



Defending free expression and your right to know

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday February 15th – Sunday February 21st 2010
Weekly Media Update 2010-6**

Contents

1. Comment
2. The week's top stories
3. Human rights violations
4. The most quoted voices

COMMENT

Mahoso's ghost resurfaces

MMPZ welcomes the official appointment of commissioners to the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) and hopes that this will finally expedite the licensing of new newspapers.

The appointments, reportedly published in a Government Gazette on February 19 2010, come after almost a year of bickering among coalition partners over the form and scope of media reforms, including allegations of manipulation in the selection of the ZMC commissioners.

MMPZ trusts that the establishment of a secretariat to run the day-to-day activities of the ZMC will not fall victim to the same political squabbling and excessive bureaucracy that have paralysed the introduction of the "free media environment" proposed in the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

News that discredited former chairperson of the defunct Media and Information Commission, Tafataona Mahoso, had applied to head the secretariat, and that some ZMC commissioners, including commission chairman Godfrey Majonga and ZANU PF's Christopher Mutsvangwa were **"already selling Mahoso's proposal to other commissioners"** (*The Zimbabwean*, 18/2), does not instil confidence in the process. Neither does the retention of repressive media laws and the continuing use of extra-judicial methods by state security agents to curtail Press freedom.

The arrest of a Mexican journalist in Masvingo just two days before the gazetting of the ZMC appointments, is testimony to this.

New Zimbabwe (17/2), quoted Tourism Minister Walter Mzembe saying he was **"extremely concerned"** that the scribe, who was in his care, was arrested despite having been specially accredited by the authorities to make a documentary on tourist sites in southern Zimbabwe.

Said Mzembi: ***“We approve a journalist from Mexico to go and film Masvingo and he was arrested...We cannot attract tourists if we do not look at our law and order.”***

THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

The EU's decision to extend targeted sanctions against President Mugabe and his allies reignited intense debate in the media about the relevance of the measures, overshadowing other topical issues such as the debate over controversial indigenization regulations, dirty diamonds, and even the civil servants' strike. See Fig. 1.

Fig 1: The media's most popular stories

Media	Sanctions & conspiracies	Diamonds controversy	Indigenisation regulations	Constitutional reforms	Investment conference
Public media	62	19	13	19	27
Private media	23	16	20	9	3
Total	85	35	33	28	30

EU sanctions reignite 'Western plot' conspiracies

The government media used the European Union's decision to extend sanctions for another year to reinvigorate ZANU PF's campaign to discredit the move as a Western plot to weaken the party in ongoing power-sharing talks; divide the inclusive government; and/or to achieve "illegal" regime change in Zimbabwe.

This was reflected in 54 of their 62 reports on the topic. Thirty-four of these appeared on ZBC and the remaining 28 in government papers [news stories (22), opinion pieces (five) and one editorial comment]. Twenty of the official media's news reports were heavily editorialised.

The rest of the government media's reports on the topic alleged conspiracies against the country by international organisations, such as the IMF and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). They reported the IMF's reluctance to provide financial support to Zimbabwe until the country had cleared its debt, and calls by some CITES members for a moratorium on ivory sales, as ploys to undermine economic recovery.

None of these news reports and opinion pieces provided any credible evidence to support these claims.

Although the private media reported the EU move as having deepened the rift between the parties in the coalition, they reported the decision as being inevitable in view of ZANU PF's reluctance to honour reform pledges in the GPA. *The Financial Gazette* (18/2) even credited Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai for having played a role in the EU's lifting of sanctions against

some formerly targeted parastatals, citing appeals he made to the West, contrary to the government media's portrayal that he was reluctant to campaign against them.

State media avoid 'vanishing' diamonds puzzle

The government media were careful to "sanitize" their reports of the activities at the Chiadzwa diamond fields and related developments.

Of the 19 stories they carried on the subject, eight contrived to present concerns raised over Zimbabwe's failure to comply with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KP) as part of the West's regime-change agenda; four were court updates relating to the ownership wrangle of Chiadzwa claims between the state and African Consolidated Resources (ACR), while another four were on the appointment of South Africa's Abbey Chikane as KP monitor to the country.

One notable story in *The Herald* (18/2) reported Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku clarifying **"my very clear order of January 25"** that diamonds confiscated from ACR should be kept at the Reserve Bank until the ownership dispute was resolved, adding that their removal would represent **"the height of mischief"** and would be **"in contempt...of this court"**.

However, the paper made no attempt to investigate the controversial circumstances surrounding its earlier story, which reported that the Registrar of the Supreme Court had declared that the diamonds need not be kept at the Reserve Bank. It also failed to report news that the police had removed the diamonds from the central bank, allegedly on the orders of Mines Minister Obert Mpofu (reported in the private media). Nor did the paper make any attempt to discover what had happened to the diamonds.

