



Defending free expression and your right to know

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday August 23rd – Sunday August 29th 2010
Weekly Media Update 2010-33**

Contents

1. The week's top stories
2. Most popular voices
3. Rights violations

THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

While all media paid attention to the death of MDC-M Deputy President and former trade unionist, Gibson Sibanda, only the private media publicized the ensuing debate on the controversial criteria used to select national heroes in the country. The logistical and administrative obstacles bedevilling the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac)'s outreach consultative programme amid an appeal by the committee for more money to fund an extension of the exercise attracted significant media interest too. But the media reported a decline in cases of rights abuses stemming from the outreach exercise. See Fig 1.

Fig 1: Top stories in the media

Media	Sibanda Death	Constitution	Human Rights
Public media	29	22	2
Private media	23	26	16
Total	52	48	18

Official media stifle debate on Sibanda's hero status

The government media suffocated renewed debate on who qualified for national hero status reignited by the refusal by the ZANU PF arm of government to entertain requests by its two MDC coalition partners to declare MDC-M Deputy President Gibson Sibanda a national hero.

Of the 29 reports that these media carried on Sibanda's death only two (seven percent) paid attention to the issue.

One reported MDC-M President and Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara expressing his party's disappointment with the ZANU PF decision not to consider Sibanda a national hero (ZTV 25/8,8pm). The other, carried in *The Herald* (26/8), reported ZANU PF downplaying the MDC's demands for consultation on the matter. The paper passively quoted ZANU PF Secretary for Administration Didymus Mutasa presenting his party as the one with the sole mandate ***"to determine the hero status of a person... Since independence, the politburo has been meeting to confer national hero status"***.

Consequently, there was no attempt to analyse why the decision to select national heroes still remained the prerogative of ZANU PF and not of the inclusive government, especially as the national and provincial shrines were national monuments funded by taxpayers and not through party membership subscriptions. Neither did the government media interpret the ZANU PF decision as indicative of the lack of shared vision among coalition partners, whose reign has been characterised by incessant disagreements on how to effectively implement the September 2008 Global Political Agreement (GPA) that brought them into power.

Otherwise, the rest of the government media's 27 stories on the subject merely focused on the funeral itself, which was state-assisted, and the expression of condolences from Zimbabweans, including all the three partners in the inclusive government.

The private media gave the discourse on national heroes greater exposure in their 23 stories on the MDC-M leader's death.

Not only did they publicise MDC's reasons why Sibanda should have been declared a national hero, they also interrogated ZANU PF's refusal to do so, which they presented as symptomatic of continued friction in the inclusive government. They reported political analysts and MDC officials depicting the ZANU PF decision as a violation of the GPA since President Mugabe had failed to consult his fellow principals in the inclusive government on the matter.

New Zimbabwe (24/8), for example, reported that though the principals to the GPA agreed to establish a cross-party committee that would confer hero status, ZANU PF had not consulted its coalition partners following Sibanda's death. It quoted MDC-M Deputy Secretary General Priscilla Misihairambwi denouncing this development, saying: ***"This may be a good time for ZANU PF to come out and tell the country that the taxpayer has been funding what is essentially a misnamed ZANU PF honorary club and burial society."***

Copac outreach remains shrouded in confusion

There was precious little information in the media this week on how the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac)'s consultative outreach process has progressed throughout the country.

Although the media reported Copac as seeking a supplementary budget to fund the extension of the exercise from the initial 65 days, the exact reasons for the extension remained murky. Neither did they ask Copac to give a checklist of how many outreach meetings they had held and where, and how many were outstanding, crucial information needed to measure the success of the exercise.

There was even conflicting reports in the media, for example, on how much money was needed to fund the extension of the programme.

While *The Herald* (30/8) quoted MDC-M Copac Co-chair Edward Mkhosi saying his committee required \$8 million as supplementary budget for the 25 days added to the outreach exercise, SW Radio Africa, Studio 7 & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday* (26,27 & 29/8) quoted his MDC-T Copac counterpart Douglas Mwonozora, saying they needed an additional US\$5million.

Six of the 22 reports that the government media carried on the constitutional reforms passively reported on this issue. The other 14 stories were mainly on the constitutional campaign activities of officials from the ZANU PF arm of government mostly at church gatherings. The remaining two focused on rights violations in the constitution making. They comprised the arrest of four MDC officials for allegedly disrupting a ZANU PF constitutional outreach meeting in Masvingo and the downplaying of violence related to the constitutional reforms by ZANU PF's Monica Mutsvangwa as **"sporadic quarrels"**.

Of the private media's 26 reports on constitutional reforms, nine were on logistical and administrative problems facing the exercise such as funding problems, attributed to Copac's failure to buy fuel and pay allowances to outreach teams in Manicaland, Matabeleland and Masvingo. Three were on rights violations and one on the constitutional campaign activities of ZANU PF. The remaining seven were general reports on the constitution-making process.

