



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 23 July 2012

Information on Zimbabweans being raped or killed because they refused to attend meetings for the Zanu PF

A report published by *AIDS-Free World*, in a chapter titled “An Organized Rape Campaign”, states:

“In the weeks immediately following the June 2008 presidential elections in Zimbabwe, AIDS-Free World received an urgent call from a Harare-based organization working on behalf of women and girls. They believed that hundreds and possibly thousands of women had been raped by members of President Robert Mugabe’s ZANU-PF party as a strategy to influence the election, and sought help from AIDS-Free World in documenting these crimes. A preliminary investigation revealed awareness among human rights groups that sexual violence had occurred, but turned up no other organization, local or international, that had moved beyond awareness of the crimes to address the politically motivated sexual violence through legal channels. Organizations within Zimbabwe were severely restricted by security concerns, few had contemplated or initiated advocacy campaigns, and there was little media coverage inside Zimbabwe of potentially widespread rape.” (AIDS-Free World (December 2009) *Electing to Rape: Sexual Terror in Mugabe’s Zimbabwe*, p.12)

In a chapter titled “Maintaining Power with Violence” this report states:

“The testimony that AIDS-Free World has gathered to support claims that ZANU-PF supporters committed sexual crimes against humanity is distressing but not completely surprising. The history of Zimbabwe is the story of conflict. It is also a story that is as notable for what it conceals as what it reveals. Veiled beneath the documentation of decades of mass torture, murder, and forced abduction is a continuous thread of rape and sexual brutality against the women of Zimbabwe. Since Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, widespread rape against women has been a key feature of the violence utilized by Robert Mugabe and his supporters to maintain power in that country.” (ibid, p.15)

A chapter titled “Testimony of Survivors” (paragraph headed “Pattern of political language used by rapists”) refers to the consequences of refusing to attend ZANU-PF meetings as follows:

“Repeatedly, in locations throughout the country, ZANU-PF perpetrators also told their victims that they would be punished or ‘fixed’ for refusing to attend ZANU-PF meetings and for joining the MDC. Victims in the provinces of Mashonaland East, Harare, Manicaland, and Bulawayo were all told they were being ‘fixed,’ often while they were being raped.” (ibid, p.24)

A report prepared by the *Research and Advocacy Unit*, in a section titled "Rape and sexual abuse", states:

"There is a strong link between elections and sexual violence with sexual violence being used as a political weapon to silence dissent or intimidate opponents. In Kenya and Zimbabwe for example the elections that were held between 2007 and 2008 point as evidence to this proposition. Sexual violence was used as a form of punishment or a retaliation tool to those who are perceived to be responsible for the unfavourable outcome of the election results... A similar finding can be said about the violence that was witnessed in Zimbabwe during the Presidential run-off in June 2008 after President Robert Mugabe lost the presidential election to his opponent Morgan Tsvangirai. From these findings the evidence points to the fact that political elections contribute to sexual violence being perpetrated against women." (Research and Advocacy Unit (December 2009) *Fighting for a New Constitution: Human Rights Violations experienced by Female Members of the National Constitutional Assembly*)

This section of the report also states:

"Of all the gross human rights violations, it is rape and sexual abuse that is particularly inflicted upon women and it is of concern that so little is accurately known about the prevalence of rape or sexual abuse in contemporary Zimbabwe. There are obvious reasons why these abuses are so infrequently reported; fear and shame are the most common, but, in Zimbabwe, the stigma of HIV and AIDS is an additional complication. There has been considerable anecdotal reporting of rape and sexual abuse over the years since 2000, but very little systematic documentation of rape; the general finding of the under-reporting of rape holds true, it seems, for what might be termed "political rape"." (ibid)

An *Amnesty International* report, in a section titled "ZANU-PF torture camps", states:

"In most wards of Mashonaland, Midlands, Manicaland and Masvingo provinces, 'war veterans' and local ZANU-PF leaders established makeshift torture camps. The camps were set up in the form of tents, clearings within a community, classrooms or at the homestead of ZANU-PF officials or displaced MDC activists. Led by serving or retired army officers, 'war veterans' or ZANU-PF leaders, the camps, also known as bases, were known to the police and were only dismantled some time after the election on 27 June. Local people were forced to attend all-night meetings at these camps. There, people were made to watch their neighbours being beaten and warned that if they did not vote for ZANU-PF on 27 June they would face a similar fate. MDC supporters were forced to denounce the party and surrender all their party materials, including t-shirts and membership cards. Dozens of MDC supporters died after beatings at these camps. Local youths were forced to attend the camp meetings and participate in beatings." (Amnesty International (31 October 2008) *Zimbabwe: Time for Accountability*, p.7)

