

Arrest and detention in Zimbabwe - Diary of the events from February 23 – April 12, 2002

Hans Christen

Saturday 23rd February, 2002

My wife Jenny had gone off to a ladies' lunch on a friend's farm, hosted for Simmy Knott, a dear friend of ours, who, together with her husband Mike, were shortly leaving Zimbabwe in search of greener pastures in New Zealand. I was preparing a chicken curry and rice dish for the evening meal, as Jenny's parents were coming to spend the weekend with us; we were planning to celebrate her father's birthday on the Sunday.

I had the curry bubbling away in the slow cooker and was busy receiving and replying to emails, while my two daughters, Klara (7) and Heidi (5) were entertaining themselves. At about 2.30pm a vehicle arrived at the gate and I opened it. In came 3 MDC activists, one of whom I knew – Bornface Tagwirei. I had, some months ago, secured employment for him at Frame Africa, owned by a friend of mine, Christopher Bell.

I offered them a cool drink and they told me that they would like to borrow my Mazda B2200 pick-up. I told them that I had lent my vehicle out and that I was unable to help. They then informed me that they had already borrowed one vehicle from elsewhere and they needed fuel in order to continue campaigning in the constituency. Their vehicle had been left parked outside the gate with another four or five occupants whom I invited in for some refreshment. I told them that they could fill their vehicle with fuel, on my account at Stephens's (ex-Charlesdale) Service Station in Marondera. To this they readily agreed and also requested some firewood for the people guarding the remains of the local MDC Parliamentary candidate's house which had been partially gutted by a firebomb a couple of days earlier. The house – as a result of the firebombing – no longer had its electricity supply intact, and so cooking had to be done on a wood fire. I gave them a load of firewood and they went on their way.

At approximately 4pm my parents-in-law arrived. I went about preparing afternoon tea, which we had on the verandah. Jenny's mother produced a beautiful chocolate birthday cake, which my eldest daughter decorated with candles. My father-in-law had barely blown out the candles on the cake when I heard the sounds of another vehicle at the gate. Thinking that it was my wife returning from her lunch party, I opened it only to see a Landrover Defender followed by a light blue sedan car pull in through the gates.

I was immediately concerned for this could mean the arrival of the ruling party's Border Gezi Youth Brigade, "war-veterans" or a motley crew of thugs. I herded my in-laws and my children upstairs, and began shutting windows and doors. However the visitors, numbering approximately fifteen, led by what turned out to be Detective Inspector Chikwanda, were already in the room adjacent to the kitchen which we use as a "pub".

I asked them who they were and enquired as to the purpose of their visit. They all identified themselves as plain-clothes officers attached to the Zimbabwe Republic Police in Marondera. Several kept me entrapped in a little corner of the room whilst others sifted through boxes and pored over maps that we had gathered in order to help identify polling stations. The officers also examined the jerry cans stored in my garage (a necessity in these days of erratic fuel supplies) and muttered knowingly. Some of them may or may not have wandered around the house whilst I was cornered in the pub.

They took away my cell phone and only reluctantly allowed me to retrieve a box of cigarettes before shoving me into the back of the Landrover. At no stage were they able to produce a Warrant of Arrest or a Search Warrant. I was not told of the crime I was supposed to have committed until we arrived at the police station in Marondera, where I learned that a Zanu (PF) Nissan Hardbody Twin Cab pick-up had been damaged in an arson attack the night before, whilst parked in the Marondera police station car park. Interestingly, Marondera lawyer Ignatius

Sakala told me later, that at first, members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police sympathetic to the MDC had been suspected of the crime, and 9 officers had been transferred to remote posts. The Police accused me of attending a meeting of MDC activists on Thursday 21st February 2002 at the partially burnt-out home of Didymus Munhenzva where it is alleged that I helped plot the attack on the Zanu (PF) vehicle with MDC activists.

Despite my protestations that I had a complete and credible alibi covering the entire day, I was hauled into the CID section of the police station, where to my surprise I found all the MDC activists who had earlier in the afternoon visited my home. I was questioned relentlessly, personal and family and business details were extracted from me after which I was led into the open central courtyard of the CID building where I was made to sit on the concrete floor. I was asked whether I spoke Shona; upon replying in the negative, I was accused of being a racist by one of the group of approximately a dozen officers - a female - who surrounded me.

I was questioned about my aluminium business and told that it was illegal, as I didn't have a licence to trade in aluminium – which is nonsense. They asked about my photographic business and asked whether I had done photography for the MDC. I was reminded about the Macheke farmer, David Stevens, who was gunned down in cold blood and at point-blank range outside a police station before the 2000 Parliamentary Elections and I was told that I was about to face the same fate. The officers were all in the kind of state which suggested the prior consumption of narcotic and/or alcoholic substances.

I was told to lie on my back and told that if I did not answer the questions posed to me satisfactorily, I would be whipped. Two sjamboks (long stout whips) were displayed to prove that this was no idle threat. I admitted that although I had supported the MDC, I had done so in terms of the constitution which guarantees certain personal freedoms, including the freedom to support the political party of my choice. I insisted that I had done nothing illegal and that I had had no hand in either the alleged "meeting" or the actual burning of the Zanu (PF) vehicle. I pointed out that it was not illegal to be in possession of MDC literature.

I was then beaten on the soles of my feet and on the ankles whilst an officer stood on my knees. Burning cigarettes were applied to my soles. I was also whipped across the back and later received an open-handed blow to the face by a crazed officer. (Upon my release from custody on Friday 8th March, I went straight to Dr George Turner who witnessed and recorded the now healing injuries that I had sustained.)

I was asked to provide the names and other details of all other MDC supporters with whom I had been in contact; questions that I managed generally to avoid or evade through obfuscation. During these proceedings I heard frenzied screaming from one of the adjacent offices which indicated that another suspect was receiving a far more thorough beating than the one to which I was being subjected. I was made to reveal my cell phone's PIN number and one of the officers carefully scrutinised the phone's directory. He then disappeared with it, presumably to note names and numbers therein.

The group of nine suspects (Bornface Tagwirei, Damiano Muchetuse, Elias Saunyama, Pound Pororai, Dickson Kumbojo, Cosmos Paradzai, Christopher Jekanyika, Edith Terechiri and I) were kept in one of the CID offices until 4.30am on Sunday 24th February whilst some of the suspects were in turn taken away, one at a time, for further beatings (apparently near the Marondera aerodrome) in order to elicit forced confessions from them. My fellow suspects told me that the officers had, during the interrogation at the aerodrome, fired shots into the air as a scare tactic. Mercifully, although I was told that "Hans, we are coming for you next" repeatedly, I suffered no further torture – unlike some of my unfortunate fellows. I was however reminded that as Whites, we had spurned the hand of reconciliation offered to us by the Government of President Robert Mugabe, and that by supporting the opposition MDC, I was in contravention of the Constitution which I was told required obedience to the government of the day.

It was almost dawn when we were herded into the overcrowded, filthy police cells, charged with Malicious Injury to Property, after having to remove our shoes and surrender our valuables. Most of my fellow suspects had been beaten so severely on the soles of their feet that they could barely walk. This was a blatant attempt by the police, obviously at the behest of higher authorities, to silence leading opposition campaigners through detention, and to shut down the MDC in Marondera ahead of the Presidential Election. It later transpired that Jenny had come to the police station to enquire after my whereabouts some time during our interrogation, but was advised to return the following day after 8am.

