

Zimbabwe: An update August 2008



One Month in Zimbabwe.

Power sharing talks between ZANU PF and the MDC continued throughout the month with both parties showing signs of optimism in early September. However, concerns have been raised by civil society that the Memorandum of Understanding between the parties has been breached by convening Parliament and the ongoing violence against opposition supporters.

Zimbabwe's Parliament was sworn in on the 25th August. The election of the speaker followed which saw the surprise selection of Lovemore Moyo, chairperson of the Tsvangirai-led MDC. Robert Mugabe also appointed three non-constituency members of the Senate and eight provincial governors without consulting the opposition.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) facilitated a solidarity conference, attended by civil society from both Zimbabwe and Swaziland. Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) President, Lovemore Motombo and General Secretary Wellington Chibebe both had their trials postponed until 17th September.

Facts:

- **Zimbabwe's soaring inflation now stands at 42 million percent, economists have said.**
- **Zimbabwe's central bank chief has urged a six-month price and salary freeze in a bid to slow the rate of inflation.**
- **Zimbabwe has lifted the ban on a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), however it includes a number of restrictions and excludes organisations operating in areas such as transitional justice, human rights and governance and democracy.**
- **The Red Cross Federation has made an urgent appeal for almost \$27m (£15m), saying the food security situation was likely to be the worst on record because of the rocketing inflation and Zimbabwe's shortage of foreign currency.**



Life for a Trade Unionist

The trial of Lovemore Matombo, President and Wellington Chibebe, General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has been postponed again. The leaders were arrested on 8 May for speaking out about the state-

sponsored violence in Zimbabwe. Originally scheduled for July the trial was postponed until 27 August. But on 27 August the prosecutor failed to turn up in court and a new date has been set for 16 September.

UNI Global Union has sent a protest letter to the Zimbabwean government urging it to drop all charges against the leaders of the ZCTU. In a letter sent to the Zimbabwean Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamase on 25 August, UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings expressed concern about the charges that have been brought against ZCTU.

A protest denouncing Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe was held on 16 August in the gardens of Johannesburg's Sandton Convention Centre, where the country's political crisis was high on the agenda of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit. The march was organised by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), was attended by hundreds of Zimbabweans living in Johannesburg and others who came in busloads from other South African cities – in addition, there was also a vast number of Zimbabwean and South African civil society organisations at the march. The march was meant to send a message to SADC leaders that they must act decisively on the Zimbabwean crisis.

A week-long boycott of goods destined for Zimbabwe and Swaziland will be launched next month throughout the southern African region, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi said on 12 August. "We commit ourselves to the creation of an effective momentum for sustained boycotts of goods destined for the two countries, throughout the region, with the trade-union movement taking an active lead," said Vavi. He said COSATU is planning a one-week long boycott in September during which all workers will refuse to touch goods destined for these countries, in a bid to put pressure on their leaders.

In the month of August, Doctors at government hospitals went on strike over pay and teachers threatened to begin a work stoppage shortly, union officials said. "All doctors at all the country's referral hospitals are on strike," Amon Siveregi, chairman of the Zimbabwe Medical Doctors' Association, said in an interview in Harare on the 21 August. "We are negotiating with the government, but can't yet disclose our demands because of a confidentiality clause in our dealings." The Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe said on the 21 August it was considering calling a strike.

Life for Civil Society:

Students



Four Great Zimbabwe University students once again appeared for trial on 6 August at Masvingo Magistrates Court. Brenda Mupfurutsa, Oglive Makova, George Makamure and Joel Bingudza are facing contempt of court charges following a demonstration they staged at Masvingo Magistrate Court when Edison Hlatswayo was appearing before the magistrate on 15 October 2007.

In a letter to Botswana President Ian Khama, ZINASU called for the dismissal from the University of Botswana of Caesar Zvayi, a former political and features editor at the Zimbabwe State-controlled Herald newspaper. Botswana authorities later detained Caesar Zvayi and stated that he was to be deported. Meanwhile ZINASU

hailed the President of Botswana, for heeding the call by the students of Zimbabwe to deport Zvayi and sparing the students of Botswana from propaganda.

The ZINASU Secretary General Lovemore Chinoputsa and Shadreck Vengesai appeared before the University disciplinary committee this month. Their case arose from the disturbances at the university on 7 July. To date they have appeared a record nine times.

