



**Australian Government**  
**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE36824 – National Youth Service – Border Gezi Youth Service – Training Camps – Relocation – Nursing Employment – Surname Jongwe

1 July 2010

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1. Deleted.
2. Deleted.
3. **Is Soraidema is part of the Hurungwe District in Mashonaland West and that this is well known for the training centre for the National Youth Service known as the Border Gezi Youth.**

No information was found regarding the location of Soraidema. No information was found regarding the existence of a training centre, or training camps in Soraidema. There is evidence that training camps have been established in the Hurungwe District in Mashonaland West; however it is unclear as to whether these camps are still in operation. A number of sources suggest that most of the camps were closed in 2007 due to budget constraints; however it is reported that pockets of activity remained.

Zimbabwe's National Youth Service was introduced in 2001 by the former Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation, Border Gezi.<sup>1</sup> The stated aim of the NYS was to instil national pride in Zimbabwean youths and offer vocational skills training. It is widely reported, however, that the 100 day program involves military training and pro-government teachings. The trainee youths are used to harass and intimidate political opponents of the ZANU-PF party and, as such, are more commonly known as the 'youth militia' or 'Green Bombers' (based on the colour of their uniforms).<sup>2</sup>

The first National Youth Service training centre was established in Mount Darwin, Mashonaland Central Province, in August 2001. In November of that year, the centre was renamed the 'Border Gezi Training Centre' in reference to the NYS's founder. A 2003 report by the Solidarity Peace Trust explains that the training centre in Mount Darwin is used for the "training of trainers"; recruits from across the country are instructed on how to train youths at the provincial or district levels. The report claims that youth militia training was widespread in all of Zimbabwe's provinces by January 2002.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, 'National youth service training - "shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner"', 5 September, p.13 [http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf) - Accessed 28 June 2010 – Attachment 4

<sup>2</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, ZWE101401.E - *Zimbabwe: The National Youth Service (NYS) training program; the type of training involved; age of participants; whether the training program is mandatory; whether there are exemptions; and the penalty for refusing to serve or for desertion (2001 - 2006)*, 22 June – Attachment 5

<sup>3</sup> Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, 'National youth service training - "shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner"', 5 September, pp.15-16 [http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf) - Accessed 28 June 2010 - Attachment 4

A number of training camps were established in the provinces of Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Matebeleland North, Matebeleland South, Manicaland and Midlands. 'Primitive', informal camps were also established at the district level.<sup>4</sup> In 2006, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada advised that although the exact number is unclear, several sources highlighted "approximately ten camps...located in such places as Border Gezi, Dadaya, Guyu, Kamativi, Mushagashe, Vumba, Mutare, Manicaland, and Zvishavane".<sup>5</sup> Some of these places can be found on the map attached.<sup>6</sup>

There are conflicting reports as to whether these training camps are still in operation. A June 2009 news article highlights training camps operating in the Hurungwe District in Mashonaland West, describing local ZANU PF youth militants as "graduates of the Border Gezi youth camps in schools in the district".<sup>7</sup> A January 2010 article describes a community project which assists "youths between the ages of 14 and 19 from the Border Gezi training camps". It is reported that the project's founder "does not go directly to the militia camps but reaches the camps' graduates using churches and faith-based groups to identify and contact them".<sup>8</sup> An October 2009 article cites "[r]eports...that Zanu PF has reopened a training camp a few kilometers from Nyamapanda in Mashonaland East province where it is recruiting youths". Furthermore, the article cites MDC-T secretary for social welfare Kerry Kay, who claims that "Zanu PF has "re-activated" its terror squads and camps in the rural areas".<sup>9</sup> A July 2009 news article similarly states that "[v]icious militia camps, mostly in rural areas, have still not been dismantled".<sup>10</sup>

However, it is clear that the activities of the NYS training camps were seriously affected by financial difficulties from at least 2007 onwards. An April 2010 report by the Youth Initiative for Democracy claims that "[t]he centres were officially closed in 2007 when the state could not [financially] sustain the programme though there are still pockets of activity".<sup>11</sup> Recommendations made by the Youth, Gender and Women's Affairs parliamentary portfolio committee in 2007 included closing down the training camps until the economic situation improves. The shortages of supplies, inadequate accommodation

