



Australian Government

Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE37880 – Zimbabwe
Prison Service – ZANU-PF – Movement
for Democratic Change – Prisoners

12 January 2011

1. Please provide information relating to the ZPS generally, particularly in relation to its politicisation and alignment with the ZANU-PF regime.

The Zimbabwe Prison Service (ZPS) is a paramilitary organisation under the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, although it is not part of the public service.¹ According to the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs website, the ZPS is headed by Prison Services Commissioner Paradzai Zimondi, who “provides superintendence, direction and control of the organization and further provides the department with an upward link with the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs”. Policy issues and directions are passed from the Prisons National Headquarters in Harare to the prisons via four Regional Headquarters in Mashonaland, Matabeleland, Midlands/Masvingo and Manicaland.²

Prison Services Commissioner Paradzai Zimondi, also chairman of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, is a former Major General in Zimbabwe’s military. Human Rights Watch argues that his appointment to the ZPS was part of ZANU-PF’s attempts to retain the loyalty of the military, by giving military leaders prestigious jobs.³ In March 2009 *The Washington Times* reported that personal sanctions imposed by the United States on Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe’s 200 closest advisors included Zimondi.⁴

According to *The Guardian*, supporting the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is viewed in the ZPS “as an act of betrayal” and, as a result, many prison officers “pander to Zanu-PF officials”. After becoming an MDC supporter in 2000, prison officer Shepherd Yuda was “beaten, imprisoned, suspended from work and, after successfully contesting the suspension in court, demoted to a low-ranking job on half-pay”. In 2007, Yuda began filming a documentary on the horrific living conditions and ill-treatment of inmates in Zimbabwe’s prisons. In the process he uncovered “sinister evidence of how

¹ ‘The Zimbabwe Prison Service’ 2009, Paradzai Zimondi’s Death Prisons website, March <http://www.zimondi.com/the-zimbabwe-prison-service/> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 1

² ‘Zimbabwe prison service’ (undated), Zimbabwe Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs website http://www.justice.gov.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58%3Azimbabwe-prison-service&catid=35%3Adepartments&Itemid=55 – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 3

³ Human Rights Watch 2009, *Diamonds in the Rough: Human Rights Abuses in the Marange Diamond Fields of Zimbabwe*, June, p.12 – Attachment 4

⁴ ‘Zimbabwe jail likened to death camps’ 2009, *The Washington Times*, 31 March <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/31/zimbabwe-prison-compared-to-death-camps/?page=1> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 5

Mugabe's government rigged the votes of its own employees".⁵ In the lead up to the 2008 presidential run-off election, Yuda filmed prison officers being forced to complete postal ballots in the presence of ZANU-PF activists.⁶ Another source within the ZPS similarly revealed that officers at Harare Remand Prison were threatened with loss of employment if they refused to complete postal votes in the presence of the Senior Assistant Commissioner.⁷

In addition, Human Rights Watch reports that ZPS officers were involved in ZANU-PF's campaign of violence and repression which targeted MDC members and supporters during the 2008 elections. The Joint Operations Command (JOC) which orchestrated the violence was led by ZANU-PF officials and included the Prison Services Commissioner. At least five senior ZPS officers were deployed to various provinces to administer ZANU-PF's Operation Makavhoterapapi (Where Did You Put Your Vote?) under the JOC's command.⁸

The Zimbabwean similarly reported in 2008 that the ZPS "sent senior prison officers to provinces throughout the country to oversee Operation Makavhotera Papi terror campaign", which targeted MDC supporters. According to a source within the ZPS, senior "[prison] officers, many of whom are also war veterans, have been using prison resources in a bid to re-educate people into voting for Zanu (PF)". Senior officers reportedly beat members of the public as well as prisoners to demonstrate how MDC supporters would be treated. The source also stated that promotion within the ZPS was linked to involvement in 'ZANU-PF brutality'.⁹

A July 2010 *Afrik-News* article claims that the security officers in the ZPS who assisted ZANU-PF in the 2008 presidential election and 'terror campaign' benefited from a 'suspicious' deal which awarded them US\$150 in allowances. A source in the Zimbabwe Republic Police stated that "[a]ll the Prison officers in the security department were awarded the money. They are the ones who participated in the 2008 violence...Most of these people who are in this department are Zanu (PF) agents and not real prison officers". A source within the ZPS similarly argued that security officers "don't want us to discuss MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) issues but they discuss their Zanu (PF) issues openly. When you discuss issues related to the MDC, they tell us we are talking politics but when one discusses Zanu (PF) issues, no one challenges that".¹⁰