Sunday 24th February 2002

After snatching a few hours of fitful sleep on the floor of the police cell, sharing filthy blankets – one of them stained with either vomit or excrement - with over a dozen other suspects, I was ushered into the police station's Charge Office where I was able to speak to my wife for 5 minutes. I was allowed to receive a cigarette and have a sip of the juice that she had brought. Thereafter I was led back to the cells until lunchtime when we spent a few minutes in the diamond-meshed wire enclosure outside the cell, eating sadza (maize porridge) and kapenta (a small fresh-water fish) and sharing a communal bowl of drinking water. Similarly we were let out for an early supper of the same fare, after which time we were returned to the cell.

Jenny arrived in the late afternoon with Andrew Chadwick from The Newsroom and with Sheila Jarvis, an attorney from the law firm Atherstone and Cook. I was allowed to speak to Jenny and to Sheila for 5 minutes but was not allowed to be given any of the food or drink which my wife had brought. During both visits a police officer was present in the room. I learned that Human Rights and Aids activist Kerry Kay (who has recently appeared on the BBC's "Hardtalk with Tim Sebastian") had also been taken in for questioning, but that she had subsequently been released. 3 international Election observers, one of them a Norwegian, were also at the police station and Jenny was able to speak to them.

At approximately 9pm the cell door opened to reveal 3 officers in plain clothes (either CID, CIO or a combination of both). They accused Elias, Kenneth and me of conversing in sign language – a ridiculous notion – which they said was "a very bad thing". They chained us together using handcuffs and leg irons and told us that as "part of the investigation" we were being taken to an alternative place of detention. How could the investigation possibly have benefited by us being detained "elsewhere"? As we were asked to sign out our belongings and put on our shoes the officers told us not to try to escape as they were armed and would shoot "in the head". It's highly unlikely to see 3 detainees handcuffed and leg-ironed in a row effecting an escape! They joked loudly amongst each other, debating on whether they would "kill to injure" or "injure to kill".

We were led to a waiting Landrover into which we were bundled along with five officers. They then tore to the bottom end of the police camp where it dawned on me that we might be offloaded for further torture. It transpired, however, that they were merely stopping for refreshment of alcoholic beverages. Once all aboard we left the police station and drove along the slip road parallel to the main Harare-Mutare highway. The Landrover stopped at Ruzawi Road Service Station where more refreshments were purchased. Clearly intoxicated and in a sadistically jovial mood the officers proceeded eastwards along the Mutare highway. Upon enquiry, I was told that we were going to Macheke police station. My heart sank for there was no earthly logical reason why, for the sake of the police investigation, we were being ferried to Macheke police station on a Sunday night by intoxicated officers. As we passed the North Road I was convinced that I was seeing the turn-off to our home for the very last time. For the first time in over twenty years, I began to pray, asking God that my end be relatively swift and merciful. I was absolutely convinced that my two fellow suspects and I would be severely tortured at best and at worst, killed.

The trip (which, as it turned out, ended at Macheke police station) at over 130km/hr was quite honestly the worst half-hour I have ever endured in my entire life. We were disgorged at the

entrance to the Macheke Charge Office where the laborious procedure of booking in our valuables, shoes, belts, etc took place. One of the CID/CIO officers from Marondera even told me to detach my penis and book it into my property bag. Such was the extent of their malicious and sadistic behaviour. No sooner had we three been booked in, when one of the CID/CIO officers deleted my entry with a pen and ruler. There was much conversing in Shona – I did not understand a word, but the thought went through my mind that Elias and Cosmos would be remanded at Macheke police station whilst I would be taken elsewhere to face God-knows-what fate. As it turned out, they had made a procedural error, and booked me in again.

I thought again about how this whole operation was designed to neutralise the MDC in Marondera. The investigating officers were clearly radical Zanu (PF) sympathisers and hell-bent on arresting all and sundry prior to launching a full and proper investigation. For the record, in the warned-and-cautioned statement which I gave to the ZRP I noted that I did not support or condone the attack on the Zanu (PF) vehicle in the police yard; neither had I known about the attack, prior to it having been pointed out to me once I was in custody. A crime has clearly been committed, and the offender/s should be brought to book. However, justice should not be selective, neither should innocent people be subjected to torture and incarceration for two weeks (as we were to be) by partisan State agents. Incidentally when some weeks ago, an MDC provincial vehicle was fired upon and torched in Murehwa, no suspects were taken into custody. There should have been a full attempted-murder investigation, as well as one for malicious injury to property.

Following the checking-in of our effects, we were shepherded by torchlight to the Macheke police cells – a truly sorry place. We were shoved into a pitch black, filthy cell where two occupants already lay. We scrabbled around in the dark for the grubby blankets and felt our way to the latrine.

Monday 25th February 2002

We woke up covered in mosquito bites to the sight of a dingy 5m by 7 m cell with four small window set high in the wall and guarded by burglar bars and weld mesh. The latrine stank horribly and could not be flushed. We had to cover it with a blanket to minimise the stench. At mid-morning the door swung open and Elias, Kenneth and I were able to enjoy a few minutes of sunshine while we ate our breakfast of mealie meal porridge with our fingers. The uniformed police officer allowed me to accompany him, in handcuffs, to the Charge Office where I was permitted to extract a single cigarette from my bag of possessions. Shortly thereafter we were herded back into the cell.

At lunch we were once again released for a few minutes into the diamond-mesh wire enclosure to eat sadza and kapenta. However a cigarette was refused, as was medication, soap, toothbrush and paste, visits from my lawyer and from my wife and friends. These instructions, I was told, had come from the investigating officers at Marondera CID. Clearly they wanted us to suffer in conditions of extreme deprivation, denying us even the most basic of human rights. In addition we were now told that we were no longer allowed to stretch our legs in the sunshine during the lunch break – we had to sit up against the outer wall of the cell while we wolfed down our meal. I even had to ask for permission to walk a couple of metres to the tap for a mug of water. We were herded back to the cell as soon as we had finished lunch.

Permission to shower (even without soap) was refused. I learned later that Jenny had gone to the Marondera Police Station at 7am in an effort to see me. She was told to bring me a meal at 8.30am by officers who must have known full well that I had been transferred to Macheke during the previous night. This in itself reveals the corrupt and sadistic nature of the investigation – a blatant attempt to punish me, my wife and my fellow suspects for daring to sympathise with the MDC. Upon Jenny's return to the Marondera police station at 8.30am, she was told that I and two others had been transferred to Macheke. Jenny duly proceeded to Macheke but was denied

access to me. Similarly the lawyers, Godfrey Mupanga and Khanyisela Moyo from the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum were denied contact with me.