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<sup>4</sup> 'ZIMBABWE: "Green Bombers" deserting poor conditions in camps' 2004, *IRIN News*, 23 January <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=48241> – Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 6; 'Hundreds of ZANU PF youths are still being trained at torture camps scattered around Mashonaland Central' 2002, *The Daily News*, 21 March – Attachment 7; Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, 'National youth service training - "shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner"', 5 September, pp.15-16 [http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf) - Accessed 28 June 2010 - Attachment 4

<sup>5</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *ZWE101401.E - Zimbabwe: The National Youth Service (NYS) training program; the type of training involved; age of participants; whether the training program is mandatory; whether there are exemptions; and the penalty for refusing to serve or for desertion (2001 - 2006)*, 22 June – Attachment 5

<sup>6</sup> UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations Cartographic Section 2004, 'Zimbabwe: Map No. 4210 Rev. 1', UN Cartographic Section website <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/zimbabwe.pdf> - Accessed 29 June 2010 – Attachment 8

<sup>7</sup> Makomo, M. 2009, 'ZANU PF sets up bases in Schools', *The Zimbabwe Telegraph*, 19 June <http://www.zimtelegraph.com/?p=796> – Accessed 28 June 2010 – Attachment 9

<sup>8</sup> Peta, B. 2010, 'Independent Appeal: Rescuing Zimbabwe's lost generation', *The Independent*, 7 January <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/appeals/indy-appeal/independent-appeal-rescuing-zimbabwes-lost-generation-1859876.html> – Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 10

<sup>9</sup> Chimhete, C. 2009, 'Violence intensifies after MDC-T pull out', *The Zimbabwe Standard*, 31 October - Attachment 11

<sup>10</sup> Gonda, V. 2009, 'Government Dedicates Three Days to National Healing', AllAfrica Global media, source: *SW Radio Africa*, 22 July – Attachment 12

<sup>11</sup> Youth Initiative for Democracy in Zimbabwe 2010, 'Youth's position on the proposed reintroduction of National Youth Training Programme (Youth Service)', Kubatana website, 15 April <http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/chiyou/100415yidz.asp?sector=CHIYOU> – Accessed 1 July 2010 – Attachment 13

facilities and a lack of regular remuneration received by the trainers were identified as evidence that the centres should be closed pending economic improvement.<sup>12</sup>

Information provided by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) in 2006 cites a May 2006 article in the *Zimbabwe Independent* which “reported that all of the NYS training camps across Zimbabwe had been shut down because of food and resource shortages”. The article claimed “that since the “last intake” of youths in 2005, there had been no new recruits to the NYS”. The IRB further states that despite more than 100 training camps in operation in 2002, this number had decreased by 2005, possibly due to budget constraints.<sup>13</sup> In addition, a March 2010 article cites the director of the Youth Initiative for Democracy in Zimbabwe, Sydney Chisi, who claims that “training at Border Gezi camps has been halted”.<sup>14</sup>

However, the Youth Initiative for Democracy refers to the inclusive government’s 2008 Global Political Agreement, which commits to the reintroduction of the NYS training program.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, President Mugabe referred to a new bill “to regulate the structure, management and operation of the programme” to be introduced in the next session of parliament when he gave the opening address in October last year.<sup>16</sup> No further reports on the progress of this bill were found.

**4. Please provide independent country information regarding whether conditions in the National Youth Service known as the Border Gezi Youth training facilities are reported to include poor construction, frequent hunger, and sexual abuse of girls and women.**

Several sources highlight the severe food shortages, squalid living conditions and sexual abuse of female recruits in the Border Gezi training camps.

A news article published in May 2009 cites a report on the youth training camps by a government committee set up to de-politicise the NYS. The report emphasises the acute food shortages in the camps and the dilapidated conditions of the buildings. The fear of sexual abuse faced by female recruits is also noted.<sup>17</sup> An August 2007 article outlines a report by the Committee on Youth, Gender and Women’s Affairs which commented on the “appalling conditions” in Border Gezi training camps in the Midlands and Matabeleland South. The report was based on inspections carried out between November 2006 and March 2007, and found that trainees “were near starving”.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, an *IRIN News* article from 2004 describes one case where a trainee escaped the centre

