

# Zimbabwe: An update October 2008



## One Month in Zimbabwe

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Extra-Ordinary Summit, held on 9 November has failed to break solve the deadlock between Zanu PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) around the designation of ministries which has prevented the forming of a power sharing government since the unity accord signed on 15 September.

The summit was called after the SADC troika on defence, politics and security failed earlier in the month to secure a settlement on the allocation of cabinet positions. A troika summit on Zimbabwe to be held on 20 October in Swaziland was boycotted by Tsvangiri when he was not given a passport. Tsvangiri called for a full scale SADC Extra-Ordinary Summit with leaders from all 12 member countries present, he stated that the planned meeting was "too narrow to make Mr Mugabe see sense." It was agreed on 24 October to hold a full scale Extra-Ordinary Summit.

Before the Summit there had been optimism that SADC leaders would be able to break the deadlock, the Executive Secretary of SADC Tomaz Salomao had commented that this was a "crucial moment for Zimbabwe" and that "time is not on our side. There is a humanitarian crisis, there are about five million people who are in need of food aid." While South African had indicated a toughened stance, President Kgalema Motlanthe had urged both sides "to show political maturity" in finding a compromise. While on 3 November Botswana president Ian Khama backed the MDC's calls for an election rerun commenting "We strongly believe that the one viable way forward in Zimbabwe is to have a rerun of the presidential election under full international sponsorship and supervision."

After 12 hours of talks the members of the SADC summit communicated that a consequence of the failure to form a government was the inability to "effectively address the challenges facing the people of Zimbabwe." The summit took the position that "The Ministry of Home Affairs be co-managed between Zanu-PF and the MDC" to be reviewed after 6 months by the parties with assistance from Mbeki, SADC and the African Union"

Read the full communiqué here

<http://www.actsa.org/page-1177-Zimbabwe%20Election%20Updates.html>

Morgan Tsvangiri rejected the proposal as unworkable. He commented "This issue of co-sharing does not work. We have said so ourselves, we have rejected it, and that's the position," He added that "It is about power sharing, it is about equitable power sharing, it is about giving the responsibility to the party that won an election and has compromised its position to share a government with a party that lost." Robert Mugabe left the summit without comment.

## Facts

- Zimbabwe's official annual inflation rate hit 231,000,000% in October, while independent economist Steve Ranke of John Hopkins University has estimated the annual inflation rate on 6 November as 215,000,000,000,000,000%. Currently, the highest denomination banknote is Z\$50 000, not enough to buy a loaf of bread.
- UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimate that 2 million people currently require food aid in Zimbabwe and by early 2009 5.1 million Zimbabweans will require emergency food aid.
- Zimbabwe sold almost 4 tonnes of Ivory on 1 November raising US\$450,000 which is intended to go towards the management of national parks.
- In a statement on 9 October the UN World Food Programme appealed for US\$140 million to provide vital food relief over the next 6 months.
- Amnesty International claim that 180 people have been killed and 9,000 injured in political violence since Zimbabwe's general elections in March.



## Life for a Trade Unionist

ZCTU have expressed "disgust" towards the actions of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe in raising the daily withdrawal limit from \$50 000 to \$500 000, and expressed concerns that "the withdrawal limit remains below what an ordinary family requires in a day." ZCTU had been calling for the abolition of the withdrawal limit. ZCTU have stated that they are "perturbed by the current wave of dollarisation or Americanisation of the Zimbabwean economy by the authorities at a time when most workers in Zimbabwe are earning their wages in Zimbabwean dollars." ZCTU has demanded that while the dollarisation of the economy continues all workers should be paid in American dollars.

Raymond Majongwe, Secretary General of the Progressive Teachers Union commented on 20 October that of 130,000 teachers 5 years ago, less than 80,000 are still employed, and few of them can afford to go to work on a salary of about \$3 a month. He stated that "We don't have any option other than this deal, and pressure has to be put on Mugabe to make serious compromises as the welfare of the whole nation is at stake."

## Life for Civil Society

### Students

Zimbabwe's universities have still not started to teach this academic year, the situation at Midlands state university was described by Zimbabwe State University Lecturers' Association president Mr Government Phiri as "different from a strike, lecturers just cannot report for duty" and commented that engagement with the authorities has ended in deadlock. While at the University of Zimbabwe students are

greeted by a note on a faculty building telling students lectures would begin “on a date to be advised,” while vice-chancellor Levy Nyagura has said that the university has no electricity, no water and no funds.

Clever Bere president of the Zimbabwe Students Union (ZINASU) has commented “The few lecturers that remain at universities are not motivated; they are getting the lowest salaries in the world. They are there physically, but in spirit they are not there. We expect our universities to be like other universities.”

On 14 October a group of 500 university students gathered outside parliament to protest over the poor state of the education system and the failure of the state authorities to open universities for the academic year. During the protest five students, including Clever Bere, president of ZINASU, were arrested. They were later released without charge

### **Women**

Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, leaders of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) have been released from police custody three weeks after their detention. The women were initially arrested on 16 October for leading a peaceful 200 strong sit-in to demand food aid for the hungry and the immediate formation of a power sharing government. The Zimbabwean Human Rights Forum described their



detention as “a clear violation of the WOZA leaders fundamental right to freedom of assembly and association guaranteed in the Constitution of Zimbabwe.” Williams and Mahlangu experienced delays at the hands of the legal system. Their first bail application on 21 October was delayed until the 24 and then 27 October, when the application was turned down. An appeal hearing in the High Courts on 5 November granted their release. WOZA has commented that they are “delighted that the state’s petty attempt to pervert justice has finally been overruled.”