Tuesday 26th February 2002

Again we were denied access to medication, family, friends, lawyers, and basics such as soap, toothpaste and toothbrush, toilet paper and cigarettes. Jenny arrived at the police station in the company of Andrew Chadwick – in vain - but managed to shout a message of support as she drove past the cellblock. Marondera lawyer, Richard Mufuka telephoned the Macheke police, only to be referred to Marondera CID. Officer Kurere (?) told him that the investigating officer, Detective Inspector Chikwanda was in Harare and Mr Mufuka was unable to obtain the required cell phone number to seek permission to see us. A friend came to visit and was also told that this was not possible. She placed a plastic shopping bag containing toothbrush, toothpaste, “wet-wipes”, toilet paper, cigarettes and a lighter in a small gap in the diamond mesh enclosure at my behest. Luckily for once the police officers had left the tiny peep hole in the steel cell door open, and I had seen her coming and was able to shout to her. However, upon being released for the few minutes that it would take us to consume our evening meal, I discovered that the plastic bag had been removed and all police officers with whom I came into contact professed to have no knowledge of its existence. (Interestingly, the plastic bag was handed to me, unopened, the next day at Marondera police station when we were transferred back there.) I worked out that I walked 12 kilometres by pacing backwards and forwards in the cell – there was little else to do to while away the hours.

Wednesday 27th February 2002

At about 8am we were taken out of our cell and whilst eating our porridge a group of about 5 plain-clothes officers from Marondera arrived at the cell and informed us that we were to be taken back to Marondera police station and then to the Marondera Magistrate's Court. I was allowed to wash my face before being handcuffed and taken to the Charge Office where we were booked out and were able to reclaim our property. Only at this point was I allowed to have a cigarette. Andrew Chadwick and Nigel Hough were parked on the shoulder of the main highway, next to the police station, from where they were observing the proceedings, just in case the police changed their minds and decided to redetain us elsewhere. A police Landrover sped out of the police station, accosted them and told them to move on. We three suspects were then driven to Marondera, shackled together in the back of a Landrover. One of the officers examined my cell phone to ensure that I had not switched it on. He warned me to keep it off.

Upon arrival in Marondera we were taken back to the CID block where we sat in the courtyard in which we had been tortured some days previously. I was then taken to Detective Inspector Chikwanda's office where I was able to speak to Jenny and to my lawyer, Khanyisela Moyo, in private for about 10 minutes. Jenny told me that she had had arrangements made for the Macheke police station to be put under surveillance on Monday and Tuesday nights, in case we were again whisked away elsewhere as had happened on Sunday night. The Detective Inspector told us to hurry up with our discussions, threatening to haul us to court only in the afternoon if we took too long. Miss Moyo was then able to speak to the other suspects for about a minute each before we were taken back to the police vehicle and driven to the court.

At the court my wife, a small crowd of well-wishers and two Norwegian Election observers met us. We appeared in the dock and were asked by the lady magistrate in Court One whether we had any complaints against the police. Eight of us replied in the affirmative and we displayed our injuries. Shortly before lunch the magistrate called the public prosecutor and our lawyers to her Chambers. She postponed the hearing to 2pm, however later changed her mind and postponed it to first thing the following day. We were now all in the cells at the Magistrate's Court where I received a great deal of encouragement from several ZPS (Zimbabwe Prison Service) officers. Jenny was able to provide us with lunch after which we were told by Miss Moyo that we were to be taken to Marondera Prison for the night.

I was allowed to give Miss Moyo a list of requirements for myself and for my fellow suspects, such as sandals, toiletries, medication, food, reading matter and a small towel. We were duly put onto the back of a Zimbabwe Prison Service lorry, everyone handcuffed except for me – I was placed in leg irons. A CID/CIO official was overheard giving the ZPS officials the instruction that I was to be put in leg irons, as there were many “whites” around and it was felt that they might try to spring me out of custody!

Jenny and Chris Bell followed the ZPS lorry to Marondera Prison, where they enquired about visits and bringing me food. We were told to take off our clothes (including underpants) which were put into bags provided – mine was number 163A. We donned the dress of remand prisoners – khaki shirt and shorts. Fortunately I was able to secure a uniform that was dirty but not in tatters – as were most of the shirts and shorts. We handed over money and valuables to the prison authorities and had to give all details such as name, ID number, height, details of any visible scars, occupation, level of education, residential address, etc. We were then individually interviewed by the 2 i/c officer who explained the basic prison rules, asked what offence we were supposed to have committed and warned us not to talk about politics in jail. I was also told not to tell other inmates what my alleged crime was. I was assured that indecent assault was not tolerated and that I need not be concerned about this phenomenon.

During all this time we had to sit or squat on the floor, which we soon learned was standard prison procedure - sit or squat unless in your cell or when walking from your cell to be fed or to shower or to see visitors. We were then given a plate of sadza and spinach and ushered to our cells by a ZPS officer.

The prison compound comprises 8 men's cells, a penal block, a small women's cell, kitchens, the dog section and an administration block. Remand prisoners are housed in cells 1, 7 and 8. Initially cell 1 was designed for the remand prisoners and around it is the remand enclosure guarded by a barbed wire fence – with strands woven vertically and horizontally – and two lines of razor wire. There are now so many remand prisoners that cells 7 and 8 which used to house the convicted are now also part of the remand section.

I was put into cell 7 with Bornface Tagwirei, Dickson Kumbojo and Cosmos Paradzai. We arrived at the cell at “fall in” time when all prisoners have to sit in lines of five, while they are counted by the cell “staff” – a position similar to that of a school prefect. The numbers in each cell are then verified and recorded by ZPS officers doing their rounds. This procedure happens twice daily, also at times when soap or toilet paper is handed out, supposedly one roll of toilet paper per 5 prisoners per week, and in the week and a half that I spent in prison, each prisoner was given a small bar of soap.

I walked into cell 7, approximately 5m x 10 m in dimension, to be greeted by about 100 black faces! The numbers in each cell vary daily, as some remand prisoners are released on bail and new suspects are brought in, but numbers generally hover at around 100 people per cell. There is a definite pecking order in the cell; newcomers are generally squashed together on the side of the cell nearest to the latrine, called “Epworth”, after one of Harare's poorer suburbs. Those who have to sleep in the centre of the cell are in “Mbare”, after one of Harare's busy high-density suburbs – named so because everyone is constantly stepping over these people on their way to the latrine. The “seniors” of the cell are on the side furthest from the latrine, in “Gunhill” which is one of Harare's more posh suburbs. Peter Tapera (who has been on remand for 17 months) and Owen Matare, two of the “seniors” ushered me to Gunhill, found me a space in which to sleep and gave me three blankets.

I was the only person to be afforded the luxury of an extra blanket, which I could fold lengthways and use as a mattress. For this I was extremely grateful as my hipbones and coccyx were by now aching from days of sleeping on the floor of police cells. One blanket was used as a pillow and the third to cover myself. I was befriended by a number of prisoners, all wanting to know what

“crime” I had committed, and telling me their problems. They are a surprisingly cheerful bunch, considering the sorry circumstances in which they find themselves. Many, like me, are obviously the victims of wrongful arrest – be it for political reasons or for crimes they are “supposed” to have committed – they are merely suspects. It becomes apparent that often the police arrest to investigate, rather than investigate to arrest. A number of remand prisoners obviously have committed offences, many admitted their wrongdoings to me, however the nature of their detention leaves much to be desired.

Many have relatives outside of prison who do not even know where they are, such as one Tonderai Karimapfumbi, who was arrested when he bought a stereo system and a cell phone from the son of a so-called “war veteran”. The latter then went to the police and accused Tonderai of theft. Tonderai was beaten severely, but he lacks the ability or the courage or the finances to expose his mistreatment at the hands of the authorities.