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<sup>12</sup> ‘ZIMBABWE: Youth militia camps may close’ 2007, *IRIN News*, 6 September <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74160> – Accessed 1 July 2010 – Attachment 14

<sup>13</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *ZWE101401.E - Zimbabwe: The National Youth Service (NYS) training program; the type of training involved; age of participants; whether the training program is mandatory; whether there are exemptions; and the penalty for refusing to serve or for desertion (2001 - 2006)*, 22 June – Attachment 5

<sup>14</sup> Nyaira, S. 2010, ‘Zimbabwe’s Notorious Youth Service Program Set for Overhaul, Depoliticization’, *Voice of America*, 24 March <http://www1.voanews.com/zimbabwe/news/civil-society/Notorious-Zimbabwe-Youth-Service-Program-Set-for-Overhaul-24Mar10-89037072.html> – Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 15

<sup>15</sup> Youth Initiative for Democracy in Zimbabwe 2010, ‘Youth’s position on the proposed reintroduction of National Youth Training Programme (Youth Service)’, Kubatana website, 15 April <http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/chiyou/100415yidz.asp?sector=CHIYOU> – Accessed 1 July 2010 – Attachment 13

<sup>16</sup> ‘Zimbabwe: ‘Our Destiny is in Our Hands’’ 2009, AllAfrica Global Media, *The Herald*, 7 October <http://allafrica.com/stories/200910070035.html?viewall=1> – Accessed 1 July 2010 – Attachment 16

<sup>17</sup> ‘Zimbabwe reportedly sets up committee to de-politicize youth service’ 2009, *Financial Gazette - Zimbabwe*, 7 May – Attachment 17

<sup>18</sup> Kandemiiri, J. 2007, ‘Zimbabwean Parliament Panel Urges Closure Of Youth Militia Camps’, *Voice of America*, 27 August – Attachment 18

because of widespread starvation, which was exacerbated by gruelling military training exercises, and terrible living conditions.<sup>19</sup>

The suitability of the training facilities was questioned in April 2010 by Sydney Chisi, the director of the Youth Initiative for Democracy in Zimbabwe. Chisi noted in particular that the camps make “no special provision for [women]”.<sup>20</sup> In 2007, it was reported that due to financial constraints, “female trainees were no longer supplied with sanitary towels”.<sup>21</sup> A Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment of Zimbabwe in February 2009 states that female trainees have complained about the use of rape “as a standard method of breaking in new recruits”.<sup>22</sup> Former female trainees, including girls as young as 11 years old, have reported systematic sexual abuse at the hands of officials or fellow male trainees. As a result, youth pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, are prevalent.<sup>23</sup> The Zimbabwe Child Soldier Victim Foundation claims that young male recruits are also subject to rampant sexual abuse and systematic beatings both from camp leaders and other trainees.<sup>24</sup>

## **5. Is there information on whether every person within the age group 10-30 living in the Hurungwe District is forced to go to the training camp?**

A number of sources indicate that NYS training is mandatory for youths between 10 and 30 years of age. The official website of Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Youth Development and Employment Creation states that “the target age group of NYS program recruits is 16 to 30 years of age”; however it is reported that children as young as 11 years old have been recruited.<sup>25</sup> While some youths join voluntarily, reports of kidnappings, abductions and forcible recruitment are widespread.<sup>26</sup> The recruitment does not appear to be specific to any particular district or province of Zimbabwe.

A 2010 report on education by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) explains that National Youth Service training is compulsory for youths aged between 10 and 30 years old. Tertiary admission and public sector employment preference is given to graduates of the NYS training program. When compulsory service was announced in 2003, the then Minister for Higher Education

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<sup>19</sup> ‘ZIMBABWE: “Green Bombers” deserting poor conditions in camps’ 2004, *IRIN News*, 23 January <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=48241> – Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 6

<sup>20</sup> Makore, T. 2010, ‘Reform National Youth service or withdraw it – Zim youths’, *The Zimbabwe Telegraph*, 17 April <http://www.zimtelegraph.com/?p=7001> – Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 19

<sup>21</sup> ‘ZIMBABWE: Youth militia camps may close’ 2007, *IRIN News*, 6 September <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74160> – Accessed 1 July 2010 – Attachment 14

<sup>22</sup> UK Home Office 2009, *Country of Origin Information Report: Zimbabwe*, 23 December, p.51 – Attachment 20

