

Prison Diary - Part 2

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Should you wish to make use of any part of this diary, please contact Shane Kidd on shanekid@mutare.mweb.co.zw

Dot dot dash dash dot dot. Good evening Zimbabwe and all ships at sea, this is Shane Kidd (apologies to Walter Winchell) with the latest up date on law and order in Chimanimani. Yes you guessed it. I fell down the rabbit hole again.

Monday 29th July

8.30am beautiful sunny Monday morning, doing some admin at home when my own personal cloud arrived hooting at the gate, in the form of the police land rover with a constable and 2 sergeants. I wander up to see what they wanted. The new member in charge Assistant Inspector Mupfururirwa would like to interview me.

“Come on guys you know I’m not going anywhere near the police station. Every time I go up there you arrest me. It’s 3 times in 3 months so far.”

“Mr Kidd he just wants to talk to you. We promise.”

“Yhea sure! I’m going to go and phone Mr Tzunga my lawyer and I’ll see you up there later.”

“Mr Kidd there is no need for a lawyer, he just wants to talk to you but he won’t tell us about what”

Not being a complete fool I go back to the house and phone Arnold Tzunga my lawyer and give him notice that the circus is about to start again. I then get Birgit out of bed, she down with flu and a 40 degree temperature and I tell her I need a witness. 30 minutes later when we get to the car the police are still resolutely parked outside the gate. So we drive up to the police station with them following behind. We arrive at the charge office. I greet every one but get no response and walk thru to Mupfururirwa’s office. Mupfururirwa is in the process of replacing Chagugudzo our previous Member in Charge who because of his ineptitude and ability to attract bad publicity has been transferred to Beitbridge, or so he informed me when he arrested me 2 weeks ago.

Having greeted Mupfururirwa we sit down and ask what he wants. He asks when was the last time I was in Chipinge? I tell him Friday 26th. You can tell he’s the Sherlock Holmes of the Zimbabwe Republic Police, gifted with a vast intellect, incisive mind and a dogged determination to chase down the truth regardless of cost or consequences. After considering my answer for at least, oh 3 seconds he announces that I’m under arrest. When I ask why he tells me that I’m wanted for contravening the Public Order and Security Act, POSA in Chipinge, but won’t elaborate beyond that. Birgit goes of to phone Arnold and I go to the charge office for the familiar arrest routine (I’m getting really rather good at it.). Shortly afterwards I’m escorted to the cell to join my mate the rapist who’s still there from 2 weeks ago (I wonder if any one actually knows were he is). Anyway our mutual language skills have not advanced since our last encounter so we grunt at one another, share the blankets and settle down on the concrete floor to get some rest.

The rest of the day is uneventful except for lunch arriving at 12pm which I refuse because I’m now back on hunger strike. I think that Zimbabwean police stations have set some sort of bench mark in the world of institutional catering and sanitation. Its one of the few countries in the world were a hunger strike is a sensible alternative as opposed to a moral choice.

Birgit meanwhile is playing another wonderful Zimbabwean Police game, “hunt the prisoner”. Having gone back to the house, phoned Arnold, changed etc., she arrives back at the police station at 10am and is told by Sgt. Mpofu that I have already been transferred thru to Chipinge 75km to the south. Birgit picks up Lovemore Mbiri at the MDC office and starts travelling. On arriving at ZRP Chipinge she is told that I’m not in the cells and they suggest CID. She spends the rest of the day running around ZRP, CID, CIO and the courts in

Chipinge trying to find me but to no avail. At 4pm she decides to go back and try ZRP Chimanimani again. When she arrives back the duty liars have knocked off work and there is only a junior constable who has not been entrusted with this sacred responsibility. Birgit ask were I am and he happily tells her I'm in the cells, would she like to see me. After her visit its back to a comfortable rest on the concrete.

At about 10pm the cell door rattles, its 4 armed uniformed policemen and 2 plain clothes (could be CID or Law and Order from Mutare). They tell me I'm being transferred to Chipinge. They give me my shoes etc. then handcuff my hands behind my back and bundle me into ZRP land rover ZRP 886 A or D. Once I'm in the vehicle they start to blind fold me with a triangular bandage. This takes about 10 minutes (for God's sake it's 2 wraps and a simple knot, how difficult can this be.) Once the blind fold is in place the 2 plain cloths individuals start threatening me and telling me how I'm being taken to a secret location to be killed. At this stage my heart goes out to them, so much effort for such abysmally poor results. This needs to be put in to some sort of context. Imagine these 2 getting out of bed in the morning and looking at each other.

"Wight darling the only way we are going to get ahead in this man's Police Force is to twy and be weally mean and intimidating. No darling don't use the blow dwyer today, wemember we are twying for the tough wugged look."

What can I say, they weally, weally need to pwactice! 2 minutes later the blindfold falls of so they eventually use it to tie a jacket over my head and I'm pushed down onto the floor of the land rover. We then settle down for an hour and a half journey with the occasional death threat thrown in to lighten the atmosphere.

The blindfold is a complete waste of time. Anyone familiar with Chimanimani district knows that there are only 5 main road junctions in a radius of 150 km so I knew I was in Middle Sabi before the vehicle stopped. At about midnight I'm thrown into the police cell with 12 other people and 4 blankets. Middle Sabi is lowveld, which means the winter nights are warm - this is good. Middle Sabi is lowveld, which means the nights are warm and humid - this is bad. It gives a whole new meaning to the word 'body' when we talk about the aroma rising from the cell's single non-functioning latrine! We eventually put 3 blankets on the concrete to sleep on and use 1 to cover our heads to minimise the effect of the latrine's bouquet. This leaves the rest of our body for the undernourished mosquitoes to feed on, choices, choices!

Tuesday 30th July

Wake up and start getting to know everyone in the cell. There are a couple of chicken thieves and miscellaneous offenders but the majority have been picked up in a swoop of Chipinge the previous day. One of them is Phineas Muzaruwetu a security guard at the Chipinge Govt complex and he relates the following story.

He's on duty at the gate at about 9pm Saturday night when he hears a strange spluttering and spitting emanating from one of 3 tractors parked in the complex's car park about 30 m away. He goes down to investigate and sees sparks coming from the battery area of the central tractor, so he rushes in to the main building which houses CID, CIO, District Police (DISPOL is in overall charge of the police in Chipinge /Chimanimani area.) and has officers representing each section on 24 hour duty to raise the alarm. They wonder out to admire the show but don't do anything constructive. The security guard then rushes up to the police station about 300m up the road to inform them that there is a problem. Whilst making the report there is a loud explosion.

"You see I told you there was a problem."

The police eventually get moving and the fire brigade is called and everyone returns to the complex to the sight of 3 blazing tractors and a select audience of govt police and security officials who actually haven't done anything to stop it. The fire brigade arrives looks amazed "what do you mean you want water?" and departs hastily in search of said commodity. The farce eventually comes to an end when there is nothing left of the tractors to burn. The security guard and his co worker, Ratidzai Zarura, are promptly put in the cells. The rest of

the Chipinge people picked up in the sweep on Sunday and Monday are all in the cells because of these tractors.

The rest of the day and night is uneventful for me and the others, just lying around the cells killing mosquitoes. I did tell the Middle Sabi Member in Charge that I was due in court for another remand hearing on Wednesday morning at 8.30 but he just ignored me. Birgit meanwhile is playing her second game of hunt the prisoner after having not found me in the Chimanimani cells in the morning. She is again told that I am in Chipinge. After a fruitless day of searching, she and Arnold eventually go back to Chimani and demanded to inspect the cells. This is after giving Mupfururirwa a piece of her mind in all the languages at her command. She eventually gets into the cell where there are 6 prisoners and Birgit lifts up all the blankets to make sure that I'm not there. Birgit goes to bed, still not knowing where I am.

Wednesday 31st July

Mentally I've settled down and figured out that I'm going to be hidden away for at least another week. Arnold gets hold of Birgit who is getting fairly frantic by now. She is at court at 8.30 in the morning when I was due to appear for a remand hearing on the Mwale arson case. Obviously I don't appear and the court issues a warrant of arrest for me. Arnold tells her that he'll sort things out. On arriving in Chipinge he goes straight to DISPOL Mabunda with an URGENT EX PARTE application which details the run-around that the police have been giving him with denials, obfuscation and outright lies reference my whereabouts. The application demands that he produces me unconditionally within 2 hours or face the wrath of the courts. Mabunda chickens out and a vehicle is sent to Middle Sabi to collect me and the others.

We go straight to CID where I'm eventually informed that I am being charged with the burning of the 3 tractors worth \$30,000,000 - the fact that I was on bar duty in Chimanimani with 20 witnesses at the time is immaterial. I also see Arnold for the first time. We then go to the police station where the final accused are all collected and taken to court. Surprise, surprise! John, a white coffee farmer who wants to remain nameless, is amongst the accused. How nice to find another member of the ethnic minority is in the crap with me. Am I starting a trend? The rest of the gang are Phineas Muzaruwetu and Ratidzai Zarura - the 2 security guards on duty that night; Prosper Mutseyami, Daniel Ngorima and Zechariah Makoni - 3 prominent MDC party members in Chipinge; John and myself. Things are picking up. I started off 3 ½ months ago as one, and then became a member of the Famous Five. I've now been promoted to the Magnificent Seven, what next, the Legion of the Dammed? We are deposited in the courthouse cells to await the bail hearing. The others spend a lot of time protesting their innocence and how unfair life is. I couldn't be bothered. It will eventually dawn on them that if they are MDC members or farmers they are legitimate targets for police harassment in this day and age. Birgit manages to get some food into the cells and I have my first meal since Sunday night.

