



Australian Government

Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE38183 – Political
Violence in 2007 – Operation
Murambatsvina (Clean-up) – Uzumba –
Snake Park – Zimbabwe Grounds,
Highfields Rally
17 February 2011

1. Please provide general information on the political situation, including the level of political violence and instability in Zimbabwe in and around July 2007.

A number of reports indicate that political violence in Zimbabwe escalated in 2007. In December 2007, the US Department of State stated that it had been “the worst year yet for defenders of freedom in Zimbabwe”. Victims of the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government’s intensified campaign included members and supporters of the political opposition, who were intimidated, harassed, attacked, kidnapped, detained, and tortured. In 2007, reports from Zimbabwean NGOs included more than 6000 cases of human rights abuse, over 90 politically-motivated kidnappings and cases of disappearance, approximately 3500 victims of torture and assault, and more than 3000 incidents of harassment and intimidation.¹

The US Department of State human rights report for 2007 outlines politically motivated killings, abductions, and attacks committed by the government throughout the year, particularly against Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) members and supporters. Peaceful demonstrations were violently disrupted by security forces, protesters were arrested and beaten while in custody, civilians in opposition strongholds were assaulted by security forces, and government supporters were trained and deployed to harass opposition members and supporters. Some victims and witnesses of such crimes were also detained after reporting attacks to police. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum reported more than 1600 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention throughout 2007, including the arrests of 30 opposition members in Harare following alleged bomb attacks.²

In July 2007 the UK Home Office reported “a dramatic increase in political violence in March and April 2007 with hundreds of activists arrested and detained without charge following protests that began in Harare on 11 March”. Security forces assaulted many protesters, causing serious injuries and killing one person. MDC leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara were arrested and beaten while in police custody.³

¹ ‘Zimbabwe: Escalating Violence in 2007’ 2007, *States News Service*, 7 December – Attachment 1

² US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Sections 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 2b – Attachment 2

³ UK Home Office 2007, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, 16 July, p.4 – Attachment 3

Amnesty International also highlights “an increase in organized violence and torture” in 2007, particularly regarding the arrests, abductions, and severe beatings of many MDC members for peacefully protesting against the government.⁴

Human Rights Watch’s world report on the events of 2007 similarly describes ZANU-PF’s intensified stranglehold on power and its increasingly severe restrictions on the political opposition. It is reported that throughout the year, “hundreds of civil society activists and opposition members were arbitrarily arrested during routine meetings or peaceful protests against social, economic and human rights conditions... On several occasions police have used tear gas to disperse demonstrations, beaten protestors with batons and rifle butts and even fired on peaceful protestors”.⁵

In March 2007 *The Irish Examiner* reported MDC claims that their supporters were victims of “an upsurge in violence”, while the government warned of a crackdown on unrest. The MDC reported that members and supporters who were injured following “beatings by ruling party youth league members and state agents” were refused medical treatment at state hospitals. Shortly prior to the increase in violent attacks, Robert Mugabe had publicly threatened opposition activists and encouraged youth leaders to “get prepared for a fight”.⁶

In October 2007, *Reuters* similarly reported MDC claims that Robert Mugabe’s ZANU-PF government “was escalating a violent crackdown” against MDC members and supporters. MDC spokesman Nelson Chamisa stated that the party has “witnessed an escalation in the number of assaults, violence and intimidation against our members, particularly in the rural areas but also in the urban areas”. Officials with the opposition reported more than 4122 cases of political violence since the beginning of the year.⁷

2. Deleted.

3. Deleted.

4. Please provide information on whether there was an active ZANU PF party at Uzumba High School or whether this is an area dominated by ZANU PF supporters.