<sup>23</sup> ‘ZIMBABWE: “Green Bombers” deserting poor conditions in camps’ 2004, *IRIN News*, 23 January <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=48241> – Accessed 22 June 2010 - Attachment 6

<sup>24</sup> ‘History of the camps’ (undated), Zimbabwe Child Soldier Victim Foundation website <http://www.zimbabwechildsoldiers.com/existing-camps/history-of-the-camps/> - Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 21

<sup>25</sup> ‘ZIMBABWE: “Green Bombers” deserting poor conditions in camps’ 2004, *IRIN News*, 23 January <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=48241> – Accessed 22 June 2010 - Attachment 6; ‘History of the camps’ (undated), Zimbabwe Child Soldier Victim Foundation website <http://www.zimbabwechildsoldiers.com/existing-camps/history-of-the-camps/> - Accessed 22 June 2010 - Attachment 21; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *ZWE101401.E - Zimbabwe: The National Youth Service (NYS) training program; the type of training involved; age of participants; whether the training program is mandatory; whether there are exemptions; and the penalty for refusing to serve or for desertion (2001 - 2006)*, 22 June – Attachment 5; UK Home Office 2009, *Country of Origin Information Report: Zimbabwe*, 23 December, pp.52-53 - Attachment 20

<sup>26</sup> Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, ‘National youth service training - “shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner”’, 5 September, p.21, 53-54 [http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf) - Accessed 28 June 2010 – Attachment 4



reported that “no students leaving high school would be given their A- or O-level certificates until they had completed six months’ service”.<sup>27</sup>

The Zimbabwe Child Soldier Victim Foundation claims that youths who do not join the NYS voluntarily are often “abducted under force, from the streets, their homes, schools and even churches.”<sup>28</sup> A 2003 Solidarity Peace Trust report similarly indicates that some youths voluntarily joined the NYS, in part due to increased employment prospects following completion of the training program. Nevertheless, a large number of youths are reportedly coerced into the program or even kidnapped and forced to join. However, the report questioned the compulsory nature of the training, given the government’s stated capacity to train only 20,000 of the 300,000 school leavers per year.<sup>29</sup>

Advice provided by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) in 2006 cites a 2004 Solidarity Peace Trust report, which claims that some individuals have fled Zimbabwe to desert the training, or to avoid forced conscription and the lack of opportunities that non-NYS graduates face. The report also indicates that youth in some rural areas who refuse to join the training program are victimised.<sup>30</sup>

## **6. Is there information to suggest that a person would be prevented from relocating to another location in Zimbabwe outside the Hurungwe District?**

Advice received from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in September 2009 states that aside from the Marange diamond field (which is closed to anyone who is not authorised to mine there), previous ‘no-go’ zones in the country have been removed. As such, perceived or actual MDC supporters now have full access to all parts of the country, and are able to safely reside in major population centres, including Harare, without being subjected to politically-motivated violence. However, it is noted that movement in the provinces of Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, and Mashonaland Central is still monitored by local authorities.<sup>31</sup>

The US Department of State reports that politically motivated violence committed by ZANU-PF-dominated factions of the government and its agents continued throughout 2009. Supporters of ZANU-PF were also accused of assaulting suspected MDC members. In addition, it is reported that the government restricted the rights of citizens to move freely within the country. Armed police regularly set up road blocks in and around both urban and rural areas, particularly before organised protests.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the NYS training camps are located across the country, and trainees are recruited from all areas.

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 2010, *Education Under Attack*, UNESCO website, p.243 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001868/186809e.pdf> – Accessed 9 June 2010 – Attachment 22

<sup>28</sup> ‘History of the camps’ (undated), Zimbabwe Child Soldier Victim Foundation website <http://www.zimbabwechildsoldiers.com/existing-camps/history-of-the-camps/> - Accessed 22 June 2010 – Attachment 21

<sup>29</sup> Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, ‘National youth service training - “shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner”’, 5 September, p.21, 53-54 [http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf) - Accessed 28 June 2010 – Attachment 4

<sup>30</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, ZWE101401.E - *Zimbabwe: The National Youth Service (NYS) training program; the type of training involved; age of participants; whether the training program is mandatory; whether there are exemptions; and the penalty for refusing to serve or for desertion (2001 - 2006)*, 22 June – Attachment 5

<sup>31</sup> DIAC Country Information Service 2009, *Country Information Report No. 09/63 – CRS Request No. ZWE9736: Update of country information post February 2009*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 1 September 2009), 1 September – Attachment 23

<sup>32</sup> US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Introduction, Sections 1c, 2d – Attachment 24

Therefore, relocation from the Hurungwe District may not necessarily remove the threat of forced recruitment into a Border Gezi training camp.