Did you know that...

- Zimbabwe faces the risk of acute food shortage, according to the Food Security Risk Index 2010, *Daily News* (24/8)
- Police forcibly evicted about 250 “*illegal settlers*” in Borrowdale and detained them at Harare Central police station without access to lawyers, SW Radio Africa, Studio 7, *Daily News* (26, 27, 28/8)
- There is an impending strike in the banking sector after the Zimbabwe Banks and Allied Workers Union (Zibawu) gave a two-week notice to go on strike after their demands for an 80% salary increase were not made (*Zimbabwe Independent* 27/8).

Most popular voices

There was no deviation in the sourcing patterns of the media during the week. The government-controlled media paid more attention to ZANU PF opinion than its MDC coalition partners while the reverse applied to the private media. In the government media, ZANU PF sources were cited mostly commenting on constitutional reforms and expressing condolences following the death of MDC-M Deputy President Gibson Sibanda. The MDC formations were also quoted paying homage to Sibanda and commenting on power-sharing issues while foreign diplomats and alternative sources were recorded debating on the constitutional reforms and calling for the removal of Western sanctions on Zimbabwe.

The private media quoted ZANU PF voices mainly commenting on Western sanctions and EU relations with Zimbabwe while the MDC, foreign diplomats and political commentators discussed the power-sharing dispute, the constitution revision and ZANU PF's refusal to declare Sibanda a national hero.

Vice President John Nkomo was the most quoted individual in the public media. He was heard eight times, speaking on the constitution making process and urging Zimbabweans to outlaw homosexuality in the new national law. Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai followed (four times). He was heard discussing stability in the inclusive government and paying condolences to the Sibanda family.

Vice President Joyce Mujuru, Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara and Bishop Nhewatiwa of the United Methodist were a close third (three times each). Mujuru and Nhewatiwa were reported urging the church to participate in the constitution rewrite to ensure it safeguards Godly principles. Mutambara was quoted expressing his party's disappointment with ZANU PF's refusal to accord Sibanda national hero status as well as commenting on the contents of a letter he allegedly wrote to Zuma pertaining to outstanding issues in the GPA.

MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa was the most heard in the private media. He was quoted 11 times followed by Mutambara (seven). Both were commenting on Sibanda's death and the implementation of outstanding issues in the GPA.

MDC-T Constitutional Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga (five times) and MDC-M deputy secretary general Priscilla Misihairmabwi and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) chairman Simpson Mutambanengwe (four times apiece) completed the list. Matinenga was recorded giving updates on constitution making; Misihairambwi criticising ZANU PF's refusal to honour Sibanda and Mutambanengwe expressing ZEC's unpreparedness to hold elections next year due to inadequate funding.

Voice distribution in the media

Media	ZANU PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Foreign Diplomats	Alternative	Govt	Ordinary People
Public media	21	12	4	12	16	3	6
Private media	9	42	28	7	34	1	2

Constitutional-related Rights Violations decline

The media published nine cases related to human rights violations during the week, eight of which appeared in the private media and one in the official media. Of these, three emanated from the constitution-making exercise, a 333 percent drop from last week's 10 incidents.

These included:

- Forced eviction of **“squatters”** from the Borrowdale racecourse during an early morning raid by police, SW Radio Africa, Studio 7 & *Daily News* (26,27 & 28/8);
- Flight to South Africa by two state prosecutors, Samkeliso Moyo and Freedom Chaita, from Matabeleland South earlier this month after they were allegedly severely tortured by state security agents for their role in sending three war veterans to prison for stock theft, SW Radio Africa & *Zimbabwean on Sunday* (27& 29/8)
- The alleged hunt by police of Women of Zimbabwe Arise leader Jenni Williams for **“commissioning”** a slogan about the civic group's constitutional awareness programmes, SW radio Africa (26/8);
- Arrest of four MDC officials for allegedly disrupting a ZANU PF constitutional campaign meeting in Masvingo North, *Daily News* & *Zimbabwean on Sunday* (23& 29/8); and
- Alleged coercion of residents to attend ZANU PF constitutional campaign meetings in Buhera, *Zimbabwean on Sunday* (29/8)

What they said...

“The political developments in this country will never be the same again after the formation of the MDC but the saddest thing in my life is the split of the MDC. It represents the saddest part of my relationship with (MDC-M Deputy President Gibson) Sibanda” – Prime Minister Morgan (*The Standard* 29/8)

“So we reject lock, stock and barrel the decision by ZANU PF politburo that Gibson Sibanda is not a national hero, they have no locus standi, no jurisdiction in this country in terms of determining who is a hero” – MDC-M President Arthur Mutambara (*The Financial Gazette* 26/8)

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

Feel free to write to MMPZ. We may not be able to respond to everything but we will look at each message. For previous MMPZ reports, and more information about the Project, please visit our website at <http://www.mmpz.org/>