



## **Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 29 November 2012**

### **Treatment of Shona people in Bulawayo.**

The 2012 US Department of State country report on Zimbabwe, in a section titled “National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities”, states:

“According to government statistics, the Shona ethnic group makes up 82 percent of the population, Ndebele 14 percent, whites and Asians less than 1 percent, and other ethnic groups 3 percent.” (US Department of State (24 May 2012) *2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe*)

A Minority Rights Group International report on Zimbabwe states:

“The Ndebele’s heartland is the South-Western territory of Matabele-land. In the years, immediately before and post-independence, rivalries between the majority Shona and the minority Ndebele were evident. The main resistance-movement to the racist regime of Ian Smith, were the Ndebele’s ZAPU, led by Joshua Nkomo and the Shona’s ZANU, led by Robert Mugabe. After independence, the Shona-dominated ZANU won the country’s first free elections. Mugabe then moved to crush opposition among the Ndebele, embarking upon the ‘Gukurahundi’ pogrom. The killings, which continued from 1983 to 1987, resulted in an estimated 10,000–20,000 deaths. Nevertheless, discrimination against the Ndebele continued. The Minorities At Risk (MAR) project notes that ‘There is massive unemployment and general social destitution in the area. Furthermore, although there are no restrictions to high office, civil servants in Matabeleland are disproportionately Shona, and do not even speak Ndebele’. These issues have become particularly acute since the emergence of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC); Matabele-land is an opposition strong-hold.” (Minority Rights Group International (June 2008) *Zimbabwe Overview*)

A UK Home Office Border Agency report on a 2010 fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe, in a section titled “What are the police doing to protect victims of political persecution?” (paragraph 3.22), and in reference to information provided by the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), states:

“ZLHR noted that the police in Bulawayo were better than those in Harare but more likely to act arbitrarily. Bulawao Agenda observed that police in Matabeleland were predominantly ethnic Shona, an ethnic minority in the region, and this led at times to there being a language barrier.” (UK Home Office Border Agency (27 October 2010) *Report of Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe, Harare: 9-17 August 2010*, p.31)

See also paragraph 3.28 of this report which quotes Anastasia Moyo, a human rights activist, as saying:

“The police are not helping victims of political violence at all and they are still seen as liked to Zanu PF. The police in Matabeleland are Shona, despite Shona being a minority population. There is mistrust of the police and there is also sometimes a language barrier, although at times this is falsely created.” (ibid, p.33)

In a section titled “Internal Relocation” (paragraph 4.11) this report quotes the Bulawayo Progressive Residents Association as follows:

“There has been an influx of Shona to Bulawayo, and some local residents do not like this and there are occasional incidents of violence. However, there are only isolated cases of this.” (ibid, p.45)

See also paragraph 4.14 which quotes the Research and Advocacy Unit as saying:

“There is a Shona presence in Matabeleland, and many Ndebele speak Shona. In Bulawayo, about 80% are Ndebele but many of the businessmen and Government posts are Shona. There was a large movement of Shona to Matabeleland in the 1980s and into the 1990s. There is a certain amount of ethnic tension due to this. The majority of Ndebele over Shona in part of the country is diminishing. Large numbers of the Ndebele youth are migrating to South Africa. The proportion of elderly in the rural areas is increasing.” (ibid, p. 46)

A judgment by the UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber), in a section titled “Internal relocation” (paragraph 225), states:

“We accept the evidence of the appellants that a Shona, without family or other significant contacts in Bulawayo, seeking to move to that city from outside Matabeleland, is likely to face social difficulties, in addition to others of the kind we have just described. In particular, he or she may face discrimination in relation to jobs and housing. It is, however, apparent from the evidence of Professor Ranger and the civil society interviewees in the FFM report, that in previous decades there was a significant pattern of migration of Shona to Bulawayo in search of work, and that, as a result, some 20% of the population of that city is Shona. It would, accordingly, not be necessary for the newcomer to speak Ndebele, in order to get by in Bulawayo, although linguistic problems may be relevant in determining the issue of whether it would be unreasonable or unduly harsh for such a person to live in that city.” (UK Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) (10 March 2011) *EM and Others (Returnees) Zimbabwe v. Secretary of State for the Home Department*, p.67)

An article published on the Zim Diaspora website states:

“A Bulawayo resident Zwarayi Shumbayanetsa was seriously beaten up for using a wrong Ndebele word at a funeral. Shona-speaking Shumbayanetsa of Lobengula West was assaulted by a group of youths at a funeral in Nkulumane . Shumbayanetsa who could not speak Ndebele is said to have accompanied his workmate who had lost a relative to the funeral where he was viciously assaulted.” (The Zim Diaspora (5 October 2011) *Man assaulted for using wrong Ndebele word at funeral*)

## A Zimbabwe Mail article

“It is the State’s case that on February 13, Nkomo met Clarent Jimu, who is employed by the Zimbabwe Prison Service, in Nkulumane suburb. He drew closer and spoke to her in Ndebele, but she replied in Shona. When Nkomo remonstrated with her over her choice of language, the prison officer would not budge. It is reported Nkomo questioned the woman why she thought everyone was Shona, but Jimu replied: ‘This is a Shona country’. This did not go down well with Nkomo. In a fit of rage, Nkomo grabbed Jimu’s hand and whipped her using a dead snake he picked up at the spot. Although Jimu did not sustain physical injuries, she felt extremely offended by Nkomo’s use of a dead snake to strike her and caused his arrest.” (Zimbabwe Mail (24 February 2012) *Woman assaulted for speaking Shona in Bulawayo*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

### References:

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