The private media didn't look for the diamonds either, but they did interpret Chidyausiku's judgment as being **"a rebuke"** for Mpofu and the police (*Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 21/2). *The Independent* (19/2) also quoted unnamed sources warning that elements within government planned to stop the **"inquisitive"** Mines and Energy parliamentary portfolio committee from proceeding with its public investigations into the authorities' activities in Chiadzwa. Although minister Mpofu was reported in *The Herald* (17/2) saying the government was **"fully committed"** to the country's obligations under the Kimberley Process, the paper's story the next day on President Mugabe's response to the EU's decision to extend sanctions, quietly quoted Mugabe threatening that Zimbabwe could ignore KP altogether and **"find alternative markets for our diamonds"**.

Indigenisation debate gathers steam

President Mugabe was also quietly quoted in *The Herald's* front-page story (18/2) defending controversial indigenization regulations: **"Forty-nine percent is a hell lot (sic) of equity, it's only foolish ones who will say no; wise ones would take it up."**

In fact 13 reports in the government media continued to support ZANU PF's indigenization regulations while turning a blind eye to concerns of the business community and economists that they were detrimental to economic recovery and efforts to attract investment. Instead, they gave extensive and positive coverage to the tourism and investment conference held in Harare

and ignored the damaging effects of the indigenization regulations. A diversity of views could be found in the private media, although they emphasised the negative repercussions the regulations were likely to have on the economy and considered the investment conference to be a supreme example of bad timing.

ZimOnline (17 & 19/2), for example, quoted ZANU PF Tourism Minister Walter Mzembi calling for “**further engagement**” on the indigenisation law and ZCTU warning that the regulations could “**plunge**” the country’s industry into “**chaos**” comparable to the one triggered by Mugabe’s controversial fast-track land reforms. And SW Radio Africa’s ‘*Hot Seat*’ interview carried a lively debate between disenfranchised exiled businessman Mutumwa Mawere and Affirmative Action Group leader Supa Mandiwanzira, among other contributors.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The public media did not report any incidents of human rights abuses.

The private media recorded seven.

They included:

- Alleged assault by the police of 20 Great Zimbabwe University students for criticising the Public Order and Security Act at a public hearing organized by Parliament’s Defence and Home Affairs portfolio committee (*The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 21/2).
- Arrest of MDC-T MP Godfrey Chimombe for addressing an unsanctioned constitutional meeting and insulting the President in Mt Darwin (SW Radio Africa & *The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 16 & 21/2); and
- Arrest of two MDC-T workers for distributing the Prime Minister’s newsletter in Harare and the destruction of the paper in Mutoko by state security agents (Studio 7 & *The Zimbabwean*, 17 & 18/2).

THE MOST QUOTED....

Birthday Boy takes the cake

Although the media appeared to have accessed comment from both the two major political parties, the government media mostly quoted the MDC-T in the context of portraying it as responsible for the country’s suffering through its alleged reluctance to call for the lifting of sanctions.

Fig 2: Most quoted groups in the media

Media	Govt	ZANU PF	MDC-T	MDC-M	Alternative	Business
Government media	20	58	38	8	15	10
Private media	5	30	37	9	30	6

Predictably, “birthday boy” President Mugabe was the most quoted individual during the week (27 times in the government media), mainly talking about the divisive nature of sanctions, power-sharing problems and other controversies.

His exposure included a 20-minute “birthday interview” on ZTV and Spot FM with ZBC’s Tazzen Mandizvidza (repeated on Sunday) which turned into an unquestioned monologue defending ZANU PF’s policies.

MDC-T Finance Minister Tendai Biti (11), MDC-M Industry Minister Welshman Ncube (seven) and ZANU PF Mines Minister Obert Mpofu (four) were the runners-up. Biti and Ncube were also quoted mostly commenting on sanctions and power-sharing issues, while Mpofu talked about Chiadzwa.

Affirmative Action Group leader Supa Mandiwanzira (six) and Tafataona Mahoso (three) were among the most quoted “alternative voices” in the official media, mainly condemning the EU for maintaining sanctions and defending the indigenization laws.

Mugabe (twelve) and Biti (nine) were also favourites in the private Press. They were quoted commenting on sanctions, diamonds and the IMF’s decision to restore Zimbabwe’s voting rights. Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe and Indigenisation Minister Saviour Kasukuwere, who were quoted four times apiece, commenting on indigenisation regulations, were the other favourites.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“As for the rest of the nonsensical hogwash in your article – we will not bother to respond as we have tried to clarify issues with your paper and other newspapers in the same stable...to no avail. What we can do is feel sorry for the millions of Zimbabweans who have to deal with your hate language and are robbed week-in, week-out of quality news coverage” - ZCTU Secretary-General Wellington Chibhebhe censuring *The Sunday Mail* for allowing its columnist Tafataona Mahoso to write falsehoods about the ZCTU (*The Standard*, 21/2).

“We are negotiating about nothing. It is the nothings that are holding us back. All that was important was enshrined in the global agreement and there is hardly anything we are now discussing which falls within the global agreement” – President Mugabe speaking during his birthday interview with ZBC (*The Herald & ZTV*, 20/2).

“We have to rid ourselves of our addiction to patronage, which is turning us into a nation of beggars and prostitutes.” – Former Education Minister Fay Chung (*The Standard*)

Ends/

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