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The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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Weekly Media Review 2010-32

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The week's top stories

Media debate over the ruling of the SADC summit on Zimbabwe's power-sharing standoff intensified this week, eclipsing other contemporary issues such as the ongoing consultative phase of constitution making and developments in the contentious Chiadzwa diamonds mining saga.

The media's coverage of the constitutional outreach exercise mainly focused on the intimidation and violence characterizing the process while differences between the ZANU PF arm of government and a coalition of civic organizations over whom to appoint as a local focal person to monitor Zimbabwe's compliance with the Kimberley Process recommendations, highlighted the latest controversy in the mining of Chiadzwa diamonds.

Other issues that attracted media attention evolved around public complaints over poor service delivery by some municipalities and the huge salary bills they were paying their top management. (See Fig. 1).

Fig 1: Top stories in the media

Media	SADC summit	Constitutional review	Chiadzwa diamonds	Municipal issues	Human rights
Public media	47	34	11	10	5
Private media	60	40	24	7	16
Total	107	74	35	17	21

Media give conflicting signals over SADC summit outcome

The media gave conflicting versions of the outcome of SADC's deliberations on Zimbabwe's protracted power-sharing dispute during the regional grouping's summit in Namibia.

The government-controlled media based its coverage mostly on resolutions of the meeting, which basically commended Zimbabwe's coalition parties for their commitment to the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and called for the immediate lifting of Western sanctions on Zimbabwe.

However, the private media paid cursory attention to the SADC communiqué. Instead, they concentrated on preliminary discussions of the country's political crisis by the SADC Troika on Politics, Defence and Security at the summit where South African President Jacob Zuma allegedly pledged to assist Zimbabwe's coalition parties resolve their power sharing dispute in 30 days, including coming up with a roadmap leading to free and fair national elections next year. Notably, all the private media's reports on the matter lacked official corroboration as they were mostly sourced from unnamed government officials.

But while the government media gave a fairly accurate picture of the SADC summit's resolutions on the coalition's power-sharing dispute, they did not back up their claims that the summit had **"suspended"** the operations of the SADC Tribunal following concerns by the ZANU PF arm of government that the organ was **"illegitimate"**.

While the SADC communiqué merely announced the body's decision to review the **"role functions and terms of reference of the SADC Tribunal"**, to be **"undertaken and concluded within six months"**, the official dailies (18/8) passively quoted Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa interpreting this as **"suspension"**, adding that during that period the Tribunal could not **"entertain any cases"**.

The private media gave balanced coverage of the matter, exposing conflicting official interpretation of the SADC decision.

SW Radio Africa & *New Zimbabwe.com* (18/8) quoted SADC deputy executive secretary Joao Samuel Caholo saying SADC had suspended the regional court, and as such, would **"not be able conclude old cases or take new ones before the end of the review"**, while *ZimOnline* & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* (18, 19 & 22/8) quoted his boss, Tomaz Salamao, denying this claim.

None of the media interrogated claims by Zuma and the coalition parties that an agreement had been reached on 24 of 27 outstanding issues with the status of RBZ governor Gideon Gono, Attorney General Johannes Tomana and MDC-T's Deputy Agriculture Minister designate Roy Bennett singled out as the only unresolved issues. Besides quoting ZANU PF claiming that the issue of provincial governors would be dealt concurrently with the removal of sanctions, none of the media gave a breakdown of the **"resolved"** issues and clearly explained how these were addressed.

Violence derails outreach meetings

All media publicized the cancellation of some Copac outreach meetings in Manicaland and Masvingo due to clashes between rival supporters of the coalition parties.

The government media carried five reports on the constitution making-related violence: three acknowledged the problem and two quoted senior ZANU PF officials downplaying it.

The Manica Post (20/8), for example, reported that violence between ZANU PF and MDC supporters in some parts of Manicaland had “**crippled**” Copac’s outreach programme, which was already behind schedule following a boycott by the two MDC formations two weeks ago. Reportedly, this was in protest against the arrest of MDC Copac Rapporteur Kudakwashe Munengiwa for public indecency after he allegedly showed off his manhood during a Copac meeting in Chipinge following a row with ZANU PF Senator for Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe Oriah Kabayanjiri.

However, Spot FM (20/8, 1pm) passively quoted President Mugabe dismissing such reports as an “**attempt to dismantle and malign**” the outreach programme while addressing his party’s Central Committee.

The rest of the official media’s stories on constitutional reforms were on administrative modalities of the process (nine), ZANU PF and MDC-T’s outreach campaign activities (three stories each) and campaigns for the recognition of the rights of special interest groups, such as women, in the new supreme law (14).

None of these reports critically assessed the progress of the outreach programme. For example, *The Herald* (18/8) reported that Copac had held about 2, 004 consultative meetings since the beginning of the exercise about two months ago, but did not say what percentage they represented of the total number of meetings the committee planned to hold. Neither did they provide details on what was being debated at the meetings, nor say exactly when the outreach programme would start in Harare and Bulawayo.

The private media paid more attention to rights abuses in the constitution revision, which they argued damaged the credibility of the programme.

This was reflected in 26 (65%) of their 40 stories on the subject. All of them blamed ZANU PF, war veterans and state security agents for the problem. The remaining 14 stories were on logistical problems dogging the exercise such as fuel shortage and delays in paying outreach teams their allowances.

Daggers drawn over Maguwu nomination

Conflict between a coalition of independent civic organizations, Nango, and the ZANU PF arm of government over the civic group's nomination of Centre for Research and Development Director Farai Maguwu as the KP's local focal point for civil society, elicited media interest.