Most cannot afford lawyers to help speed up the judicial process and they are remanded in custody after appearing in court time and time again, others have been granted bail, but cannot raise the money. I was told of an inmate who was granted bail of \$500. He was only able to raise \$485 so he languishes in the remand cells.

The prison is some distance from Marondera, and some relatives do not have the means or the resources to pay visits and bring basics such as toothpaste and toothbrush, or luxuries such as cigarettes, and they certainly cannot afford to raise the money required for bail. The bureaucratic procedure that one has to go through to secure the release of a remand prisoner is beyond the grasp of many simple rural relatives who are often the prisoners’ only hope. Many of the prisoners gave me messages of support and told me that they would pray for me and ask God that I be given bail by the Magistrate on Thursday.

Once I had prepared my bedding on the floor, I chatted to fellow inmates till official bedtime, which is signalled by a guard rapping on the steel cell door at 8pm. After this time inmates talk at their own peril, the cell “staff” report offenders to the guards and this results in a beating. I must say, however, that I was treated very well by the prison authorities, many asked about my family, told me that I would soon be back home, they often joked with me and enquired repeatedly whether I was having any problems with the other prisoners.

I soon discovered the greatest scourge of the prison, and the inmates’ most intimate companion, the body louse, *Pediculus humanus*. The females lay up to 300 eggs which take about a week to hatch, the nymphal stage of the body louse is only 10 days and therefore it can multiply rapidly. Several times a day one removes one’s shorts and shirt and examines the seams for evidence of these parasitic creatures. They are virtually impossible to find in one’s blankets though, so the problem is never eradicated, one merely minimises it to an extent. The most afflicted areas of the body are the shoulders, armpits, waist and inner thighs. One of the prison guards later suggested that we rub Lifebuoy soap onto our skin – this supposedly reduces one’s appeal to the lice! Interestingly Jenny was at no stage allowed to bring us any ointments to relieve the itchiness and discomfort caused by the lice. Neither was I allowed to receive Sunblock. It appears that there is a long list of prohibited items! I fell asleep fairly quickly, thanks to an Imovane sleeping tablet, which had been spirited to me at the court by Jenny, via Miss Moyo. The lights stay on all night, otherwise inmates on their nocturnal visits to the latrine would constantly trip over sleeping bodies.

Thursday 28th February 2002

I awoke to see the early morning sun filtering in through the windows. The cells used to be classrooms many years ago, so the ten windows allow in plenty of light, and the ventilation is adequate. They are however fitted with burglar bars as well as weld mesh, and the ceiling of the cells are also constructed of weldmesh, above which is a corrugated tin roof on wooden roofing trusses.

After “fall in” and counting, those who were due to appear in court were called and given an early breakfast of a slice of bread and an aluminium mug of sweet tea, dished out from a metal dustbin by the convicts who served as kitchen staff. The morning bread as well as lunch and supper are wheeled to the gates of the remand enclosure on a four-wheeled trolley. Those wearing tattered shorts and shirts were ordered to exchange their rags with other inmates wearing more presentable clothes, for it would not do for prisoners to appear in the Magistrate’s Court in rags!

I soon learned that it is advisable to keep oneself clothed only in one’s blanket early in the morning, to avoid one’s presentable clothes (if one is so fortunate as to have them!) being given to someone who is due to appear in court that day!

I was able to have a quick shower, although I did not have the correct soap. As a concession I was permitted to keep my bar of Lux for the first day, pending Jenny bringing me a bar of Lifebuoy, since I had told the authorities that I had not showered since February 22nd. Then we were handcuffed to each other and made to squat in lines of five, till the Prisons Service bus was ready. The bus was extremely crowded – barely another standing passenger could have fitted on board.

We arrived at the court and as we drove past her I shouted a greeting to Jenny who was already waiting. This drew a swift rebuke from one of the officers – it is obviously against the regulations. We were once again placed in the court’s cells until we were due to appear before the magistrate. Once the gates swung open we were herded into the corridor behind the courtroom and we squatted whilst a string of prisoners went into court, one by one or in little groups, only to appear again a minute or two later. They had no legal representation and most were remanded in custody for another fortnight, pending further investigation by the police. Some were granted bail but did not have the money, nor did they have any friends or relatives at the Court to assist them.

When our turn came, we filed into the dock whilst our lawyers argued for the granting of bail. I was most heartened to see, amongst numerous friends, David Coltart the Member of Parliament for Bulawayo Central, sitting in the gallery. The Public Prosecutor opposed bail, saying that we had committed a serious offence and caused damage in the region of \$1,3 million to a Zanu (PF) vehicle. He further argued that we were likely to interfere with the police investigation, given that the suspected actual arsonist was still at large. He called Detective Inspector Chikwanda to the witness stand and the officer told the court that he believed we all knew the whereabouts of the fugitive in an MDC “safehouse”. Incidentally all I know about this elusive suspect is that his name, apparently, is Gift! The police officer also told the court that we were likely to commit similar offences, and, given the volatile political situation in Zimbabwe, our own safety could not be guaranteed unless we were incarcerated in prison.

As far as I am aware the police have not been able to produce any evidence relating me to the crime. Nevertheless, after a recess for lunch, the magistrate summed up the case for the prosecution and for the defence, and denied us bail. My heart sank, I could not believe that an innocent person could find himself in the middle of such a nightmare. We were whisked back to the cells where Miss Moyo came to tell us that the next avenue was the High Court where bail would be applied for. It was a depressing remainder of the afternoon that we spent in the court cells waiting to be taken back to prison.

Upon our arrival back in cell 7, astonished inmates greeted us, for they have all convinced themselves that if one has a lawyer one will be granted bail! I told them that we had been remanded in custody until the 14th March to which they replied, “It’s not long, you’ll manage!” So it was back to the prison routine, and wondering how long it would take to get a bail application through the High Court, and indeed what verdict that court would deliver.

Friday 1st March 2002

After “fall in” we languished in our cells till about 10am when we lined up in squatting rows of 5 prisoners for breakfast. Bread and sweet tea again. However bread is not given every day, perhaps ZPS finances are stretched to the limit! Then it was time for the morning’s ablutions. The 300 plus remand prisoners share 4 cold water showers of which 2 are in working order. The 4 latrines are filthy and are flushed only at intervals. There is an old bathtub which can be pulled under the shower, and this is where the inmates wash their blankets.

Owen and Peter offered to wash my blankets, so I gave them a bar of Lifebuoy, which they turned into shavings. These were placed into an empty plastic cool drink container. The container was filled with water and shaken till the soap dissolved. My blankets were thrown into the tub alongside theirs and the tub was filled with cold water. They then stomped around in the tub, removing the coarsest dirt with their feet, and tipped out the water. The tub was refilled with water and this time the soap shavings were added, the blankets were washed and rinsed and laid out on the dusty ground in the sun to dry. Owen also washed my khaki shirt for me (and lent me his while mine was drying).

