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**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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COMMENT

ZBC displays slavish loyalty to ZANU PF

THE return of ZANU PF propaganda songs on all stations of the national public broadcaster, ZBC, graphically illustrates the extent to which the country's sole broadcasting station remains ZANU PF's propaganda tool despite it losing the 2008 elections.

This torrent of offensively partisan publicity that falsely promotes ZANU PF as still the only ruling party under President Mugabe's leadership, trashes the spirit of the Global Political Agreement, which recognizes all three parties to the coalition to be equal partners in the Government of National Unity.

It also makes nonsense of ZBC's public service mandate to provide its audiences with fair, balanced and accurate information and confirms the broadcaster's slavish loyalty to one political party instead of to the people of Zimbabwe.

The ZANU PF propaganda songs are the product of the Mbare Chimurenga Choir whose eight-track album was officially launched during ZANU PF's Central Committee meeting on July 9th after being presented to Mugabe at ZANU PF's headquarters two days previously.

Both these events received unprecedented publicity on ZTV's main evening news bulletins before ZBC started peppering its programming with three of the songs from the album without any explanation the following Monday (July 13th).

MMPZ's monitoring and independent estimates suggest that ZBC flooded its airwaves with at least one of the tracks from the album, *Nyatsoterera*, every 30 minutes during prime-time across all ZBC stations. This included both television stations that broadcast videos accompanying the songs glorifying Mugabe and ZANU PF, which themselves invoked nightmarish memories of

ZANU PF's violent 2002 election campaign publicity managed by former Information Minister Jonathan Moyo.

It can be no coincidence that *Nyatsoterera* was produced by the Mahendere Brothers, architects of Moyo's notorious 2002 *Pax Africa* publicity campaign that did so much to damage Zimbabwean society by its promotion of political intolerance, division and hatred.

The Chimurenga choir even graced the official opening of the Third Session of Zimbabwe's 7th Parliament by Mugabe where they sang their ZANU PF songs before the multi-party audience. ZBC presenters also used the songs as signature tunes in their previews of the Mid-Term Fiscal Policy Review just before its presentation by Finance Minister Tendai Biti on July 15.

Despite private media reports (*NewsDay* and *The Financial Gazette*, 22/7) claiming that Cabinet had agreed at its meeting on Tuesday July 21, to have the songs stopped, ZBC has continued to air the offensive political propaganda, confirming the contempt ZANU PF holds for the GPA and the intentions of the unity government to reform the media environment.

ZBC has again proved it is a slave to partisan political interests and MMPZ believes there can be no free and fair election without first removing all senior management at the public broadcaster and replacing them with a non-partisan, professional broadcasting management free of political influence.

Even now, the constitutional reform outreach consultation exercise will have already been contaminated by this shameless act of political favouritism.

THE TOP STORIES

THE official opening of the Third Session of the Seventh Parliament by President Mugabe and the presentation of the Mid-Term Fiscal Policy Review by Finance Minister Tendai Biti grabbed attention from the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee's outreach consultative programme in all the media during the week.

Although Copac suspended its public consultation for these events, reports exposing flaws in the exercise and the alleged intimidation of Zimbabweans to support ZANU PF's views of what a new constitution should contain, still proliferated in the private media. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme's decision to allow Zimbabwe to sell its diamonds, which was passively depicted as a tonic for Zimbabwe's economic recovery and a decisive defeat for perceived Western detractors by the state-controlled media, attracted significant attention too.

Fig 1: Top stories in the media

Media	Parliamentary issues	Constitutional reforms	Chiadzwa diamonds	Human rights
Public media	91	45	30	1
Private media	70	33	23	18
Total	161	78	53	19

PARLIAMENT

Brickbats for Biti, bouquets for Bob

PRESIDENT Mugabe's address at the official opening of the Third Session of Zimbabwe's Seventh Parliament and Finance Minister Tendai Biti's Mid-Term Fiscal Policy Review drew mixed reactions from the media.

The government-controlled media exclusively praised Mugabe's speech, which touched on various issues, such as constitutional reform, Chiadzwa's controversial diamonds and the normalization of relations with the West, while their main focus on Biti's statement was critical.

All the government media's coverage of Mugabe's address carefully censored criticism of his comments, which centered on his exclusion of important legislation that was expected to be included in the work of this session of Parliament, such as a Freedom of Information Bill and the Public Order and Security Act Amendment Bill.

Sixteen (46%) out of 35 stories on Biti's statement either quoted the ZANU PF arm of government and its political allies, or were editorials vilifying Biti's policies as an attempt to reverse the gains of independence. Only one report, based on the views of economist John Chikura endorsed Biti's statement (ZTV, 15/7, 8pm). The remaining 18 were neutral.

The Herald's front-page lead: *Biti under fire* (16/7) reported MPs and **"various sectors of the economy"** as having **"castigated"** Biti for **"failing to consult them"** before presenting his review. It reported that Biti was **"at pains"** to defend his policy during debate in the House of Assembly, which sought to give legal effect to Biti's statement. The paper also quoted civil servants' unions criticizing Biti for failing to increase wages for government workers while the tourism industry **"also reacted angrily"** to Biti's decision to withdraw the suspension on duty of vehicles bought for the industry, saying the move exposed Biti's **"inexperience in government"**. One ZANU PF apologist, Philip Chiyangwa, accused Biti of **"blindly pushing an MDC-T agenda..."** and wanting to **"destroy everything ZANU PF did, even when the thing is good for the country..."** *The Sunday Mail's* columnist Jonathan Moyo (18/7) attacked Biti and his party, accusing him of **"staring at staggering political irrelevance"** and of being an unsuitable finance minister. No credible facts were provided to support this.