The government media gave space to ZANU PF and its allies opposing Maguwu's appointment while the private media were largely restricted to reporting Nango defending its decision. *The Herald* (19/8) & ZTV (20/8, 8pm) reported Maguwu's appointment being "**rejected**" by, among others, another coalition of NGOs – believed to be affiliated to ZANU PF – on the grounds that he was facing criminal charges in the courts and would have no access to the Chiadzwa diamond fields until he was acquitted.

The Herald (20/8) & ZTV (20/8, 8pm) quoted these NGOs describing Nango's action as a "**deliberate**" attempt to "**provoke government**" while Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa dismissed him as a nonentity. They quoted him: "**No one knew Farai Maguwu until Mr Abbey Chikane was coming for Kimberly Process visits**".

Further, they reported him chiding Maguwu as a Western functionary: "**If you see a tortoise on top of a wall, look for its owner**".

The private media provided the other side of the story.

NewsDay (19 & 20/8), for example, quoted Nango CEO Cephas Zinhumwe insisting that Maguwu's nomination would remain, arguing that government had no role to play in the appointment of the KP local focal point person. Further, Zinhumwe said Nango was not prepared to recognize the appointment by the rival "**bogus**" coalition of civic groups of Goodson Nguni to replace Maguwu, a development the government media and ZANU PF welcomed.

The most quoted...

ZANU PF voices flooded the government media, mostly praising SADC recommendations on Zimbabwe, reflecting these media's tendency to report favourably on developments that support ZANU PF's viewpoint.

The smaller MDC formation was mostly quoted in the context of discrediting concerns by the Morgan Tsvangirai-led MDC over ZANU PF's alleged lack of political will to fulfil its power-sharing obligations. Alternative voices were generally cited welcoming SADC resolutions while foreign diplomats basically commended "progress" in Zimbabwe.

The private media also exposed the same bias, giving MDC-T 100 percent more publicity than its coalition partners combined. These media, especially *The Zimbabwean* stable, SW Radio Africa and online publications basically reported political developments such as the SADC summit and human rights violations from the MDC-T's perspective. The private media quoted political commentators, civil society and foreign diplomats questioning the soundness of SADC resolutions and the organ's ability to resolve Zimbabwe's political crisis.

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

He was heard 22 times, commending SADC efforts to resolve Zimbabwe's political stalemate and insisting that his party would not make further concessions until Western sanctions were removed.

ZANU PF negotiator Patrick Chinamasa (20 times), Vice President John Nkomo (10) and outgoing SADC chairman Joseph Kabila (seven) also competed for attention in the official media. Chinamasa was quoted claiming that the summit had suspended the SADC Tribunal and that Zimbabwe's coalition principals had agreed that the contentious issue of provincial governors would be addressed concurrently with the removal of sanctions. Kabila was cited praising progress in the implementation of the GPA while Nkomo urged churches to participate in the constitution making process. MDC-T secretary general Tendai Biti topped the charts in the private media. He was quoted 16 times, followed by his party's spokesman Nelson Chamisa and Chinamasa (eight times each). Biti and Chinamasa were quoted praising SADC's search for a solution to Zimbabwe's political crisis. Chamisa was recorded claiming that the regional body had instructed that Zimbabwe should hold elections next year and accusing ZANU PF of undermining the GPA.

Fig 2: Voice distribution in the media

Media	ZANU PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Alternative	Foreign diplomats	Unnamed
Public media	81	15	8	26	39	5
Private media	21	56	7	40	36	15

RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The media recorded 10 incidents of human rights violations, all of which were committed during the constitutional outreach process.

Two of these appeared in the official media, identifying MDC-T and ZANU PF supporters as perpetrators. The remaining eight were featured in the private media. All of them identified ZANU PF, war veterans and state security agents as offenders.

These included:

- The disruption of a ZANU PF constitutional outreach meeting by suspected armed MDC-T **“thugs”** in Masvingo (*The Herald*, 18/8);
- Abduction and assault of seven MDC-T activists by state security agents in Chimanimani (Studio 7, *The Zimbabwean* & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 16, 19 & 22/8);
- Assault of two villagers, Charles Chovi and Charles Chunje, by suspected ZANU PF youths in Chipinge (SW Radio Africa & *The Zimbabwean*, 16 & 19/8);
- The burning of a house belonging to an MDC-T activist, Titus Garuru, by alleged ZANU PF supporters in Uzumba (*The Zimbabwean*, 19/8); and
- The arrest of two MDC-T officials in Masvingo for allegedly disrupting a ZANU PF outreach meeting (SW Radio Africa, *NewsDay* & *The Herald*, 18 & 20/8).

What they said...

“If you read the language of these various sanctions or restrictive measures, they all point to the fact that the motivation behind them was human rights violations that were violent and blocking progress. This part gets ignored. They are sanctions that are designed to try and influence behaviour that creates a better Zimbabwe for the people” – US ambassador Charles Ray defending Western sanctions against Zimbabwe (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 20/8).

“We have told the other side (MDC-T) that there will be no movement on the matter. Governors will not be divided; let us see to those issues that worry us, such as sanctions. Sanctions must go in their entirety and that is when we will talk about governors” – President Mugabe addressing his party’s Central Committee meeting in Harare (ZTV, 20/8, 8pm & *The Herald*, 21/8).

“No one took a decision to suspend the (SADC) Tribunal. What was said is that the Tribunal’s role and responsibility has to be reviewed...” – SADC executive secretary Tomaz Salamao (*ZimOnline* & *ZimDaily*, 19/8).

Ends/

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