC requirements.

Malema was also the most quoted in the private media. He was quoted 11 times criticizing the MDC-T and promising his party's support for ZANU PF in future elections. Zuma (five); his advisor Lindiwe Zulu (five); and MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa (four) closely followed. Zuma was heard criticizing Malema's conduct and warning of possible punishment against him. Chamisa was quoted expressing his party's outrage over Malema's partisan statements, while Zulu was commenting on Zimbabwe's political deadlock.

Fig 2: The most quoted voice in the media

Media	ZANU-PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Foreign diplomats	Alternative	Unnamed
Public Media	45	7	9	26	9	3
Private media	7	31	2	44	26	15

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

The private media kept an eye on persistent rights violations, reporting on nine incidents. The government media all but censored them, giving the impression that there was tranquility in the country.

Among the incidents were:

- Assault of a 16-year old girl, Moreblessing Lore, and intimidation of teachers suspected of being sympathetic to the MDC by ZANU PF supporters in Mt Darwin and Murewa (*The Zimbabwean*, 8/4);
- Arrest of eight Harare City councillors at the behest of businessman Phillip Chiyangwa after they had exposed Chiyangwa's fraudulent acquisition of land in Harare (*Studio 7* & *Zimbabwe Independent*, 8 & 9/4); and
- Arrest of an MDC-T councillor, Bernard Nyamambi, in Victoria Falls for allegedly undermining President Mugabe (*New Zimbabwe.com* & *The Chronicle*, 7 & 8/4).

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"When Zimplats closes, the economy won't even catch a cold because the company's current contribution to the fiscus is negligible in terms of royalties and taxes. We can afford to close the mine for a year or more until we have our own mine" - Indigenization Minister Saviour Kasukuwere (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 9/4).

"If Gono goes, then Zimbabwe will have a problem...When Zimbabwe was confronted with economic difficulties, he managed to bring together a response for the sake of the survival of the people of Zimbabwe to the extent of introducing the multi-currency system" – ANC Youth League chairman Julius Malema endorsing ZANU PF's position that RBZ governor Gideon Gono should stay (*The Daily News*, 9/4).

"We reiterate that leaders should think before they speak as their utterances have wider implications for the country...The relevant structure in the ANC will look at what has happened to see if the line has been crossed. If the line has been crossed, there will be consequences" – SA President Jacob Zuma referring to Malema's comments (*The Daily News*, 11/4).

“He just came here to provoke the situation... As MDC...we respect ANC so much. They are mediators between the parties in the inclusive government here. For Malema to just come and insult us; it’s just unacceptable...Malema should not act as if he is the youth leader to all African political parties by going around labeling others puppets of the West” – MDC-T deputy youth chairman Amos Chibaya (*The Daily News*, 6/4).

❖ Please note that *The Zimbabwe Times* has changed its name to *The Daily News* with immediate effect.

Ends/

The MEDIA REVIEW 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

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