

Zimbabwe update

This month's update focuses upon the tensions within Zimbabwe's unity government and the subsequent disengagement of the MDC from the unity government. The update also focuses on the denied entry of the UN expert on torture, the \$100 million in development aid Britain has given Zimbabwe and attempts by the police to block a ZCTU demonstration.

Also featured is the arrest of ZINASU leaders, continued violence in diamond mining and the re-emergence of cholera in the country.

You can find more details about all of the stories covered on the [ACTSA website](#).

MDC disengage from unity government

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader and Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Morgan Tsvangirai, 'disengaged' from the unity government on the 16th October, in protest over outstanding issues and non compliance with the Global Political Agreement and the re-arrest of the MDC's treasurer and deputy agricultural Minister designate Roy Bennett. "It has brought home the reality that as a movement we have an unreliable and unrepentant partner in the transitional government", Tsvangirai explained.

The parties agreed to share power in February this year following the elections of the previous year. However, as a unity government the parties have failed to agree on a number of vital issues including appointees for provincial governors, the central bank governor and the attorney general. The MDC also accuses ZANU PF of persecuting its activists and legislators. Tsvangirai's MDC will not leave the coalition government but disengage from ZANU PF, the Cabinet and the Council of Ministers.

Police block ZCTU demo

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions' (ZCTU) plans to hold a demonstration to commemorate the detention and torture of the federations leadership in 2007 were blocked by the police after courts had approved the march. The Chief of Police of the Five Fields area of Harare dismissed the court order which would have allowed ZCTU members to hold the march on 12th October.

However, demonstrations organised by ZCTU did take place throughout Zimbabwe on 10th October to mark Decent Work Day after the Minister of Labour instructed police that they should allow ZCTU the right to assemble. The main demonstration in Harare lasted for 48 minutes before it was blocked by the police.

Journalists detained

Two journalists from Al Jazeera were detained and assaulted by police on 20th October according to Reporters without Borders. The two were covering a cabinet meeting following the MDC's disengagement from the unity government and filming outside the Zimbabwe parliament at the time of their arrest. This was the first arrest of journalists since the formation of the unity government.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fair pay talks halted

The Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ) has refused to meet ZCTU's demands to increase the minimum wage to US\$250 a month. ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo said "We have gone back to square one and workers have to mobilise themselves for real action because if they don't do that they will continue with the current slave wages."

Supreme Court drop Mukoko charges

The Supreme Court in Zimbabwe has dropped all charges against human rights activist Justina Mukoko following a hearing on the 28th September. Mukoko had been charged with banditry by the police after recording some of the human rights abuses committed against political activists, unionists and civil society members by the previous government.

Britain to increase aid to Zimbabwe

Britain will provide \$100 million to Zimbabwe to help the unity government and ease humanitarian crisis. Mark Canning the British Ambassador stated "The UK wants it to succeed. We are not holding back...We don't want it to fail as a result of lack of financial support."

Mr Canning explained that the aid would be ring fenced for vital services such as water, sanitation, health care and education, which after years of neglect have collapsed, and also to provide food aid, seeds and fertilizer to poor households. Britain's aid will not be given directly to the unity government. International donors have abstained from providing development aid to Zimbabwe, until there is more evidence that reforms have been made.

Dave Fish of Britain's Department for International Development said "We would expect significant developments on the political front before we deepen support or even provide funding directly through the government."

ZINASU leadership arrested

Five senior members of the Zimbabwe National Student Union (ZINASU) were arrested on Saturday, 11th October, on charges of misconduct and undermining the office of the President and Cabinet. The five were discussing the inclusive government whilst travelling by bus in Harare. A police officer on the bus commandeered the vehicle which was taken to Harare Central Police Station, where the students were arrested, beaten and detained for two nights. A statement from ZINASU said the arrests had "shown lack of willingness of any meaningful reform by the police department in this transitional period as inmates are still being subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment while in detention." The student leaders received treatment following their release for various injuries sustained from the beatings.

UN Expert on Torture denied entry

Zimbabwe has denied entry to UN expert on torture, Manfred Nowak, at the last minute, after inviting him to the country for a week long visit.

Nowak, the special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, was due to conduct a fact finding mission in Zimbabwe from 28th October to the 4th November. He was told that his mission had been cancelled due to a sudden SADC meeting, aimed to resolve the current political crisis, following his arrival in Johannesburg. Nowak, nevertheless travelled to Harare, following an invitation from Mr Tsvangirai, but was denied entry by immigration officials in Harare airport.

The UN made a statement that welcomed "all efforts to resolve the political crisis", but the SADC meeting was not a valid reason to cancel his visit.

ACTION

Dignity! Period

Access to sanitary products for women in Zimbabwe is worse than ever, for many women sanitary protection is a luxury they can no longer afford. Women have been forced to use newspaper, rags or leaves as a substitute for sanitary pads which can cause serious infections for which there is no available medication.

ACTSA's Dignity! Period campaign provides sanitary towels to women in Zimbabwe, just £3 a month provides sanitary towels for 3 women for a year. Visit ACTSA's Dignity! Period web pages to make a donation or learn more



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HEALTH

Five people have died and 30 others are being treated for cholera in Zimbabwe. The disease has broken out just three months after the epidemic was last halted in July 2009, after 4,300 people died. Aid agencies warned that another outbreak would be inevitable, due to the coming rain season. The number of infections is not predicted to reach the catastrophic numbers of last year, due to improved water purification.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Rights groups are lobbying the Kimberley Process to ban diamond exports from Zimbabwe. Following a recent review mission, investigating reports of human rights abuses and corruption, Zimbabwe's diamond industry has been described as a "nightmare of lawlessness and horrific violence". Campaigners have warned that the credibility of the KPCS will be seriously undermined if no action is taken against Zimbabwe.

EDUCATION

A fee of \$10 per subject for O'levels and \$15 per subject for A'levels has been introduced in Zimbabwe. 75 percent of the 300,000 children eligible to sit the exams in November had failed to register before the deadline, according to a survey by the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe.