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LEGAL AID BOARD

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Are there any reports on war veterans getting payments or pensions?

An article on Zimbabwe News Online states in relation to war benefits being withdrawn:

“War veterans in Mutoko say they are fed up with President Robert Mugabe violent policies and are seeking ways of breaking free although they don't know how to do that.

Mutoko is in Mashonaland east, a stronghold area for Mugabe's Zanu PF.

‘There are many of us who are fed up with the system but are afraid that if they join ranks with the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) then they will lose all they get from Mugabe such as land,’ said a spokesperson of a group of war vets who say they are now facing persecution because they want to break free, Misheck Nyakudanga...

Nyakudanga said this group of war vets in Mutoko that had refused to denounce and persecute MDC supporters in the bloody 2008 Presidential Election run-off had their war benefits withdrawn, which include pension funds and education assistance for children.

‘We were called up and told that we should denounce the MDC. ...some of us refused because we believed in the freedom of choice,’ he said.

According to Nyakudanga several war veterans were taken to Warwick Building, a Harare Office of the Central Intelligence and threatened in a typical CIO fashion to be thrown through the windows of a tenth floor building.” (Zimbabwe News Online (3 April 2010) *War vets fed up with Mugabe and Zanu PF*)

An article in the Zimbabwe Independent from 2002 states:

“War veterans who have joined the opposition Movement for Democratic Change MDC have had their ex-combatants' pension benefits terminated by the Robert Mugabe regime, the Zimbabwe Independent has learnt.

The move is meant to send a warning to disaffected members of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association that they should not join the MDC.

Despite official propaganda, the MDC has attracted thousands of war veterans to its ranks since its inception three years ago.” (Zimbabwe Independent web site (21 October 2002) *Zimbabwe: Government reportedly terminates MDC war veterans' pensions*)

The United Kingdom Home Office Country Report states:

“Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments noted that ‘war veterans’ are “...

included in the reserve force and receive a gratuity (increasingly sporadically) from the Ministry of Defence for being technically available for duty.” (Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – Zimbabwe, accessed 10 February 2009)” (United Kingdom Home Office (25 March 2009) *Country of Origin Information Report – Zimbabwe*, pp. 77-78)

This report also states:

“Indicating the continuing influence of the War Veterans over the government, ZimOnline reported on 2 February 2007 that the government agreed a substantial increase in War Vet pensions. ‘The payout increase for war veterans leaves former fighters – known for doing little except campaigning for Mugabe and ZANU-PF every election time – earning more than junior school teachers ... ‘ In addition to the pension, ex-combatants are entitled to free treatment at state hospitals and free education for children at state schools.” (Ibid, p. 78)

A report on Zim Online states:

“The Zimbabwe government has increased monthly payouts to veterans of the country’s 1970s independence war who have backed it in power, even as it struggles to raise cash to pay striking doctors, nurses and teachers.” (Zim Online (2 February 2007) *Mugabe hikes pensions for war veterans*)

This report also states:

“Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) chairman Andrew Ndlovu confirmed in an interview with ZimOnline that the government had raised monthly pensions for war veterans from Z\$25 000 to \$103 000 per month.

He said: “We got an increment this month but it’s not much. You cannot plan your future basing on pension money, particularly this time when our economy is not doing well.”

The 300 percent payout hike awarded war veterans is the same given every government worker including doctors and teachers, who have however rejected it is inadequate in an environment where prices rise every day and inflation is 1 281.1 percent.

The payout increase for war veterans leaves the former fighters - known for doing little else except campaigning for Mugabe and ZANU PF every election time – earning more than junior school teachers who get about \$84 000 per month.

The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe says a standard family of five people requires about \$344 000 for basic goods and service per month. ” (Ibid)

This report also states:

“Ndlovu said in addition to receiving more pensions, the war veterans had also requested more land from the government and financial loans “to start income generating projects”.

Already the ex-combatants are entitled to free treatment at state hospitals, free education for their children at government schools and grabbed some of the best farms vacated by whites.” (Ibid)

Another report on Zim Online states that the Finance Minister who is in charge of pensions is an MDC member:

“HARARE – Finance Minister Tendai Biti on Thursday promised to resume pension payments to veterans of Zimbabwe's 1970 liberation war after meeting the representatives of the group.

The government suspended the pension to the war veterans last year.

The undertaking by Biti comes after the war veterans, who two weeks ago started lobbying for more compensation, finally held a meeting with the finance minister yesterday.

Biti, who has turned down demands for salary increment by civil servants, told the veterans led by the Joseph Chinotimba that the country's economy was not performing and explained that the government had no money.

‘Our economy is not performing,’ Biti told the veterans, adding; ‘You cannot eat it (your chicken) while it is still a chick but you wait for it to mature first.’

The finance minister told reporters that the meeting with the war veterans was ‘very friendly’.

Chinotimba, who led Mugabe's chaotic and often violent farm invasions and has been fighting to seize control of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), said the war veterans were not fighting with the finance minister but only wanted their grievances addressed.

‘He is an MDC (member), I am ZANU PF but he is in the GNU (government of national unity) so he deals with everyone, we did not come here to fight Biti, what we want is our money,’ Chinotimba said.” (Zim Online (7 May 2010) *Biti undertakes to resume war veterans pensions*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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.

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