At 4.00pm we are dragged into court for the bail hearing. The Public Prosecutor (PP) starts with the normal nonsense of telling the court what dangerous and devious criminal we are, using the pending cases against us that he hasn't bothered try yet, and volunteering to put the investigating officer on the stand to bolster his case. We run out of time and will have to come back tomorrow. So we are cuffed in pairs with leg irons and handcuffs and carted off to Chipinge prison where I'm greeted like an old friend.

We go through the normal routine of stripping down and registering for prison. The only surprise is to find that we have been promoted to D class prisoners because of the value of the alleged crime. This is right up there with the murderers, armed robbers and rapists. This means that there is a basic change in our living conditions. When we go to the cells at night our rags (clothes are too strong a word) are taken away and we sleep only with our blankets. At 6.30 am we march naked across the yard, deposit our blankets in the store room and collect our clothes, then march back across the yard naked to our cell where we are counted in. Once inside the cell we can put on our clothes and except for meals, official functions and searches, we spend the rest of the day in the cell bored out of our minds.

There is this funny little ritual that all D class prisoners have to do before entering the cell in the evening. You are lined up outside the cell door naked with your blankets over your shoulder. When your name is called you run to the door, throw your blankets through, then jump up in the air clapping your hands above your head and spreading your legs at the same time. If the prison officer (PO) is not suitably impressed, you get a beating and have to do it again. I watched these performances last time I was in and decided then, sod this for a game of soldiers. When my name is called I walk to the door throw my blankets in and walk in afterward. The PO calls me out, starts ranting and raving. I tell him that I don't perform circus tricks, turn around and walk back into the cell. For the rest of my stay I'm the official exception to the rule.

Thursday 1st August

Up early in the morning to deposit blankets, collect clothes and another haircut with blunt scissors for me, then a quick cup of tea and mouldy bread for breakfast. The Pasture Institute should study this bread. I'm sure there are as yet undiscovered funguses of medical or hallucinogenic value here. The colours are magnificent. Every shade of green, blue and black and if you're particularly lucky, some truly vibrant yellows. Then it's back into manacles and off to court where the entertainment is provided by the PP's star witness, Detective Constable Mushwete. The PP puts him through his paces for an hour, telling the court what dangerous criminals we are and our propensity for violence. Mushwete glibly tells half truths and lies throughout his testimony and looks happy with himself. Arnold and Co then proceed to tear him apart for the next 2 hours, catching him out on all sorts of lies and contradictions and backing him into some very interesting corners. DISPOL Mabunda is in the gallery listening. He eventually walks out in disgust, realizing he's made a serious oopps and one assumes that he is going in search of a more fluent liar to put on the stand.

At lunch we are carted back off to prison. The police and prison service seem wary of us because of the large crowds at court. So for our entire incarceration we have our own closed transport which is a blessing because the winter rains have moved in and it's really miserable weather. Once again I find myself in the role of group pessimist, trying to convince the rest of the group that we are not going to get out any time soon and they should prepare themselves for at least a 2 week stay. They are all convinced that they will be out by the end of today.

Being confined to the cells for most of the day is mind numbingly boring and cold. It's only at meal times that I have a chance to talk to John and catch up with acquaintances made during my last visit. Even these opportunities are limited because D class are not meant to associate with the rest of the prison population. Some of my previous cellmates have been released and others convicted. Isaiah the street kid from Chimani is still in but they have moved him back to C class and will be transporting him to a juvenile facility in Mutare next week. Bongo walks around like a Zombie. The Prozac seems to have taken its toll. Isaiah is amazing. I have never seen a kid who can eat as much as him. I normally give him my food and the other prisoners give him whatever is left over. There are 2 main meals a day and he consumes at least 3 full plates of food at each sitting. A normal hungry adult will only do a plate and a half. In an effort to make the meals more entertaining and nutritional, the cooks have decided to add stones to the beans so you have to be careful how you chew otherwise you end up spitting out teeth. Caught up with Roddy who has been languishing in jail for the last 4 weeks for possession of stolen property. He has been trying to get a bail hearing. He's lost his dreadlocks but is otherwise okay. The Chimani police have also been playing silly buggers with him, claiming that he is a Mozambican of no fixed address to try and deny him bail. I told him I would get hold of Allen and see what I can do.