I was then called by the guards as I had visitors. Jenny and a friend, Marty Perreira, together with several relatives of my co-accused had arrived with 9 sturdy plastic bags of requisites, which Jan Perreira had purchased the previous afternoon. The items included sandals, soap, peanut butter, biscuits, sandwiches, cigarettes, toilet paper, magazines, Vaseline, toothbrushes and paste, nappies (to be used as towels), combs and cool drinks in plastic bottles. The guards inspected everything closely, even opening the jars of Vaseline and peanut butter and prodding around with a stick to detect any hidden weapons. Similarly the sandals were bent in half to ensure that no weapons were concealed therein. The biscuit wrappers were removed and the contents checked and the sandwiches were opened to reveal the fillings. The cool drinks and all food had to be tasted by Jenny first to assure the authorities that they had not been deliberately poisoned. Then the items were passed to us, one by one, through the barbed wire fence.

There are restrictions on what kind of food may be brought into prison, for fear of a cholera outbreak. When we were led back to the remand enclosure we had to squat again at the gate and wait for it to be unlocked. Then our “goodies” were once again inspected and we were allowed to rejoin the other squatting and sitting remand prisoners. After a time, at about noon we were once again herded into squatting lines to receive our sadza and half-cooked beans, served from a dustbin. We walked back to where we had been squatting minutes before in the dusty enclosure and ate our meal with our fingers – no cutlery is available, presumably this could be fashioned into weapons and concealed on one’s person.

After lunch it was time to return to our cells till supper which is usually served at about 2pm. Prisoners are allowed to spend the interval between lunch and supper in any one of the 3 remand cells, so one generally spends the afternoon with friends, not necessarily in one’s own cell. I was introduced to a remand prisoner who had been arrested near Hwedza. He had already apparently been handcuffed when he was shot through the left leg by a police officer. He had been granted bail of \$500, but had no access to the required money.

Suppertime duly arrived and we were faced with sadza and beans again. It is prudent to get into the supper queue as quickly as possible, and then entrust your plastic bag of “possessions” and your plate of food to a friend while you quickly shower. If one waits too long the showers become congested with 4 or 5 people trying to get under the jet of water at any one time. In addition to the people lining up to lather themselves there is a constant stream of inmates trying to wash their hands or fill their empty supper plates with water to drink. Plastic cool drink bottles are a precious rarity and are periodically confiscated by the guards.

Once in cells for the overnight period, the only water that most inmates have access to is that contained in a 20l plastic cooking oil container placed in each cell. The showers are so congested that some inmates choose to stuff a strip of blanket into the latrine and flush repeatedly till the bowl is full. This enables them to wash themselves and their clothes in a more leisurely manner.

After supper, Jenny visited again, bringing more food, but was told that in future she should restrict her visits to once a day. I was able to speak to her for 15 minutes – prisoners are permitted to talk to relatives once a week, although food can be brought every weekday. Her name, address and ID number were duly recorded in the visitor's book.

Once back in the cells, I was called to the window where an inmate, dressed in the trademark white shorts and shirt of the convicted was waiting to talk to me. It was Martin Chataza whom I did not recognise, but who told me that he had done some casual work for me about 4 years ago - I had gone to the Department of Labour to recruit temporary employees to sand down the wooden floors of our new house. He asked me how I was coping and tried his best to lift my spirits. He passed me a couple of tatty, well-thumbed magazines through a narrow gap in the window's weld mesh. Over the next days, he also secured a gleaming tin mug for me – my very own personal mug! I no longer had to use one of the dirty, bent and buckled and often leaking mugs that were handed out at breakfast! The communal mugs were also in short supply and those at the end of the breakfast queue could only be served tea once the kitchen staff had collected the mugs from those prisoners who had already finished their morning tea.

Martin came back daily, bringing me more magazines, and on one occasion, an old thin foam mattress. I was now on cloud nine! Martin also offered to wash my blankets in hot water to try to rid them of lice and their eggs. I presume that convicts have access to hot water to do their laundry. I readily accepted. Martin's kindness was a reflection of how I was treated by many of the prisoners during my time at the prison. For some reason, I was somewhat of a celebrity. It was rare, I was told, to see a white man in prison. Peter Tapera told me that in his 17 months in the remand cells he had only seen six whites, who all came and went again very quickly. None had stayed in jail for more than a few days, he said. One of the whites, he said, had been locked in the Penal Block, an imposing brick building with a concrete roof and tiny windows set high in the wall.

When not in their cells, the Penal Block prisoners sit in a small high-walled courtyard with a weld-mesh cover. The Penal Block prisoners are never seen, but the whole issue is spoken of in tones of awe and trepidation. When I finished talking to Martin, I noticed a prisoner lying on his blankets two places down from where I slept. He looked dreadful. He had just been discharged from hospital and brought back to the cell, but it was patently obvious that he was in no fit state to be back in prison. I never found out his name but I gave him the Coke that Jenny had brought me in the morning, and tried with what limited means I had to make his life more comfortable. He sipped the coke, aided by a friend who helped him hold the mug. His hands were shaking so much he could not have placed the mug to his lips without assistance. I also gave him some of the cheese and tomato from the salad that Jenny had brought me. He was too weak to speak but clasped my hand feebly in a gesture of thanks. He motioned to me that he wanted a cigarette, but I felt it would do him no good and I refused. Later two inmates carried him to the latrine so that he could relieve himself. I woke up repeatedly during the night to hear him retching into a plastic bag which his neighbour was holding.

Saturday 2nd March 2002

My bail application was delivered to the High Court by our new lawyer, Andrew Mugandiwa, from the law firm Winterton's. The prison routine followed its usual pattern. We were given bread for breakfast, which meant that there would be many people smoking in the cells later. Smokers sell their slice of bread for a cigarette – even non-smokers realise the barter value of this commodity. In fact, cigarettes can buy almost anything in prison. A cigarette is worth a cup of tea or a piece of meat (on the few occasions when a tiny portion of pork from the prison's pig farm is served with the evening meal of sadza). Two cigarettes will purchase a plate of sadza from a fellow inmate or a newly repaired pair of shorts from the convicts in the tailoring section.

After breakfast I lined up as usual (in the squatting position) at the dispensary where my medication was kept. The fifty or so prisoners who line up daily with their various ailments are

invariably given a Panadol or similar painkiller. The dispensary's nursing sister is understandably fed-up as many prisoners invent ailments to relieve the boredom or for a chance to ogle at her! I was given a card from the dispensary instructing the kitchen staff to prepare rice for me twice a day, in place of the usual sadza. This was a great relief as the sadza is made from "straight-run" maize meal – unrefined and not at all pleasant. As one of the convicts said to me, it has "no additions and no subtractions".

After lunch I had my head shaved with hand clippers by one of the convicts who works in the barber's section – a corner of the remand enclosure where one squats on the ground whilst being ministered to by the barber. The sick prisoner lay on his blankets all day, apart from when his friends carried him to the dispensary. There he was given an assortment of pills which he could not hold down for more than a few minutes. After lunch, most of the cell inmates held an impromptu Church service and prayed fervently for him.

Jenny was not allowed to bring food – on Saturdays and Sundays no "goodies" are allowed. The copies of The Daily News and a copy of Newsweek that Jenny had delivered were brought to my cell by one of the convicts from "Reception Staff". They were all heavily censored, with all "offending" articles neatly cut out with a pair of scissors. Likewise, a novel, John Grisham's "A Painted House" was brought to me only after careful scrutiny by the prison censors.

The newspapers almost caused an uproar in the cell. Prisoners are so starved of reading material that they practically fought over the loose single pages of newspaper. Once read, the pages were carefully torn up and distributed amongst the smokers so that they could roll cigarettes from the raw tobacco leaf or "gombototo" which somehow finds its way into the cells.

