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The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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Weekly Media Review 2010-42

THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

PRESIDENT Mugabe's call for the holding of national elections next June appears to have set ZANU PF and the state media it controls into election campaign mode, as evidenced by an increase in the number of stories they carried publicizing the party's activities.

The ZANU PF-controlled state media were used as platforms to promote the party's policies, while suffocating news of the activities of its coalition partners.

This violated Article 19.1(d) of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), which compels them to provide ***"balanced and fair coverage"*** to all the parties ***"for their legitimate political activities"***.

On the few occasions these media reported on the activities of the MDC groups, they either distorted statements by their leaders or quoted ZANU PF and its allies vilifying them as unfit to govern and being Western puppets.

The private media viewed ZANU PF's alleged inclusion of traditional chiefs and the military in what appeared to be a campaign strategy as an abuse of state resources and a violation of Zimbabwe's Constitution. They also argued that it gave ZANU PF an unfair advantage over its competitors.

Fig 1: Topical news distribution in the media

Media	Election debate	ZANU PF campaigns	MDC activities	Constitutional reforms	Human rights
Official Press	14	15	5	7	2
ZBC	2	46	2	20	4
Private Press	47	5	14	6	14
Private radios	7	1	3	4	8
Online agencies	3	1	3	4	5
Total	73	68	27	41	33

Chiefs, state media join 'life president' on campaign trail

THE endorsement of President Mugabe's candidacy in next year's proposed elections by Zimbabwe's traditional leaders gathering at an annual chiefs' conference in Kariba was the highlight of the week.

The event presented Mugabe and senior members of his party with yet another opportunity to promote ZANU PF policies and malign its opponents.

Mugabe also grabbed the opportunity to promote his party's policies, particularly controversial black economic empowerment, in a speech at the burial of his brother-in-law in Concession (*The Herald*, 31/10).

The Herald (29/10) quoted Mugabe urging chiefs to be **"at the forefront of freeing Zimbabwe from mental colonization"** and **"disabusing the nation of the belief that only whites are capable of owning the means of production"** while addressing them.

In turn, the chiefs declared their support for Mugabe's **"principles and values"**, and declared **"he was the best person to lead Zimbabwe now and in the future"**. They expressed confidence in Mugabe's alleged **"selfless"** and **"virtuous"** leadership. Chief Musarurwa from Chikomba described Mugabe as Zimbabwe's **"ordained leader"**, while Chiefs Council President Fortune Charumbira said: **"We will be very happy if you continue at the helm. We are happy with your programmes. If you are here we know that Zimbabwe will continue developing"**.

At the weekend, *The Sunday Mail* (31/10) reported the chiefs conference as having passed a resolution **"unanimously"** declaring Mugabe Zimbabwe's **"life president"** in recognition of his **"outstanding leadership"** and expressed their support for elections, as the inclusive government was allegedly creating **"conflicting sources of power"**.

The remaining reports were mostly on calls by senior ZANU PF officials at various forums for Zimbabwean youths to be at the **"forefront of the land reform and indigenization programmes and to fight against illegal Western sanctions"**, attacks on the Prime Minister by his deputy, Arthur Mutambara, for allegedly being reluctant to contest elections, and Defence Minister Emerson Mnangagwa's denial of reports about the alleged deployment of the army nationwide to campaign for ZANU PF (ZTV, 27, 28 & 29/10, 8pm).

The private media criticized ZANU PF for roping in Zimbabwe's traditional leadership and the military in its political activities, arguing that the move compromised their political independence and integrity.

They also quoted MDC-T condemning ZANU PF's action on the grounds that it violated the country's laws, which prohibit them from taking part in partisan politics (*NewsDay*, 29/10 & 1/11).

The private media also publicized the activities of the MDC formations.

Among them was Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's trip to Zambia to urge its president, Rupiah Banda, to persuade Mugabe to honour his obligations under the GPA (*NewsDay*, 28/10).

In other reports, the private media quoted analysts and civic organizations insisting that Zimbabwe's political situation was not conducive for the holding of elections (*ZimOnline*, 26/10).

One UZ political science lecturer told the *Daily News* (31/10) that the outcome of next year's proposed polls were **"likely to be disputed"** and would result in another power-sharing deal if Zimbabwe's coalition government failed to institute far-reaching and credible electoral reforms.

Other media also reported that a senior military official, Douglas Nyikayaramba, had summoned traditional leaders from Manicaland to army barracks in Mutare for a two-day **"indoctrination workshop"** (*The Zimbabwean On Sunday* & SW Radio Africa, 28 & 31/10).

Copac's capacity questioned

THE staging of 52 delayed outreach meetings in Harare, which were allegedly disrupted by ZANU PF-sponsored violence in September, was the focus of the media's coverage of Zimbabwe's troubled constitutional reforms.

Debate over Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's alleged calls to abandon a people-driven constitution in favour of a negotiated settlement remained under the spotlight too.

The debate assumed another dimension following claims by *The Herald* (29/10) that the Prime Minister had told MDC-T supporters at Cyril Jennings Hall in Highfield, that his party would put in place its own constitution if it comes to power.

While all media reported Copac's outreach meetings as having been conducted under generally peaceful conditions, the government media downplayed the outbreak of violence at two meetings (*The Sunday Mail*, 31/10).

They restricted their coverage of the issue to Copac co-chairman Paul Mangwana's statement. Mangwana said one person was stabbed at St Johns Retreat in Harare South, while violence was also reported at Tadzikamidzi Primary School in Chitungwiza without identifying the political affiliation of the offenders.