No information was located on an active ZANU-PF party at Uzumba High School. Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe (UMP) district is located in Mashonaland East province, approximately 130 kilometres from Harare. Uzumba High School is situated in the Manyika area of UMP.⁸ A 2008 article on the Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website describes UMP as “President Robert Mugabe’s stronghold in Mashonaland

⁴ Amnesty International 2008, ‘Annual Report 2008 – Zimbabwe’, 28 May – Attachment 4

⁵ Human Rights Watch 2008, ‘World Report 2008 – Zimbabwe’, January – Attachment 5

⁶ ‘Propaganda war rages amid Zimbabwe violence’ 2007, *The Irish Examiner*, 21 March – Attachment 6

⁷ Banya, N. 2007, ‘Update 3 – Zimbabwe govt escalating crackdown-opposition’, *Reuters*, 16 October – Attachment 7

⁸ ‘Zimbabwe: UMP Ravaged By Political Violence’ 2008, *AllAfrica Global Media*, source: *The Zimbabwe Guardian*, 14 May <http://allafrica.com/stories/200805140196.html> – Accessed 10 February 2011 – Attachment 8; Muyevedzwa, S. 2008, ‘Things are changing in Uzumba, Harare and maybe Zimbabwe as a whole’, Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website, 26 March http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=3755&cat=4 – Accessed 14 February 2011 – Attachment 9

East”.⁹ *IRIN News* stated in 2008, however, that although once a political stronghold of ZANU-PF, constituents of UMP largely backed the MDC in the March elections.¹⁰

A number of reports outline political violence against MDC members and supporters in the district in recent years. An article on the MDC website in February 2010 claims that the MDC Youth Assembly gender representative in Mashonaland East, Yvonne Kapiripiriri, was harassed by ZANU-PF youths. The youths reportedly visited her house numerous times, threatening her for supporting the MDC, and accusing her of mobilising MDC support in Uzumba after a large rally was held at the Nhakiwa business centre.¹¹ In March 2010 ZANU-PF officials in UMP were reportedly threatening locals against attending meetings regarding the proposed new constitution, and violently campaigning for the adoption of the ZANU-PF backed Kariba Draft. One Uzumba resident claimed that “ZANU-PF politicians here have monopolized the whole constitution making process”.¹²

SW Radio Africa reported in December 2009 that a group of MDC supporters were attacked by ZANU-PF militias whilst travelling in an open truck to an MDC rally in Uzumba. One man injured in the attack was refused treatment at a hospital “because the nurses feared victimisation by the ZANU PF militia who work hand in hand with the police”. It is alleged that the attack was orchestrated by the ZANU-PF youth chairman for Uzumba, known as Mbizi, who is “reportedly in charge of five bases in Uzumba, namely at Katiyo, Mashambanhaka, Mtawatawa, Nhakiwa and Rukariro”. The article also states that “MDC supporters who attended the rally in Uzumba went home in fear of their lives because ZANU PF youths were waiting for them at their bases”.¹³

In October 2009 the Uzumba home of an MDC councillor was burnt down by ZANU-PF militias, who have also reportedly reopened a youth training camp in Mashonaland East.¹⁴ In June 2009 an MDC activist in Uzumba was brutally attacked twice within two weeks by ZANU-PF militias as punishment for supporting the MDC.¹⁵

The district was reportedly one of the “hardest hit by political violence” following the disputed elections in March 2008.¹⁶ In May of that year, *Zim Online* reported the killings of three MDC supporters in Uzumba.¹⁷ In April 2008 it was reported that an unsuccessful MDC candidate in Uzumba, who lost to the ZANU-PF candidate, “stormed the Uzumba High School command centre alleging that some Zanu-PF members had visited polling

⁹ Muyevedzwa, S. 2008, ‘Things are changing in Uzumba, Harare and maybe Zimbabwe as a whole’, Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website, 26 March
http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=3755&cat=4 – Accessed 14 February 2011 – Attachment 9

¹⁰ ‘Zimbabwe: Humanitarian operations curtailed by violence’ 2008, *IRIN News*, 21 April – Attachment 10

¹¹ ‘MDC youth member flees Zanu PF threats’ 2010, Movement for Democratic Change website, 19 February
http://www.mdc.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=213:mdc-youth-member-flees-zanu-pf-threats-&catid=41:top-headlines – Accessed 14 February 2011 – Attachment 11

¹² ‘Zanu-PF Councillor hires militia to disperse constitution meetings’ 2010, *The Daily News – Zimbabwe*, 4 March – Attachment 12