Prisoners are afforded some relief from the boredom by unpicking the stitching on the edge of their blankets. This thread they then use to repair their torn clothing with the help of a matchstick fashioned into a crude needle. As usual, at 8pm I placed my cigarettes, lighter and other "valuables" under my blanket or squirreled them into the rolled up blanket that served as a pillow. I had been advised by Dominic the cell "prefect" to do this to avoid nocturnal theft. The sick prisoner again retched throughout the night.

Sunday 3rd March 2002

We woke up to find the sick prisoner gasping and convulsing. After watching him helplessly for about 30 minutes he gave a last gasp and died in front of our eyes. I now wished that I had not refused him a cigarette on Friday. The guards were alerted; one came into the cell, looked at the body and said, "Let him rest." We were then divided into two groups and placed in the other two remand cells pending the removal of the corpse. Later when we were out in the dusty enclosure digesting our lunch a Prisons truck finally came to take the corpse away. When we went back to the cell, one of the prisoners sprinkled water on the ground where the dead man had lain and wiped it up with a blanket. Thereafter, the space was taken up by another prisoner who had graduated from the cell's "Mbare" section. After breakfast – no bread today, just tea – we were all assembled in the remand enclosure for "Warrant Check". Each prisoner's name was called out and he had to answer with his prison number and his next court date. My reply was, "Number 487/02, court date 14th March, Sir". Each prisoner's response was checked against the Prison's record card for that particular individual. I had my first prison rice meal – floor sweepings, but better than sadza. It's not easy, though, eating rice with your fingers. I was looking forward to seeing Jenny again on the Monday morning, and perhaps getting some news about the progress of the High Court bail application.

Monday 4th March 2002

After breakfast and my visit to the dispensary, I was summoned as my GP, Dr George Turner, and the Borradale Hospital Matron, Mrs Leslie Ward had come to see me. They waited for Jenny to arrive; otherwise my weekly visitation would have come and gone without her. When Jenny

arrived, she and George were able to speak to me for 15 minutes. This was now my verbal contact with the outside world over for the week! There was some news regarding the High Court – the earliest release date would be Tuesday, and the latest release date was to be Friday. The rest of the day passed uneventfully. The next novel, “Birds of Prey” by Wilbur Smith was still being censored and I was running out of reading material – trying to make the first novel last as long as possible. A psychiatric patient arrived and was assigned to cell 1.

Tuesday 5th March 2002

By now our group of accused had been split up into different cells. Bornface and Christopher had been placed in cell 1 after Sunday's warrant check. They informed me at breakfast that nobody in cell 1 had been able to sleep as the psychiatric patient had walked up and down the cell all night, shouting and singing.

I was able to get a closer look at him for the first time. He wore nothing but rags, and relieved himself wherever he saw fit. He had walked into the shower, fully clothed in his rags and afterwards lay down on the dusty earth. He was filthy. Rumour had it that he had polished off seven plates of sadza. He made a beeline for me and demanded cigarettes. My fellow accused chased him away. He received the same hostile treatment from all the other prisoners. Eventually some of the inmates locked him back into the cell so they could have some peace and quiet during their brief time outdoors.

Jenny arrived with the other accused's wives, as usual. We were given our food, but no communication was permitted. When I returned to the remand enclosure I was greeted by the sight of all the remand prisoners gathered together and listening to the weekly Church service, delivered by two visiting pastors. Throughout the service the psychiatric patient chanted and shouted, but there was little the guards could do to keep him quiet. He refused to squat, as ordered by the guards, and wandered around at will. Apart from this highlight, nothing out of the ordinary happened. Later, in the cells, the inmates played cards - made from the cardboard of cigarette boxes, (considering how few prisoners have access to cigarette boxes, I hate to think how long it must have taken to fashion a full set of cards) and board games - with the board drawn on the inside of a prisoner's shirt. There are 2 dice in the cell, which have to be carefully hidden away lest the guards should discover them. All these offences are punishable by a beating.

Wednesday 6th March 2002

Jenny visited to hand over food as usual. The day in prison was uneventful. Andrew Mugandiwa, the lawyer from Winterton's, arrived in Marondera to photocopy the Magistrate's notes. Jenny was worried about the possibility of the Court's photocopying machine being out of order! Andrew then raced back to Harare to give one copy of the notes to the Attorney General's office and another copy to the High Court Judge on Thursday. The inmates of cell 1 had had enough of the psychiatric patient so he was transferred to cell 7 where he alternately harassed me and banged on the steel door till the guards arrived. He pointed at me and complained to the guards, “That statue isn't giving me any cigarettes!” With that the guards took him away, back to cell 1, much to everyone's relief.

Thursday 7th March 2002

Another uneventful day! We were supposed to have a body search, but for some reason it was postponed. I was told that it was not a particularly pleasant experience. All the cell inmates have to strip naked and line up facing the wall. The guards then check for any objects which may be hidden in their buttocks. Instead we had a blanket and water bottle inspection. We all lined up outside – in the squatting position – with a blanket on each arm and one over the shoulder. The guards wanted to ensure that everyone had no more than three blankets. All water bottles were confiscated by the convicts who were assigned to the task under the watchful eyes of the guards.

When we went back to the cell, my water bottle had anonymously been returned to me! I found it waiting for me where I usually sat. We wondered whether we would be released tomorrow or whether we would have to spend another weekend in prison before we had a decision from the High Court.

Friday 8th March 2002

I was allowed to speak to Jenny for less than a minute, just to ask her how things were going at the High Court. She indicated that she hoped we would be released later in the day. We dared not believe this good news. I forced myself to be resigned to a weekend in prison. In this way I felt that I could cope better.

The dispensary did not open today, so there was no medication. I wondered how I would cope without a sleeping tablet! I was now two thirds of the way through the Wilbur Smith novel and I worried about what I would read when it was finished. Two other novels were still being censored and I was unsure whether I would receive them before Monday.

We went through the usual daily routine and were locked in the cells again at about 2pm. I was enjoying the novel and I carried on reading, however I could not keep my mind off our possible release. At about 4.30pm one of the guards came to the cell door and called our names. The other inmates immediately shouted, "You're going home!"

I began to dish out my possessions: toothpaste, Vaseline, nappy, 2 bars of soap, water bottle, sandwiches, a Getaway Magazine, the Wilbur Smith novel, cigarettes, matches, my tin mug, etc. There was pandemonium as scores of hands reached out for the contents of my plastic bag. I came out of the cell, only to be told by the officer that the police wanted me. My heart sank. As we walked down the path, he told me that I had indeed been granted bail, but that he had not wanted to tell me this news in front of everyone else.

7 of our group of 9 were being released. Bornface and Christopher were to remain in prison as they were also facing another charge. They were accused of firebombing the house of a Zanu (PF) supporter. We then squatted outside the dispensary for over an hour whilst the Prison authorities waited for the blue "Warrant of Liberation" forms to be brought from the Magistrate's Court, in the Prisons lorry, along with a new group of remand prisoners and those who had been to court that day but had once again not been able to secure bail.

The previously balmy weather suddenly and dramatically changed. It became overcast, cold and windy. I remarked on the change of weather to one of the others and he said that this change marked a change in the fortunes of the country. He was convinced that it would sweep into power Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change in the Presidential Elections scheduled for the next day.

After what seemed like an eternity we were led down to the gates, a now familiar journey - one which I had made daily when Jenny visited - except that this time I was not in leg irons. We received our bags, took our clothes out and changed out of our prison garb. We received our valuables, in my case my wedding ring, which was now loose on my ring finger. After a final interview with the 2 i/c officer where we were asked to recite the information that we had given upon our arrival at Prison (presumably for the authorities to confirm that they were releasing the right persons - most prisoners arrive at Prison without carrying any form of identity documentation) and where we were asked whether we had any complaints (not that I would have dared to complain, even if there had been reason to!), we were ushered through the gates to freedom.

Jenny was there with Nigel Hough, ready to take us to Dr George Turner for a medical check-up and the completion of a Reporting Form for the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum. I don't think I have ever hugged her so tightly before! It had been quite an eventful day for Jenny and

many others on the outside. It transpired that Andrew Mugandiwa, the lawyer, had to be at the High Court at noon. A friend, Karen Bradshaw had met him at 11.45am at his offices and accompanied him to the High Court. She planned to rush from the High Court with the Order granting bail, straight to Marondera Magistrate's Court, where Jenny was going to pay the bail and get the Warrants of Liberation issued. Time was of the essence as it was rumoured that the Magistrate's Court would be closing early, tomorrow being not only Saturday, but the first day of polling in Zimbabwe's landmark Presidential election.

Andrew was at the High Court at noon, but a representative from the Attorney General's Office had not appeared by 12.30pm (the second day in a row he had failed to appear). Eventually Andrew managed to persuade Mrs Justice Guvava – who had been keen to postpone the case till Monday – that we should be granted bail. The Order then had to be signed by the court registrar who could not be found, as the High Court was being fumigated! At last the Order was signed and Karen went to Andrew's offices to fax it to a lawyer, Richard Mufuka, in Marondera, who was then going to take it straight to the Magistrate's Court.

Jenny, Richard Mufuka and Jayne Webb Martin (also a lawyer) went to the Magistrate's Court and began the lengthy process of paying bail and obtaining receipts. Karen arrived at the Court with the original copy of the Order and the process was finalised. I have come to realise that we all take our freedom and our choices in life so for granted. It is only when one is subjected to what I have recounted, that one is able to appreciate the little things in life that one normally gives no thought to. In prison, for example, a plastic bag and a match are such valuable items.

On our way to George's surgery, we received countless phone calls from people who were overjoyed to hear my voice. Jenny told me that the support, the prayers and the phone calls – some from people we didn't even know, which was absolutely overwhelming – made this very difficult time bearable and reinforced in both our minds what a wonderful community we are part of.

We arrived at George's surgery where I had my first beer in two weeks! We were all examined and George noted our injuries. He compiled medical affidavits for use in later litigation. We then drove to my mother's house to let her know that I had been released. She was understandably overjoyed. Not daring to sleep in our own home we went to spend the night with Chris and Rozanne Bell. Our daughters were already there, fast asleep. We chatted for hours over a few drinks before finally dragging ourselves to bed.

Saturday 9th March 2002

After breakfast we took the girls home for the day, and tried to start piecing our lives together again. We felt that it would be tempting fate if we stayed in our house overnight, so we went back to Chris and Rozanne in the evening.

Sunday 10th March 2002

On our way home we drove around Marondera to check on voting queues. We discovered that there was virtually no queue at Peterhouse, so we collected my mum, Elias, Damiano and their wives and went to vote there.

We spent our first night at home!

Monday 11th March 2002

Schools were closed, as voting had been extended by a day in Harare and Chitungwiza. The High Court had, overnight, ruled that polling stations countrywide should reopen, however the Registrar-General, Tobaiwa Mudede only opened stations in the capital and Chitungwiza, and not

untill noon in some cases! An elderly lawyer friend, Chris Kavanagh, was arrested for allegedly having ink on his hands when he went to vote. It's quite pathetic! We went to report to the Police Station for the first time, in compliance with our bail conditions. We took Marondera lawyer Ignatius Sakala with us as we had a sneaking suspicion that the CID might try to re-arrest us! We saw our "friend" Detective Inspector Chikwanda standing outside his office, but he ignored us.

Tuesday 12th March 2002

We took children back to school at 10 am where we chatted at length with other parents. The next stop was prison where we brought food to Bornface and Christopher. We also took hampers to Dominic, Peter, Owen, Tonderai, Wonder and Andrew – as a thank-you for their help and friendship in Prison. We weren't allowed to take a hamper to Martin. As a convicted prisoner he is only allowed to received visitors and a hamper on a Public Holiday – the next one is April 18th. We'll see him then.

We weren't allowed to give anyone books or magazines, and even syrup was refused. The acting 2 i/c, Msademba told me he didn't want to see me anywhere in the prison vicinity, I had to stay in the car. All the other prison officers were very friendly.

My co-accused all met at our house at 3.30pm to go to Harare to meet Andrew, our lawyer at 5pm. He told us that on the 14th there would be a further remand hearing and that on the 28th he would apply for a "refusal of further remand". I settled the bill for services rendered to date - \$324,400 incl. \$42,300 sales tax. The sales tax bit hurt – going straight to the government who had arrested me! Then at 7pm we met two South African parliamentary observers, Andries Botha and Aza van Jaarsveld. On our way back to Marondera at about 9pm we heard rumours that all people who had assisted the MDC with polling agents' logistics were being rounded up by the police. We decided to spend the night with a friend, rather than go home.

Wednesday 13th March 2002

We went to the Police station early to report – to avoid the CID and CIO. No problem! A well-wisher popped in with \$250,000 from donations to help pay for our legal expenses – what a relief! The election results were announced – interestingly, there was no celebration to speak of – everyone was stunned. The only people celebrating were a couple of hundred Zanu(PF) supporters who staged a noisy march in Marondera. The "war-vets" immediately stepped up their campaign of intimidation by looting farm homesteads and workshops.

We sat on the veranda and tried to decide what to do. We expected the worst so we decided to pack the car with clothes, valuables, DSTV decoder, computer and stereo. There's a limit to what you can take with you at short notice! We drove out of our gate and wondered where to go. The first place that came to mind was Malwatte Farmhouse Restaurant, on the main Marondera – Mutare highway, about 6kms from Marondera, from where we could ponder our next move. On the way there we had to negotiate a celebrating gang of Zanu(PF) youth at the North Rd. turnoff – luckily only one rock hit the car! We had lunch at Malwatte, where we bumped into some friends and the 2 Norwegian observers who had come to watch the court proceedings at the Marondera Magistrate's Court. At 3pm we collected the kids from school and went to the Bell's for the night.

Thursday 14th March 2002

Rozanne took the children to school while Jenny and I got ourselves ready for court. We spent virtually the whole morning waiting for our case to come up. Once in the dock, it took the Magistrate about 30 seconds to remand us to the 28th. Christopher and Bornface who had been brought to court from prison were hauled off back to cells whilst the rest of us walked out into the sunshine. We decided that we couldn't stay "on the run" for ever, so we went home and unpacked the car and tried to settle in again.