In our cell are some army deserters awaiting court marshal. They are basically fed up with the way the army is treating them and have no desire to go back to the DRC. One of them was telling me that between 9,000 & 10,000 Zimbabwean soldiers were killed up there between 98/99 when the fighting was fiercest. Even allowing for exaggeration and inaccuracies it's a far larger figure than I expected. I asked them if any one was actually fighting for the Congolese people or some quaint ideology like democracy. The answer is no, everyone is fighting for diamonds or gold. Well, at least their objectives are simple.

Friday 2nd August

Back to court in the morning for the summing up of the bail hearing, then back to prison in the afternoon. Birgit and the lawyer arrive in the afternoon and tell us that the determination will be read 4pm on Monday, so it's another weekend in jail. This is really playing hell with my golf handicap.

The weekend is mostly uneventful, just really cold and wet. The high point is the cell search on Saturday morning. After everyone is searched individually we are all put in the dining hall while the cells are searched. I'm called out of the dining hall and shown a package. One of the prisoners has taken some of my hair from the hair cut on Thursday morning and wrapped it up in toilet paper to use for "*mashonga*" African spiritual medicine. I found it hilarious but the guards took it quiet seriously. Hey what do they want me to do, stop growing my hair?

The other high point is church on Sunday (me looking forward to church, things must be bad). Anything to get out of the cells for a while, I decide to take the church as an opportunity to use the toilet for the first time since Monday and hopefully have some privacy. I'm quietly perched on the throne meditating when the guard comes in and wants to know what I'm doing. Having explained the obvious he departs only to be followed 2 minutes later by another guard. When the fourth guard arrives with the same query I eventually lose it. If you *?£@:\$*!*& gentlemen of leisure would leave me in bloody peace I'll be out when I'm finished. At last I'm left in peace. I suppose it only goes to show that if you are loud and eloquent enough, all language barriers fall away and you can be understood.

Monday 5th August

Back to court in the morning and spend a dreary day in the court cells waiting for our case to come up. A certain amount of light entertainment is supplied when the new prisoners arrive. Amongst them are some ZANU (PF) youth who have been arrested for assaulting people in town and 3 individuals who claim to be representatives of the ZFTU (Mugabe's personal trade union movement). For the last 2 weeks they have been causing strikes and havoc in Chipinge. Various farmers have been locked up and some crops have been burnt, money has been extorted, businesses and farm workers have been fleeced of joining fees and subs. When one of the top ZFTU officials is called down from Harare to mediate he is introduced to these three. He looks askance at them and says "We don't have a branch of the ZFTU in Chipinge and we've never collected any dues in this area." So our 3 brethren are throw into jail, much to the delight of John and the MDC guys who start playing payback. This goes on for about an hour until the prison officers sensibly decide to move them into the next cell.

At 4 pm we are eventually taken into court to hear the determination. The interesting thing is the way the Magistrate tears the PP's case apart, particularly casting doubt on the credibility of Detective Constable Mushwete's testimony. We end up with \$20,000 bail each. So it's back to the prison for clearing and we eventually get out at about 7pm to be greeted by family and lawyers. Before leaving I tell the prison officers to keep my cell warm and find some decent cloths, because the local council election are in September and because I'm standing for Chimanimani, I'm bound to be back (the only reason I've agreed to stand is because it will be warm in September.) Like McCarthy "I will return."

Afterthought

Without being overly paranoid, the Government is out to get me and those of similar political persuasion. What fascinates me is their ineptitude. Consider DISPOL Mabunda is in overall charge of Police and the Central Intelligence Organisation etc. in the Chipinge District. The whole DISPOL set up has recently been revamped with a view to promoting politically overzealous officers to push the ZANU (PF) agenda. With all the resources at their disposal, they can't even put together a decent frame up. It's only fair to assume that they are representative of the current crop of zealots running the country. Consider Comrade Made, the Minister of Agriculture, who has been shouting from the rooftops for the last 2 years that there will be no food shortages and that the newly installed peasant farmers will feed the nation despite the fact that the government has given them no inputs or infrastructure. The worrying thing is that not only is he toeing the party line (understandable) but probably actually believes what he says. The phrase "the only circus in the world run by the clowns" springs to mind.

I'm now worth \$30,000 in bail. I'm actually quite proud of that until I convert it to £s at the black market rate and it's only £30. Hell I could get more money selling blood. I've now spent 33 days in jail/cells in the last 3 months. The bet book at the club is running double or nothing by the end of the year.