



Defending free expression and your right to know

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday July 26th - Sunday August 1st 2010
Weekly Media Review 2010-29**

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The weeks' top stories

Tributes to President Mugabe's sister and national heroine, Sabina, following her death on July 29, and President Mugabe's renewed attacks on the West for allegedly interfering in Zimbabwe's affairs during a graveside speech at her burial, made headlines in the government-controlled media.

However, there was very little examination in these media on the friction in the inclusive government caused by the unilateral conferment of national hero status to Sabina by the ZANU PF arm of government. Neither did they assess the implications of Mugabe's tirade against the West, which prompted a walkout by some of the invited Western diplomats, in protest. These issues were only tackled more holistically in the private media.

The seemingly endless problems in the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac)'s outreach consultative programme and indicators of poor service provision by the country's parastatals and municipalities also remained under spotlight in both media (See Fig 1).

Fig 1: Top stories in the media

Media	Sabina Mugabe's death	ZANU PF propaganda songs	Constitutional reforms	Poor service delivery	Human rights
Public media	90	2	20	21	2
Private media	18	8	50	33	25
Total	108	10	70	54	27

State media suppresses friction over Sabina's heroine status

The government media flooded their audiences with eulogies of Sabina's contribution to the liberation of Zimbabwe from colonial rule but paid no attention to the controversial manner in which ZANU PF unilaterally declared her a national heroine. Only the private media reported this. They pointed out how the development had further worsened relations between ZANU PF and its MDC coalition partners so soon after the two MDC formations recently protested against President Mugabe's unilateral reshuffling of ambassadors and the continued broadcasts of ZANU PF propaganda songs on the national broadcaster, ZBC, despite an alleged Cabinet directive.

The Standard (1/8) quoted MDC-M president Arthur Mutambara and MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa describing ZANU PF's unilateral conferment of hero status to Sabina as a sign of disrespect of its coalition partners and a violation of the spirit of the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

It quoted Chamisa: ***"There was no consultation. It was a ZANU PF affair. This (lack of consultation) is an area of contention, as a party we want it to have national appeal and this will give it credibility"***.

The private media questioned too the criteria used and ZANU PF's urgency in declaring Sabina a national heroine while *NewsDay* & *Daily News* (1 & 2/8) interpreted Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's absence from Sabina's burial, preferring to address an MDC-T rally in Bulawayo instead, as a ***"boycott"***. Besides quoting ***"a highly placed"*** MDC-T official alleging that the move was a protest against ZANU PF's unilateralism, *NewsDay* construed the alleged boycott as an indication that the party did not ***"recognize"*** the hero status bestowed on Sabina.

MUGABE OUTBURST SPARKS DIPLOMATIC ROW

The state media prominently reported President Mugabe's attack on the West at the burial of Sabina – which reportedly forced some of the attending Western diplomats to leave in anger – but muffled the diplomats' defence of their action. They also ignored the implications of the standoff on Zimbabwe's efforts to normalize relations with the West.

The Herald (2/8), for example, quoted Mugabe attacking the West for allegedly interfering in the country's affairs and calling for his removal from power as a precondition for their support of the country, saying: ***"To hell, hell, hell, hell, with them"***.

Although the government media reported Mugabe's diatribe as having angered Western ambassadors: Charles Ray (US), Albrecht Conze (Germany) and EU (Barbra Plinqert) and Greek (Stephanos Ioannides) charge d'affaires, they drowned the diplomats' justification of their walkout in an avalanche of criticism of their behaviour by the ZANU PF component of government and its allies.

For example, while the ***"summoning"*** of the ambassadors by Foreign Affairs Minister Samuel Mumbengegwi over their ***"unacceptable"*** and ***"disrespectful"*** behaviour got front-page lead status in *The Herald* (4/8), the paper buried deep in its report details of a Press Conference the diplomats held to explain their conduct. Similarly, ZTV (3/8, 8pm) briefly quoted Ray

justifying his action before dismissing this with the editorialised opinion of its reporter, Reuben Barwe, who claimed: ***“These reasons should not make anyone brook those failing to respect (the country’s) institutions”***.

The private media fairly covered the matter.

They gave sufficient space to both government and the diplomats to express themselves. For instance, *NewsDay* (4/8) reported on a Press Conference the diplomats held at the American Embassy where it quoted them alleging that Mumbengegwi did not give them a chance to respond when he summoned them, adding that the summons had ***“worsened”*** the situation.

ZBC “sabotages” Copac’s outreach

All media paid attention to latest problems dogging Zimbabwe’s quest to write a new constitution, among them the alleged refusal by ZBC management to flight Copac adverts.