Although the official media identified land, gender and traditional leaders' authority as among the issues discussed during these meetings (ZTV, 30/10, 6pm & 8pm), they censored the use of inflammatory and intolerant language by ZANU PF participants, especially at Mai Musodzi Hall in Mbare.

NewsDay (1/11) reported a well-known female ZANU PF activist, who spearheaded the violence that reportedly claimed the life one MDC-T supporter in September, calling for the death penalty for those who call for sanctions against Mugabe and his associates.

However, none of the media shed light on a passing reference to the fact that the MDC-T had boycotted the meetings (*NewsDay*, 1/11).

ZTV (28/10, 6 & 8pm) quoted Mangwana saying that while his committee was willing to comply with Mugabe's directive to complete constitutional reforms by next March, Copac lacked the resources to do so. He said the remaining stages required US\$14 million. Mangwana complained that while donors had honoured their pledge, government had yet to pay its share, **"raising fears"** that Copac would fail to conclude the process within Mugabe's timeframe.

The government papers devoted their attention to criticizing Tsvangirai for allegedly planning to abandon constitutional reforms. *The Herald* (29/10) quoted Mangwana attributing the MDC-T's alleged position to its **"failure to smuggle in their Western interests"**. It reported **"observers"** describing the MDC-T's alleged plans as evidence of its **"lack of commitment to democratic processes and principles"**. Among them was National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) chairman Lovemore Madhuku, who described Tsvangirai as **"reactionary"**, and ZANU PF's Jonathan Moyo, disguised as a political analyst, accusing the Prime Minister of being **"unfit to lead this country,"** while senior party official Didymus Mutasa described Tsvangirai as **"immature"**.

The private media continued to question Copac's ability to complete the constitutional reform process by early next year.

They also quoted Copac leaders saying their ability to do so depended on the provision of adequate funds (*ZimOnline*, 27/10).

RIGHTS ABUSES ON THE INCREASE AGAIN

REPORTS of human rights violations remained on an upward trend in the private media, disproving claims by ZANU PF and the state media that the political environment in Zimbabwe was now conducive for the holding of elections.

The media reported 17 new incidents. Most of them (15) appeared in the private media, while the official media reported two incidents.

They included:

- The arrest of two journalists, Nkosana Dhlamini and Andrison Manyere, on criminal nuisance charges while covering a Copac outreach meeting in Harare South (*The Sunday Mail & NewsDay*, 2/11).
- Alleged attacks on five MDC-T supporters at another outreach in Mbare (*NewsDay*).
- Assault on freelance journalist, Sydney Saize, by six ZANU PF supporters for covering their party's fundraising dinner at the Queens Hall in Mutare (*NewsDay*).
- The coercion of teachers and students in Masvingo and Midlands to attend ZANU PF meetings and the eviction of scores of suspected MDC-T supporters from their homes in Gutu by traditional chiefs (SW Radio Africa & *Daily News*, 26 & 28/10).

THE MOST QUOTED

COPAC co-chairman Paul Mangwana was the most quoted individual in the government media.

He was heard 21 times, mostly speaking about outstanding outreach consultative meetings in Harare and Chitungwiza, which he said had been conducted smoothly.

President Mugabe, Fortune Charumbira (President of the Chiefs' Council) and MDC-T Copac co-chairman, Douglas Mwonzora, closely followed. Mugabe and Charumbira were quoted 18 times each, while Mwonzora was heard 17 times. ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo (five times) came a distant fourth.

Mugabe was mostly quoted urging chiefs' to take an active role in the country's politics, attacked his perceived Western opponents and defended ZANU PF's controversial policies. Charumbira praised Mugabe and pledged chiefs' support for his party. Gumbo commented on preparations for ZANU PF's annual conference in Mutare.

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai (11 times) was the most quoted in the private media.

He urged his supporters to prepare for next year's proposed elections and expressed concern over Mugabe's reluctance to genuinely reform Zimbabwe's electoral environment.

Mangwana, Mwonzora, Gumbo and political analyst John Makumbe trailed. They were quoted three times each. Mangwana and Mwonzora mostly commented about the Harare outreach, while Gumbo spoke about his party's annual conference. Makumbe accused Mugabe of disrespecting his coalition partners and argued that Zimbabwe was not yet ready to hold credible and undisputed elections.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“He is a selfless leader. We support President Mugabe. We are happy with his empowerment drive. We endorse his leadership...” – Chief Chisunga of Mbire, a member of the Chiefs’ Council (*The Herald*, 29/10).

“He (Mugabe) is like Munhumutapa (an historic Shona paramount chief). God ordained him to lead Zimbabwe like he ordained Moses to lead the Israelites” – Chief Musarurwa from Chikomba (*The Herald*).

“Listen to the stupidity from Britain and America. They say we have not done much in the implementation of the Global Political Agreement. Who are you damn fools? Munei neGPA yedu? (What have you to do with our GPA?)” – President Mugabe (*The Herald* and *Chronicle*, 29/10).

“What happened in...2008 is unusual and we are not going to let it happen again. We are a revolutionary party and any other party which thinks it will rule this country is daydreaming. We will not relinquish power to any other party” – ZANU PF national chairman Simon Khaya Moyo speaking at a party meeting in Mutare (*The Zimbabwean*, 28/10).

“No one will rule this country without any revolutionary credentials. We have no regrets over this statement because a lot of people sacrificed their lives for the liberation of the country and we do not want them to turn in their graves because we would have sold out” – Brigadier-General Douglas Nyikayaramba speaking during another meeting of traditional leaders in Mutare (*The Manica Post*, 29/10).

Ends/

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