## **7. Is there information on whether a person partially qualified in nursing in Australia is likely to find work in urban locations in Zimbabwe?**

Civil sector positions, particularly nursing places, are generally reserved for graduates of the National Youth Service. A person partially qualified in nursing in Australia may be able to find work as a nurse in urban locations; however places are limited for non-NYS graduates. It has also been reported that perceived opposition supporters have been removed from civil service positions. The high number of vacancies in the nursing sector can be attributed to low salaries and inadequate working conditions; although this could represent an opportunity for employment.

According to the most recent CIA World Factbook, unemployment in Zimbabwe was 95 percent in 2009.<sup>33</sup> In a December 2008 report, the World Health Organisation highlighted critical staff shortages in the health sector, with 32 percent of nurse positions vacant, in part due to poor salaries and working conditions which have forced candidates to move abroad. Health care professionals in private hospitals were also affected by the public health crisis caused by Zimbabwe's economic collapse in 2008. It was reported that doctors in private hospitals had "stopped coming to work" due to severe pay decreases.<sup>34</sup>

Several sources indicate that civil sector positions, particularly in nursing and teaching, are reserved for graduates of the National Youth Service training program. The 2003 report by the Solidarity Peace Trust highlights a government policy that "denies school leavers access to tertiary training facilities and civil service posts, including teaching and nursing, without proof of having completed the national service training".<sup>35</sup> The UK Home Office report on Zimbabwe dated May 2007 similarly states that completion of the NYS is "a prerequisite for entry into the civil service, including teaching and nursing".<sup>36</sup>

It is evident that such requirements are still in place. The US Department of State human rights report on Zimbabwe released in March 2010 reports that preference for government employment positions continues to be given to NYS graduates.<sup>37</sup> The previous year's edition of the same report claimed that the government removed perceived opposition supporters from civil service positions. In addition, an October 2009 update of a report by the States in Transition Observatory noted that the Governor of Masvingo Province ordered a hospital to reserve two thirds of their trainee nursing places for ZANU-PF youth.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the 2008 global report on child soldiers explains that a government-run nurse training program only admitted NYS graduates.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 2010, 'World Factbook: Zimbabwe', CIA website, 27 May <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/zi.html> - Accessed 29 June 2010 – Attachment 25

<sup>34</sup> UK Home Office 2009, *Country of Origin Information Report: Zimbabwe*, 23 December, pp.11, 130 – Attachment 20

<sup>35</sup> Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, 'National youth service training - "shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner"', 5 September, p.10 [http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf) - Accessed 28 June 2010 – Attachment 4

<sup>36</sup> UK Home Office 2007, *Country of Origin Information Report: Zimbabwe*, 2 May, p.55 – Attachment 26

<sup>37</sup> US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 6 – Attachment 24

<sup>38</sup> UK Home Office 2009, *Country of Origin Information Report: Zimbabwe*, 23 December, pp.51-53 – Attachment 20

<sup>39</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2008, 'Child Soldiers Global Report 2008', pp.372-373 - [http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country\\_pdfs/FINAL\\_2008\\_Global\\_Report.pdf](http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/files/country_pdfs/FINAL_2008_Global_Report.pdf) - Accessed 25 June 2010 – Attachment 27

It was argued by the Solidarity Peace Trust in 2003 that the government's policy of reserving tertiary places and civil service employment positions for NYS graduates disadvantages the 280,000 school leavers each year who have not completed NYS training. The report claims that the NYS program effectively excludes all non-ZANU-PF children from tertiary education opportunities.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, 'National youth service training - "shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner"', 5 September, p.21 [http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth\\_militia.pdf](http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/download/report-files/youth_militia.pdf) - Accessed 28 June 2010 – Attachment 4

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