The Zimbabwean On Sunday & *NewsDay* (4/8) publicised news that the national broadcaster had refused to broadcast the adverts until the cash-strapped Copac paid for them at commercial advertisement rates. *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* quoted Copac co-chairman Paul Mangwana criticising ZBC for categorizing the adverts as ***“commercial”*** and Constitutional Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga arguing that the constitutional reform exercise ***“was a national programme”*** that ***“ZBC was obliged to support”***.

Both papers noted that while ZBC was denying Copac space to flights its adverts, crucial in raising public awareness about the constitutional outreach programme, it had no problems broadcasting ***“lengthy”*** and ***“monotonous”*** ZANU PF propaganda songs by Mbare Chimurenga choir.

Other problems on the constitutional reforms carried in the media included the alleged boycott of the outreach programme by MPs over poor payment (*The Herald* and *The Financial Gazette*, 29 & 30/7) and reports of intimidation and violence, which only appeared in the private media.

However, none of the media clearly disclosed the number of MPs who had withdrawn from the outreach programme and its impact on the exercise.

Instead, *The Herald* (29/7) quoted Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora dismissing the boycott as a non-event: ***“...We did not inquire the reasons for their pullout because this is a voluntary programme and anyone can move out”***.

MISSING STORIES

The government media censored a number of stories this week, which either exposed the MDC formations' disaffection with ZANU PF's intransigence or failure by the coalition parties to conclude the long-drawn-out power-sharing talks.

These comprised:

- The visit by an emissary of South African President Jacob Zuma's facilitation team, Mac Maharaj, to help Zimbabwe's coalition parties iron out their power-sharing differences.
- The alleged ban of an MDC-T rally by the police in Hwange which Prime Minister Tsvangirai reportedly defied (*NewsDay*, *The Standard* & Studio 7, 27 & 31/7 & 1/8).
- Tsvangirai's criticism of President Mugabe and his party for undermining the spirit of the GPA by making unilateral decisions on key national issues at a rally in Bulawayo (*The Standard*, 1/8).

Most popular sources

President Mugabe was the most frequently quoted individual in the government media.

He was quoted 23 times, mostly expressing his grief over Sabina's death. This frequency at which Mugabe was quoted speaking about Sabina reflected the importance the government media attached to her death.

Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara (seven), Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and Copac co-chairman Douglas Mwonzora (five times each) trailed. Mutambara was quoted reiterating his argument that Zimbabwe was not yet ready to hold national elections while Tsvangirai was quoted urging Zimbabweans to participate in the constitution-making process. Mwonzora was quoted discussing problems facing the outreach programme, especially the MPs' alleged boycott of the exercise in protest against poor working conditions.

MDC-T spokesperson Nelson Chamisa was the preferred source of information in the private media.

He was quoted 14 times, followed by Mwonzora (nine) and Tsvangirai (six). Chamisa and Tsvangirai were quoted expressing their party's displeasure with ZANU PF's unilateralism and their support for devolution of power in a new constitution. Mwonzora was reported commenting on problems plaguing constitutional reforms and criticizing NCA chairman Lovemore Madhuku's determination to campaign for a 'No' vote in a referendum on the new constitution.

Rights abuses persist

The state media turned a blind eye to ongoing human rights violations in the country mostly by ZANU PF against its perceived opponents, leaving only the private media to publicise the problem.

This week the private media recorded 17 fresh incidents, 13 of which emanated from rights violations perpetrated during constitutional outreach meetings.

These included:

- Threats by alleged ZANU PF supporters against Chivi district administrator Bernard Hadzirabwi following suggestions at an outreach meeting at Chivi Centre, Masvingo, that the country's Prime Minister should have executive powers (*NewsDay*, 29/7);
- Intimidation of two other government officials, Mugarajira and Ernest Temba, at the same meeting for making contributions deemed to be against ZANU PF interests (*NewsDay*, 29/7); and
- Alleged harassment of civil monitor, John Ziyera, and the disruption of an outreach meeting by ZANU PF supporters in Mutasa North, Manicaland (*NewsDay* & *Studio 7*, 28 & 29/7).

What they said...

"They cannot be good to us today when they could not be good to us yesterday. They detained us, jailed us, shot at us, bombed us, and slaughtered us in our hundreds. We bore the brunt of their cruelties and shall never forget" – President Mugabe attacking the West at the burial of his sister, Sabina, at the National Heroes' Acre (*The Herald* & *NewsDay*, 2/8).

"When America is treated by anyone at anytime like what happened on Sunday, I will react..." – US ambassador Charles Ray defending his decision to walk away from Sabina's burial following Mugabe's attack on the West for interfering in Zimbabwe's internal affairs (ZTV, 3/8, 8pm & *Newsday*, 4/8).

"There is no point in rushing into elections that will be challenged... There are various electoral reforms that must take place and improvements needed with regards to the election management system to make it credible" - Arthur Mutambara (*ZimOnline*, 31/7).

Ends/

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