47 women protestors were also arrested and 11 injured on 27 October following the break up of a protest outside Rainbow Towers Hotel in Harare by armed police. The women, members of Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) and the Feminist Political Education Project, were seeking information about what was happening in the power sharing talks. Emilia Muchawa chairperson of WCoZ commented “Hundreds of women were coming into town to stage a peaceful demonstration because as wives and mothers we want an end to the hard times,” she added “When people are talking about a country, when people are talking about our problems, but we are shut out from what is going on.” The arrested women were charged with offences against public order, and following interventions by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights released later the same evening.

### **Religious Groups**

Bishop Sebastian Bakare, an Anglican bishop in Harare, was named as the 2008 recipient of the Per Anger prize. The Swedish human rights prize recognises Bakare as “having given voice to the fight against oppression.” The prize committee recognised Bakare as an “important voice” who has “received threats as a result of his open and clear criticism of the government, his condemnation of local police brutality and his defence of human rights” in Zimbabwe. The Per Anger prize honours those who risk their own safety to defend the rights of individuals against oppression and inhumanity.

## Violent Oppression and insecurity

### Violent Oppression

The month has marked a series of violence from the Zimbabwe authorities, who have used force to break up demonstrations on various occasions. Activists from Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR) have claimed that 23 of their members were hospitalised, 4 arrested and 4, Moses Mutasa from Hatfield, Tinei Tinarwo from Glen Norah, a Mr Ncube from Dzivarasekwa and Adam Muchiriri, are still missing following protests this month.

On 4 November Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum issued their monthly political violence report for June 2008, the report documents high levels of violence and political intolerance by all political parties, but reserves special condemnation for the serious violations of human rights committed by Zanu PF. The report also documents an increase in political violence in urban areas and notes the highly gendered nature of violence, reporting that "the terror strategy also targeted women as the report shows six alleged rape cases in Harare Central, Bindura South, Guruve South and Makoni South." The report also documents 44 cases of unlawful arrest, 35 cases of torture, 60 allegedly politically motivated murders and 277 cases of political discrimination, intimidation or violence amongst other abuses. The Forum commented also expressed "dismay that since the holding of the elections, there have been no official policies to deal with the scourge of violence surrounding the two elections in March and in June."

### Insecurity

Zimbabwe continues to be in the grip of a severe food shortage. The world food programme commented that "A large number of farmers harvested little – if anything – this year, and have now exhausted their meagre stocks. Many hungry families are reportedly living on one meal a day, exchanging precious livestock for buckets of maize or eating wild foods such as Baobab and Amarula." In these circumstances Zimbabweans are increasingly turning to wild foods and fruit in order to survive, and children not attending school so that they can spend the day looking for food.

On 5 November the government was forced to mobilise the national disaster response agency, the Civil Protection Unit (CPU) in an attempt to stop the spread of Cholera in the country. In the last 7 days 9 people have died from Cholera across the country. In Harare raw sewage has been pumped into the water supply after a mains pipe burst. A worker at the Beatrice Road Medical Centre in Harare commented "We are aware that the government is understating the number of patients who have died from cholera," adding "We are looking at a very serious health disaster, whose effect the authorities may soon not be able to handle because it appears to be an uncontrollable outbreak." The Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) has been described by Sesel Zvidzai secretary for local government for the Movement for Democratic Change as "not in a position to maintain water and sewer equipment, since they do not have engineers; all the engineers have deserted the water authority because of poor salaries."

### Life for the media

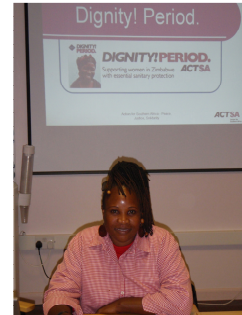
Reporters Without Borders have issued their 2008 index of press freedom, which place Zimbabwe in 151<sup>st</sup> position out of 173 countries consider, a move down the

table. The report states that “Being a journalist in ... Zimbabwe (151st) - is a high risk exercise involving endless frustration and constant police and judicial harassment.” The report documents that amendments to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy act have liberalised the media environment. Matthew Takaona President of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists stated that things have eased since the 27 June election, for instance journalists no longer risk a two year jail term for operating without a licence.

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## Calls for action

In October Emelda Mhuriro, General Council Member of ZCTU and Deputy General Secretary of the Civil Service Association visited the UK. She told ACTSA that a pack of sanitary towels now costs around \$2 in Zimbabwe, while the average monthly wage is \$5, making sanitary products increasingly unaffordable. Through the Dignity! Period campaign so far in 2008 1,564,331 women have been able to access free sanitary towels. She commented “I believe that dignity period has saved lives” as women no longer need to resort to using newspaper or rags as sanitary protection.



Take a moment to learn more about the Dignity! Period campaign and how you can help by making a donation.

<http://www.actsa.org/page-1022-Dignity!%20Period..html>

## Calls from ACTSA

To become a member of ACTSA follow this link

<http://www.actsa.org/page-1026-Give%20regularly%20&%20become%20a%20member.html>

To donate to ACTSA see here

<http://www.actsa.org/page-1007-Donate.html>

Access to sanitary products in Zimbabwe is worse than ever. Support ACTSAs Dignity! Period. campaign and visit

<http://www.actsa.org/page-1022-Dignity!%20Period..html>