¹³ Sibanda, T. 2009, ‘MDC supporters attacked by ZANU PF militia in Uzumba’, *SW Radio Africa*, 8 December
<http://www.swradioafrica.com/news081209/mdcsupporters081209.htm> – Accessed 10 February 2011 – Attachment 13

¹⁴ Chimhete, C. 2009, ‘Violence intensifies after MDC-T pull out’, *The Zimbabwe Standard*, 31 October – Attachment 14

¹⁵ Guma, L. 2009, ‘Zimbabwe: MDC activist brutally assaulted’, *SW Radio Africa*, 22 July – Attachment 15; ‘Zimbabwe: Political violence growing in rural areas’, *IRIN News*, 27 July – Attachment 16

¹⁶ ‘Zimbabwe: Humanitarian operations curtailed by violence’ 2008, *IRIN News*, 21 April – Attachment 10

¹⁷ ‘Opposition claims eight more supporters murdered in past three days’ 2008, *Zim Online*, 14 May – Attachment 17

stations dressed in their party regalia... Ms Machinga and her supporters, mainly youths, continued to protest until the police intervened”.¹⁸ *The Zimbabwe Guardian* reported in May 2008 that UMP residents, particularly teachers, were forced to flee from “unruly gangs of [both] Zanu PF and MDC supporters moving around the communities abducting, intimidating, beating and murdering people”.¹⁹

The Zimbabwe Peace Project’s September 2007 report also identifies cases of harassment and intimidation of MDC supporters in Uzumba by ZANU-PF members. It is reported that two teachers at Uzumba High School who are MDC members were harassed by a ZANU-PF Senator and accused of encouraging fellow teachers to strike for a salary increase.²⁰

5. Please provide information on whether houses in Snake Park were bulldozed in June 2005 by ZANU PF in “Operation Cleanup”.

Operation Murambatsvina (‘Clean-up’, ‘Drive out Trash’, or ‘Drive out Filth’) was launched by the Zimbabwean government in May 2005. The operation involved indiscriminate “mass forced evictions and demolitions of homes and informal businesses”, such as street vending, in poor areas throughout the country. Police used excessive force in destroying property and evicting people without adequate notice or court orders. The United Nations estimated that approximately 700,000 people were made homeless and/or without a source of income between May and July 2005.²¹

A report in the government-run newspaper *The Herald* stated that “[t]he illegal settlement near Snake Park was demolished amid minor resistance from disgruntled settlers”, as part of the “clean-up campaigns by the police aimed at restoring the status of the cities and towns”.²² Residential stands at Snake Park allocated under Operation Garikai (Better Life), which was announced five weeks after the evictions began, were prevented from being completed as late as June 2007. In addition, it was reported that “only civil servants from the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Zimbabwe National Army, Air Force and Zanu PF activists and other government departments benefited” from these allocations.²³ Another 2007 article indicates that many victims of Operation Murambatsvina currently reside in settlements at Snake Park and Hopley Farm.²⁴

¹⁸ ‘Zimbabwe: Losing Candidate Tries to Bar Announcement of Results’ 2008, *AllAfrica Global Media*, source: *The Herald*, 2 April <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804020009.html> – Accessed 10 February 2011 – Attachment 18

¹⁹ ‘Zimbabwe: UMP Ravaged By Political Violence’ 2008, *AllAfrica Global Media*, source: *The Zimbabwe Guardian*, 14 May <http://allafrica.com/stories/200805140196.html> – Accessed 10 February 2011 – Attachment 8

²⁰ Zimbabwe Peace Project 2007, ‘Human Rights Monitoring Report’, Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website, September <http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/uploaddocs/September%2007%20HRMR.doc> – Accessed 14 February 2011 – Attachment 19

²¹ ‘No justice for the victims of forced eviction’ 2006, Amnesty International, AFR 46/005/2006, 8 September – Attachment 20; ‘ZIMBABWE: Picking up the pieces after Operation Cleanup’ 2005, *IRIN News*, 17 August <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=55890> – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 21; McVeigh, T. 2007, ‘Secret lives: Zimbabwe is a country in free fall’, *The Observer*, 8 July – Attachment 22; ‘ZIMBABWE: Govt launches another clean-up operation’ 2006, *IRIN News*, 16 June <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=59357> – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 23

²² ‘Zimbabwe: President Backs Clean-Up’ 2005, *AllAfrica Global Media*, source: *The Herald*, 29 May <http://allafrica.com/stories/200505310290.html> – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 24

²³ ‘Mugabe made us into refugees’: Murambatsvina victims talk about living in Zimbabwe today’ 2007, This is Zimbabwe blog, Sokwanele Civic Action Support Group website, 21 June <http://www.sokwanele.com/thisiszimbabwe/archives/593> – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 25

²⁴ Chimhete, C. 2007, ‘Secret burials as council charges escalate’, *The Standard*, 14 January <http://www.thestandard.co.zw/local/10840.html> – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 26

6. Deleted.

7. Is there any information on an MDC rally being held on 28 June 2007 at Highfields Zimbabwe Grounds, where prior to the rally a truckload of ZANU PF youths escorted by police beat up the attendees with sticks and iron bars?

No information was located on an MDC rally held at Zimbabwe Grounds in Highfields on 28 July 2007.

A number of reports indicate that a large MDC rally was scheduled to be held at Zimbabwe Grounds in Highfields on 17 or 18 February 2007. Despite a High Court order inhibiting police from interfering, an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 people were prevented from attending the rally by “approximately 1,000 riot police, many of whom were reportedly members of ZANU-PF youth brigades”. Police beat demonstrators at random with batons and truncheons, and used water cannons and teargas to disperse the crowd. The violent clashes resulted in at least 20 to 50 people being seriously injured and between 60 and 120 MDC members and supporters being arrested.²⁵ Some reports suggest that three people may have been killed in the violence.²⁶

Following this event, the police subsequently imposed a three-month ban on political rallies and demonstrations under Section 27 of the Public Order and Security Act, apparently in response to the “violence, looting and destruction of property”.²⁷ An informal curfew was also imposed in the suburbs of Harare, and roadblocks were set up in surrounding areas. Opposition members and supporters were reportedly beaten and tortured by security forces during the ban period.²⁸ Varying reports state that the ban was lifted on either 27 or 28 June 2007.²⁹

²⁵ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 2b – Attachment 2; ‘Rallies ban lifted’ 2007, The Kubatana Trust and NGO Network Alliance Project website, 29 June http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/media/070629misaz.asp?sector=MEDIA&year=2007&range_start=151 – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 27; ‘Protest ban in Zimbabwe capital’ 2007, *BBC News*, 21 February – Attachment 28; Amnesty International 2008, ‘Annual Report 2008 – Zimbabwe’, 28 May – Attachment 4; Chinaka, C. 2007, ‘Harare police use water cannon on marchers’, IOL website, 19 February – Attachment 29; Baxter, D. 2007, ‘Zimbabwe Riot Police Run Amok, Streets Empty as MDC Rally is Stopped’, Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website, 18 February http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/print.php?art_id=1777 – Accessed 14 July 2010 – Attachment 30

²⁶ ‘Highfield Turned Into Battlefield’ 2007, ChangeZimbabwe.com website, 18 February http://changezimbabwe.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=332&Itemid=2 – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 31; ‘Three Feared Dead as Police Ignore Court Order, Break Up MDC Rally’ 2007, *BBC Monitoring Service*, source: newzimbabwe.com, 19 February – Attachment 32

²⁷ ‘Rallies ban lifted’ 2007, The Kubatana Trust and NGO Network Alliance Project website, 29 June http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/media/070629misaz.asp?sector=MEDIA&year=2007&range_start=151 – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 27; Human Rights Watch 2008, ‘World Report 2008 – Zimbabwe’, January – Attachment 5; Amnesty International 2008, ‘Annual Report 2008 – Zimbabwe’, 28 May – Attachment 4

²⁸ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 2b – Attachment 2; Baxter, D. 2007, ‘Zimbabwe Riot Police Run Amok, Streets Empty as MDC Rally is Stopped’, Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website, 18 February http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/print.php?art_id=1777 – Accessed 14 July 2010 – Attachment 30

²⁹ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 2b – Attachment 2; ‘Rallies ban lifted’ 2007, The Kubatana Trust and NGO Network Alliance Project website, 29 June http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/media/070629misaz.asp?sector=MEDIA&year=2007&range_start=151 – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 27

On 11 March 2007 a further 50 opposition members and civil society activists were arrested in Highfield for attempting to hold a prayer meeting in protest against the ban on demonstrations, including MDC faction leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara. Those arrested were beaten by police and youth militia with batons, suffering serious injuries including fractured skulls.³⁰ One MDC supporter was shot dead by riot police after allegedly threatening a group of officers.³¹ Another activist died from severe spinal cord injuries sustained whilst detained.³²

Attachments

1. 'Zimbabwe: Escalating Violence in 2007' 2007, *States News Service*, 7 December.
2. US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March.
3. UK Home Office 2007, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, 16 July.
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11. 'MDC youth member flees Zanu PF threats' 2010, Movement for Democratic Change website, 19 February http://www.mdc.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=213:mdc-youth-member-flees-zanu-pf-threats-&catid=41:top-headlines – Accessed 14 February 2011.

³⁰ Amnesty International 2008, 'Annual Report 2008 – Zimbabwe', 28 May – Attachment 4; Human Rights Watch 2008, 'World Report 2008 – Zimbabwe', January – Attachment 5; US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 1c – Attachment 2; UK Home Office 2007, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, 16 July, p.4 – Attachment 3

³¹ 'Zimbabwe opposition leader behind bars' 2007, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/zimbabwe-opposition-leader-behind-bars/2007/03/12/1173548054421.html?page=fullpage> – Accessed 11 February 2011 – Attachment 33

³² 'Another MDC activist dies following police beatings' 2007, Association of Zimbabwean Journalists in the UK website, 22 March http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=2000&cat=1 – Accessed 26 March 2007 – Attachment 34

12. 'Zanu-PF Councillor hires militia to disperse constitution meetings' 2010, *The Daily News – Zimbabwe*, 4 March. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX240730)
13. Sibanda, T. 2009, 'MDC supporters attacked by ZANU PF militia in Uzumba', *SW Radio Africa*, 8 December
<http://www.swradioafrica.com/news081209/mdcsupporters081209.htm> – Accessed 10 February 2011.
14. Chimhete, C. 2009, 'Violence intensifies after MDC-T pull out', *The Zimbabwe Standard*, 31 October. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX235841)
15. Guma, L. 2009, 'Zimbabwe: MDC activist brutally assaulted', *SW Radio Africa*, 22 July. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX230992)
16. 'Zimbabwe: Political violence growing in rural areas', *IRIN News*, 27 July. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX230986)
17. 'Opposition claims eight more supporters murdered in past three days' 2008, *Zim Online*, 14 May. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX200025)
18. 'Zimbabwe: Losing Candidate Tries to Bar Announcement of Results' 2008, *AllAfrica Global Media*, source: *The Herald*, 2 April <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804020009.html> – Accessed 10 February 2011.
19. Zimbabwe Peace Project 2007, 'Human Rights Monitoring Report', Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website, September
<http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/uploaddocs/September%2007%20HRMR.doc> – Accessed 14 February 2011.
20. 'No justice for the victims of forced eviction' 2006, Amnesty International, AFR 46/005/2006, 8 September. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX162249)
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28. 'Protest ban in Zimbabwe capital' 2007, *BBC News*, 21 February. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX172046)
29. Chinaka, C. 2007, 'Harare police use water cannon on marchers', IOL website, 19 February. (CISNET Zimbabwe CX171885)
30. Baxter, D. 2007, 'Zimbabwe Riot Police Run Amok, Streets Empty as MDC Rally is Stopped', Association of Zimbabwe Journalists website, 18 February
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<http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/zimbabwe-opposition-leader-behind-bars/2007/03/12/1173548054421.html?page=fullpage> – Accessed 11 February 2011.
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http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=2000&cat=1 – Accessed 26 March 2007.