In contrast, Mugabe's speech received favourable publicity in the state-controlled media.

ZBC (13 & 14/7, 8am, 1pm & 8pm), for instance, reported legislators from the three main political parties, diplomats and traditional leaders **"commending"** Mugabe's speech as having **"set a legislative agenda rich enough for parliamentary debate"** in addition to **"giving hope and promoting national unity"** without relating this with reality.

In contrast, the private media subjected the two statements to more impartial analysis.

The Zimbabwe Independent's comment (16/7), for example, questioned the relevance of some of Mugabe's proposed Bills. Among them the Zimbabwe Exploration Corporation Bill. This provides for a new parastatal, the Zimbabwe Exploration Corporation, a move the *Independent* viewed as **"yet another attempt"** by government to **"add to the long list of state enterprises which have become notorious for bleeding the economy"**.

NewsDay (16/7) also reported public criticism of Mugabe for omitting Bills that originated from the MDC arm of government, such as proposed amendments to **"oppressive"** laws such as POSA.

Copac retreats, but intimidation continues

ALTHOUGH Copac's constitutional outreach consultative programme took a break to give way for the official opening of the Third Session of Parliament, reports exposing widespread intimidation of Zimbabweans to persuade them to support ZANU PF's views on a new constitution continued to appear in the private media.

Twenty-two of the government media's 45 reports were based on ZANU PF's campaign activities, including statements by senior party officials reiterating their homophobic views, 13 quoted a cross-section of Zimbabweans expressing their hopes, while the remaining 10 reported Copac as having said that the first phase of the outreach programme had ended successfully.

Although the government media quoted Zimbabweans calling for the devolution of power, promotion of minority languages, gender equality and a limit to presidential terms, they gave more prominence to ZANU PF's views.

The Sunday Mail (18/7) for example, quoted Mugabe reiterating that the new supreme law would not recognize homosexuality under its front-page lead: ***No gay rights in Constitution.***

The private media focused on alleged intimidation of Zimbabweans by ZANU PF supporters and state security agents.

This was reflected in 13 stories. Nine quoted Copac defending its outreach programme, five exposed Copac's lack of readiness, and the remaining six were based on the views of analysts and civic organizations that the constitution-making process had been reduced to an ideological contest among the coalition parties.

Rights abuses decline

THERE was a 37 percent decline in incidents of politically motivated violence connected to Copac's outreach programme this week, which appeared to be a result of its temporary suspension.

Seven of the 14 incidents that appeared in the private media were related to constitutional reforms. The government media carried only one, which was not related to the issue, in line with their thrust of denying the existence of the problem despite credible evidence of its occurrence.

Incidents included:

- The alleged assault of Mashonaland Central governor Martin Dinha in unclear circumstances (ZTV, 16/7, 7am).
- Threats against Mwenezi villagers by suspected ZANU PF supporters, war veterans and state security agents not to participate in outreach programmes (SW Radio Africa & *The Zimbabwean*, 12 & 15/7).
- Intimidation of villagers in Jerera to support ZANU PF's position on the new constitution (SW Radio Africa & *The Zimbabwean*, 12 & 15/7).
- Coercion of some Mutare residents to attend ZANU PF constitutional outreach meetings (*The Zimbabwean*, 15/7), and
- The disruption by the police of a constitutional awareness meeting by the NGO, Youth Agenda, in Ruwa (Studio 7, 16/7).

MOST POPULAR VOICES

THE significance of President Mugabe's parliamentary address and Finance Minister Tendai Biti's fiscal policy review was reflected in the frequency with which the two were quoted in all the media.

Mugabe was quoted 23 times in the government media, while Biti was heard 22 times. President of the Chiefs Council Fortune Charumbira (nine) and Copac co-chairmen Douglas Mwonzora (eight) and Paul Mangwana (five) trailed.

Charumbira was quoted criticizing Biti for stressing that government's 99-year leases could not be used as bankable collateral, while Mwonzora and Mangwana were heard defending the constitutional outreach programme.

Biti (40) topped the charts in the private media, followed by Mugabe (10), reflecting the importance these media attached to Biti's fiscal policy statement compared to Mugabe's speech.

Mines Minister Obert Mpofu (nine) and MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa (four) followed. Mpofu was quoted commending the KP for giving Zimbabwe the green light to sell its diamonds, while Chamisa refuted ZANU PF and Copac's denial of the occurrence of violence during constitutional outreach programme, and repeating that MDC-T supporters were the major victims of the violence.

What they said...

“The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA)...will not take lightly this kind of behaviour... We know what is good for the tourism industry but we get worried when one minister decides to change things without our consent. He has killed the tourism industry” – ZTA chief executive Karikoga Kaseke criticizing Biti for withdrawing the suspension on duty for vehicles bought for the industry (*The Herald*, 16/7).

“Today, the Anglican Church condones marriages between men and the same for women....Humbwa ihwohwo (That is similar to dog behaviour)...We say no to gays! We will not listen to those advocating the inclusion of their rights in the Constitution!” – President Mugabe addressing thousands of apostolic sect pilgrims in Marange (*The Sunday Mail*, 18/7).

Ends/

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