A *Zimbabwe Standard* article states:

"ZANU PF militias, youths and war veterans have invaded the MDC stronghold of the urban areas, laying siege to towns and cities, previously

largely untouched by the violence raging in the rural areas. The signs of their heavy presence are evident in both high and low-density suburbs, and in the streets and along the roads. On Wednesday morning, four MDC supporters were found dead, a day after they had been abducted in Unit F in Chitungwiza. This raised the death toll blamed on Zanu PF by the MDC to 70. On Thursday night, MDC supporters were attacked in Mbare, Rugare, Warren Park, and Dzivarasekwa by the Zanu PF militia code-named Chipangano ('our agreement'). In Dzivarasekwa, Zanu PF militias, accompanied by people in army uniforms were last week ordering residents to remove their satellite dishes or risk attacks or even murder. Most Harare high-density residents were forced to attend night meetings (pungwes) where they are ordered to sing Zanu PF songs praising Mugabe and Zanu PF. At these meetings residents have come to realise the importance of knowing Zanu PF slogans. 'All those who do not know Zanu PF slogans are assaulted in public. Even commuter buses are forced to pull off the road and commuters ordered to chant Zanu PF slogans. It's so degrading,' said one Dzivarasekwa resident." (Zimbabwe Standard (21 June 2008) *Zimbabwe: Urban Areas Under Siege*)

See also *Zimbabwe Standard* article which states:

"ZANU PF is reportedly forcing villagers to attend political meetings where they are taught how to respond to outreach teams when they solicit views on the new constitution. The latest reports of intimidation, especially in rural areas, have heightened fears that Zimbabweans will once again be denied the opportunity to freely determine their future. Consultations on the constitution were suspended two weeks ago after the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac) ran into a number of logistical problems. The political battles are set to add another dimension to the various issues threatening the historic process. MDC-T says Zanu PF has conscripted soldiers, youth militia and war veterans, who spearheaded the party's ruthless campaign in the June 2008 polls, to cow villagers into supporting the Kariba Draft. Zanu PF has been pushing for the Kariba Draft — a document crafted three years ago — to be adopted as the new constitution while the MDC-T wants a 'people-driven' process. The MDC-T said intimidation was most pronounced in Masvingo, Manicaland and Mashonaland East. Pishai Muchauraya, the party's spokesperson for Manicaland, confirmed that Zanu PF was force-marching villagers to political meetings where they are instructed to back the Kariba Draft." (Zimbabwe Standard (30 January 2010) *Zanu PF's Terror Campaign Threat to Constitution-making*)

An *SW Radio Africa* report states:

"A senior airforce of Zimbabwe officer has been named as one of several military officers leading a campaign to force villagers in Manicaland to attend ZANU PF political meetings in the province. Air Commodore Innocent Chiganze, whose name has become synonymous with terror in Makoni district, is a Nigerian trained fighter pilot. Instead of concentrating on his flying skills, the Air Commodore has been accused of waging an 'undeclared war' on civilians in Manicaland. The former St Augustine Penhalonga high school pupil, who began his career in the airforce flying fighter jets at Thornhill airbase in Gweru, is reportedly leading a 'ragtag' unit of war veterans and militias pressing villagers to attend pro-ZANU PF meetings. One such meeting will be held at Jani resettlement area in Makoni South on Friday beginning at 9am, where it's been reported villagers will be told to support the

Kariba draft. A local MDC councilor told SW Radio Africa on Thursday that Chief John Rukweza, allegedly on Chiganze's orders, instructed all headmen and village chairmen to tell people based in their areas to attend the meeting without fail. 'We have 34 headmen under Chief Rukweza in Makoni South and each of them leads about 300 to 400 villagers. You are looking at an entire constituency of about 13,000 people being forced to attend tomorrow's (Friday) meeting,' the councilor said." (SW Radio Africa (21 January 2010) *Air force officer leads 'Kariba draft' campaign in Manicaland*)