Friday 15th March 2002

We went to the police station early, the kids and Jenny waited in car while I signed in, then we went straight to Harare. We had lunch (more liquid than solid) at the Keg and Maiden with a whole lot of friends. It's so surreal to be able to do this in the midst of all that one is facing! Today a Marondera farmer, was assaulted by war vets with a hoe handle. His wife was forced to witness the beating. His guard, was beaten to death. Pound Pororai was beaten up on his way back from the reporting at the police station. Another well-wisher phoned from Bulawayo to offer \$150,000 in assistance.

Sunday 17th March 2002

We heard that Ian and Kerry Kay had once again been evicted from their home.

Monday 18th March 2002

Mbeki and Obassanjo spent 2 hours with Mugabe and an hour with Morgan Tsvangirai. Two Marondera farmers, were barricaded in their houses overnight, and Terry Ford of Gowrie Farm in Norton was bludgeoned to death in the early hours.

Tuesday 19th March 2002

Went to the prison to take Bornface and Christopher another hamper. Lawyer Sakala came to speak to them. We hope to get them out on 28th. I paid Sakala \$56,400 to cover his attendances to date. A meeting of three Commonwealth Heads of State – from Australia, Nigeria and South Africa – resolved to suspend Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth for 12 months. Richard Quest from CNN emailed Carrie to say that they'd had more emails regarding the "Commonwealth suspends Zimbabwe" issue, than on any other "Question of the Day", - even last week's "What should be done with the World Trade Centre site?" I went to Doc George. He vaccinated me for Hepatitis and told me that if I developed night sweats, I probably had TB! Switzerland has frozen the assets of Zimbabwe's ruling elite and has imposed targeted sanctions in line with the EU and America.

Wednesday 20th March 2002

Chris Kavanagh was released from custody. The CFU have appealed to all farmers, their wives and children to show solidarity with Terry Ford and support for his family by coming to his funeral on Friday, 22nd, at 11 am at Highlands Presbyterian Church in Harare.

Wednesday 27th March 2002

Lawyer Sakala telephoned to say that he had managed to secure bail for Bornface and Christopher - \$5,000 each for the MIP charge and \$10,000 each for the alleged petrol bombing of the house. I brought \$30,000 in cash to his offices just before noon and met him at the court at 2pm. He told me that the Prisons truck was about to leave for the prison, taking the 2 Warrants of Liberation for Bornface and Christopher. I drove to the prison, giving a lift to a woman who had come all the way from Bindura to pay her brother's bail.

En route we picked up a man who flagged us down. He was an off-duty guard who I hadn't met during my incarceration as he had been on leave. At the prison we waited for the truck to arrive with the warrants. We sat in the car park until well after 5pm when it eventually arrived! I whiled away the time chatting to the guard and the lady from Bindura.

It turned out that the guard had joined the Prison Service in 1974, during the days of the Smith Government. He served at numerous prisons, including Wha Wha, Khami, Kadoma, Chikurubi, Harare Central and now Marondera. He was a guard at Wha Wha when Robert Mugabe and

Joshua Nkomo were incarcerated there. He told us stories about the execution of prisoners – gruesome but very interesting. The Prison Service ensures that the condemned prisoner is in perfect health before his execution; if he is unwell he is hospitalised and nurtured to a full recovery. In the words of the guard, this is so that the condemned prisoner can really “enjoy” his execution. He is given a final meal, he is visited by a Church Minister, then he is led to the gallows. Some condemned men shout and scream obscenities, others just sob. It must be awful to officiate at such proceedings. The execution is carried out by a “civilian” – brought in by the Prison Service and paid for each hanging undertaken. Apparently in the 1970’s each hanging attracted an executioner’s fee of \$10,000. Interestingly, I was told that the same “White man” who carried out the hangings under the Smith Government is still at work. The guard also told me that one of the reasons is that Blacks are very reluctant to undertake the work of an executioner. The Prisons truck eventually arrived and the lengthy bureaucratic process of releasing Bornface and Christopher started.

The poor woman from Bindura had wasted her time as her brother had another court case pending – no bail had been granted or paid for the other “offence”, so she was unable to secure his release. She was devastated.

Thursday 28th March 2002

We left home at 8am en route to the Magistrate’s Court. As we were leaving, Andrew Mugandiwa telephoned to say that he was having trouble with his car’s alarm, and would we please ask the Public Prosecutor to defer our case till 10am. He readily agreed to this. When Andrew eventually arrived, the Magistrate had just called for an adjournment of 90 minutes. During this time Andrew went to discuss the case with the Prosecutor. After the recess, we were called to the dock and I was stunned when the State’s counsel rose to say that he had discussed the case with his “learned friend” and that he had no objection to us being granted a “refusal of further remand”. The very same Magistrate who had refused to grant us bail some weeks previously, said, “Go home and relax until further notice”. We were overjoyed.

Friday 12th April 2002

Wonder Siliya (one of the detainees in cell 7) came to see me this morning. He had just been released from prison after having his case thrown out by the Magistrate. He told me that without my help, he would still be in jail. I had written to his parents (who were unaware that he had been imprisoned) to tell them where he was and that he might need legal assistance. Fortunately for them a distant relative was a retired lawyer, so with his assistance, they managed to get an early trial date at which Wonder was unconditionally released. Wonder told me that Tonderai Karimupfumbi had been granted bail of \$3000, so Jenny and I resolved to get him out of prison before the weekend.

Wonder told me some very interesting stories about what had taken place in Marondera Prison since my release. I had asked him whether the “psychiatric patient” was still there. He said, “Yes but the guy is now completely normal”. It appears that he had been sent for evaluation to two doctors. The first had been unable to help, but the second, a Black private practitioner in Marondera, had indicated that given certain medication the prisoner’s mental state would improve. Needless to say, the “psychiatric patient” apparently went back to the cells but without his medication.

In a move over and above the call of duty, the Doctor secured permission from the Harare Prison authorities to visit his patient in jail. Upon doing so he was informed by other inmates that the medication was not being dispensed for one reason or another. The Doctor kicked up a fuss and ensured that the drugs were dispensed to his patient. However, in retaliation, Wonder alleged that the Marondera Prison authorities decided to teach all the remand prisoners a lesson. I’m told that it took them almost the entire day to beat every single prisoner, because a few had dared talk to the Doctor. They all received ten strokes with a wooden baton on the sole of each foot.

Wonder also told me that the numbers in each cell had gone up considerably since my release. Apparently a number of "war-vets" have been arrested for offences such as looting. Cell 1 is apparently now the most crowded, with 130 inmates. The "war-vets" are, I'm told, very angry at having been arrested; they feel bitter that having supported President Mugabe, now his law-enforcement agents are arresting them. "Wake up to reality," I thought! After Jenny and I had had our lunch we went to the Clerk of the Court to try to pay Tonderai's bail. However, without the CRB number we made no progress, so we had to drive to the Prison to ascertain this vital piece of information. From there we went back to the court and paid the bail. Luckily by now I knew most of the prison guards and had formed a good relationship with them. One of the senior prison guards dispatched a junior officer to the prison with me, carrying Tonderai's Warrant of Liberation. This meant that we would not have to sit at the prison waiting for the Prisons truck to arrive! By 5pm we were back in Marondera with an extremely surprised and grateful Tonderai. He had expected to languish in jail for months. His relatives had not known that he was imprisoned.