Student organisations in Zimbabwe on 27 August argued against President Robert Mugabe for officially opening the 7th Parliament in breach of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) he signed with his counterparts in the opposition. The organisations voiced the possibility of campaigns of civic disobedience and to petition regional and international leaders to discredit Mugabe and the government he would appoint. Youth organisations at the meeting included the Students Christian Movement of Zimbabwe, the Students Solidarity Trust, the Zimbabwe Youth Forum and ZINASU.

ACTSA is welcoming a delegation from ZINASU to the UK during September.

Women

On 19 August Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) launched a report detailing the trauma experiences of their members. The event was conducted in Johannesburg with attendance by press, diplomats, civic society leaders and members of WOZA. The report is entitled "Counting the Cost of Courage: Trauma Experiences of Women Human Rights Defenders in Zimbabwe". The report notes that more than 50% of the women interviewed were at risk of developing significant psychological disorders.

A copy of the full report is available can be downloaded from www.wozazimbabwe.org. The statistics on the post-election violence and individual case histories of survivors are also available.

WOZA has spoken out on the impact the highest inflation rate in the world is having in Zimbabwe. Woza's Magodonga Mahlangu said: "Really, you never know what you are going to eat next or what you are going to buy. I don't remember the last time I walked into a shop and bought something. You can't budget, you can't plan anything because of the inflation." Jenni Williams added: "You just see what you can do and do the barest minimum. We are now down to the bare necessities. Sometimes from morning to afternoon, the price of a leaf of vegetable goes up."

Increased Violent Oppression



Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) is concerned by reports alleging continued politically motivated criminal acts against people living in Nyanga North Constituency by members of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA).

Channel 4 news, this month, has shown footage of militiamen from Zimbabwe's ruling party beating opposition supporters. The filming is reported to have taken place less than a week after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, on 21 July, where all

parties agreed to stop the violence. The film shows a group of thugs armed with machetes and clubs beating up a man lying on the ground.

Human rights experts and activists have joined Justice Richard Goldstone in expressing their alarm over a proposal for blanket amnesty to perpetrators of human rights abuses to resolve the Zimbabwe impasse. Christof Heyns, University of Pretoria faculty of law dean, said the mooted amnesty "worries me a lot". Heyns said this might be a short-term solution, but "somewhere one had to draw the line" in accommodating perpetrators of crimes against humanity and human rights abuses.

Life for the Media:

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) have voiced concerns about the media blackout covering the ongoing negotiations. Arnold Tsunga said: "Exclusion of CSOs (civil society) and the wider society in the mediation process, gives the impression that the problem in Zimbabwe is between Zanu-PF and the MDC. It ignores the fact that the crisis is one of governance and therefore an issue for all Zimbabweans."

Harare Magistrate Chiwoniso Mutongi has removed prominent media lawyer Harrison Nkomo from remand. Nkomo is facing charges of insulting the President of Zimbabwe in contravention of Section 33 and 41 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. Nkomo's lawyer, Beatrice Mtetwa told Magistrate Mutongi that Nkomo's matter had been referred to the Supreme Court and as such he should not be appearing in both the Magistrate and Supreme Courts at the same time. Mutongi agreed with this reasoning.

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) media aide Andrew Chadwick was named in the state media as the person who had leaked to Independent Newspapers a document that outlined a proposal for Mugabe's demise. Chadwick was consequently arrested shortly after the crisis talks deadlocked on 12 August. No explanation was given for his arrest.

Action:

ZCTU activists Lovemore and Wellington were due to appear in court on 27th August to defend themselves against charges of speaking out about the state sponsored violence in Zimbabwe. The trial was once again postponed, this time until the 17th September, as the prosecutor failed to show up.

Please take a moment to add your voice to the growing tide of support for these brave trade unionists at www.wearezctu.org

Zimbabwe: Prospects and Possibilities

A Royal African Society, Action for Southern Africa and Centre of African Studies event.

Friday 19th September
Zimbabwe: Prospects and Possibilities
with Brian Raftopoulos
12:30-2pm, SOAS, London

What will happen next for Zimbabwe? Hear one of the country's leading political analyst's view of the future. Please visit the below link for more information.

www.actsa.org/Pictures/UpImages/Zimbabwe/Zimbabwe-%20Brian%20Raftopoulos%20talk%20Prospects%20and%20Possibilities.pdf