A report from the independent radio station *RadioVop* states:

"On Sunday Zanu (PF) held a campaign meeting at Murongwe Business Centre where everyone residing in surrounding villages was ordered to attend by the war veterans' leaders. After the campaign meeting one Retired Major Shava and his group of war veterans demanded that all village heads present to give them the list of names for those who had boycotted the rally. Equipped with the list of those who had not attended and whom they also accused of being MDC supporters, Shava led his group of war veterans and Zanu (PF) youths into villages in Murongwe area raiding their homes, beating and harassing them." (RadioVop (15 February 2011) *Death Threats For NCA Members, More MDC Supporters Flee Violence*)

A *Zimbabwe Standard* article refers stallholders in Mbare being coerced into attending ZANU-PF meetings as follows:

"Stallholders at Mupedzanhamo and Siya-so markets in Mbare were recently forced to sign the petition or risk losing their stalls to Zanu PF youths. Those who sell food at the popular Mereki Shopping centre in Warren Park D are in the same predicament. They are being forced to attend meetings on Wednesdays and Saturdays at Warren Park Primary School where they are told to vote for Zanu PF in the next elections." (Zimbabwe Standard (13 February 2011) *Zimbabwe: Youths Intimidate Stallholders*)

See also *SW Radio Africa* report which states:

"Scores of vegetable sellers were over the weekend forced to attend a ZANU PF meeting in Bulawayo, after being rounded up and threatened by a group of party youths. A vegetable market on 5th Avenue was closed on Saturday after the ZANU PF youths forced the vendors to attend a party meeting at the Royal Hotel. SW Radio Africa's correspondent Lionel Saungweme said the youths were led by a known ZANU PF activist called Shepherd Gomera, who ordered the vendors to close up shop. 'The youths went around disturbing the vendors and forcing them to stop selling. Gomera then came around on top of a truck ordering people to leave and threatening them, telling them they will face some kind of punishment if they don't,' Saungweme said." (SW Radio Africa (21 November 2011) *Bulawayo market traders forced to attend ZANU PF meeting*)

A report from the *Zimbabwe Peace Project*, in a section titled "Food & Other Forms of Aid Related Violations", states:

"From Harare, an MDC-T activist was denied food at the Greendale Nursery School from an FBO based in Harare for allegedly not attending ZANU PF meetings by five ZANU PF members." (Zimbabwe Peace Project (22

September 2010) *Summary on Politically-Motivated Human Rights and Food-Related Violations: August 2010*, p.10)

An article published by the independent newspaper *Daily News* states:

“War veterans and Zanu PF supporters in Magondeni area in Binga South constituency, Matabeleland North province are harassing and forcing villagers who received free maize seed under the presidential scheme to attend-day long Zanu PF meetings as payment. In February this year, bags of maize, sorghum and millet were distributed to communal farmers countrywide under President Robert Mugabe’s presidential inputs scheme. In some areas, only Zanu PF officials and supporters benefited while in areas like Binga South some MDC supporters were lucky and received the seeds. However, war veterans in Magondeni area of Binga South led by Voice Nyoni are now forcing non-Zanu PF supporters who benefited from the scheme to attend Zanu PF meetings every Thursday where they are lectured on the liberation struggle and Zanu PF policies.” (Daily News (22 April 2012) *Villagers forced to attend Zanu PF meetings*)

A report published by the *Zimbabwe Election Support Network*, in a section titled “Freedom of assembly and association”, states:

“Observers reported that ZANU PF was able to conduct meetings to the exclusion of other parties. Asked if people were forced to attend rallies in their areas, ZESN observers reported coercive attendance of political meetings by citizens. 33% of reports revealed that people were forced to attend ZANU PF meetings. This undermines the notion of voluntary participation in political party activities. Citizens have a right to attend or not to attend meetings. Political parties need to sell their manifestos to citizens and come up with interesting programmes to entice citizens and not rely on coercion which violates their rights.” (Zimbabwe Election Support Network (February 2012) *An Analysis of 2011: Respect for Human Rights and Implications for Free and Fair Elections*, p.3)

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.

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