⁵ Lewis, P. 2008, 'I was being loyal to a government that was not loyal to its people', *The Guardian*, 5 July <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/05/zimbabwe1> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 6

⁶ Campbell, D. and Lewis, P. 2008, 'Exclusive: secret film reveals how Mugabe stole an election', *The Guardian*, 4 July <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/04/zimbabwe1?INTCMP=SRCH> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 7

⁷ 'Zimbabwe Prison Service in terror campaign' 2008, *The Zimbabwean*, 7 June http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13272:zimbabwe-prison-service-in-terror-campaign&catid=31:top%20zimbabwe%20stories&Itemid=66 – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 8

⁸ Human Rights Watch 2008, 'Bullets for Each of You': *State-Sponsored Violence since Zimbabwe's March 29 Elections*, June, pp.1-2, 14, 21 – Attachment 9

⁹ 'Zimbabwe Prison Service in terror campaign' 2008, *The Zimbabwean*, 7 June http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13272:zimbabwe-prison-service-in-terror-campaign&catid=31:top%20zimbabwe%20stories&Itemid=66 – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 8

¹⁰ Chimora, A. 2010, 'Zimbabwe: Zanu Pf agents in uniformed forces get double salaries', *Afrik-News*, 20 July <http://www.afrik-news.com/article17998.html> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 10

Furthermore, in 2001, 16 prison officers were indefinitely suspended from the ZPS for their alleged active membership of the MDC, which they denied. It was reported that after being visited by Police Internal Security Intelligence officers, the officers received a letter stating “[t]he above named member is to be placed on interdiction from duty on half pay with effect from 27 September 2001 in terms of Section 6 (1) of the Prisons (Staff) (Appointment and Discharge) Regulations, 1984 for allegations of being an active member of the opposition political party MDC”.¹¹

2. Please provide information relating to treatment of MDC prisoners within the ZPS.

There are 42 prisons in Zimbabwe with an official capacity of 17,000 inmates. Estimates by local NGOs and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at the end of 2009 put the prison population at between 12,000 and 14,000 inmates, a significant decline from the NGO estimate of 35,000 in 2008.¹²

The US Department of State reported in March 2010 that prison officials interrupted and prevented court-ordered medical examinations and postponed the release of a number of MDC members and activists “who were abducted and tortured by state security agents” prior to being imprisoned. The release from prison of MDC-T Transportation Manager Pascal Gwezere was similarly delayed by prison officials in late 2009.¹³ One of the MDC members referred to by the US Department of State is Chris Dhlamini, Director of Security for the MDC. Dhlamini issued a statement in April 2009 claiming that he was also “subjected to extreme forms of torture to extract false information and confessions” in Goromonzi Prison Complex in late 2008.¹⁴

In addition, as mentioned previously, prison officer and MDC supporter Shepherd Yuda was beaten, imprisoned, and demoted after his political affiliation became known by the ZPS.¹⁵ Yuda’s subsequent undercover documentary on prisons entitled ‘Hell Hole’ included footage of MDC General Secretary Tendai Biti in leg irons.¹⁶ The film also exposed the harsh and unsanitary prison conditions in Zimbabwe. The US Department of State reports that although improved since the release of the film, prison conditions remain life threatening, while prison officers continue to beat and abuse prisoners.¹⁷

¹¹ ‘ZIMBABWE: Prison service suspends 16 alleged MDC supporters’ 2001, *IRIN News*, 8 October <http://irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=27538> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 11

¹² US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 1c – Attachment 2

¹³ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 1b, 1c – Attachment 2; Guma, L. 2009, ‘Zimbabwe: Prison Service Fails to Produce Activists for Remand Court Hearing’, AllAfrica Global Media, source: *SW Radio Africa*, 23 January <http://allafrica.com/stories/200901230842.html> – Accessed 11 January 2011 – Attachment 12

¹⁴ Dhlamini, K. E. 2009, ‘Chris Dhlamini – MDC Security Chief’s ordeal at the hands of Mugabe’s men’, DerKeiler website, source: *Zim Daily*, 22 April <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.zimbabwe/2009-04/msg00030.html> – Accessed 11 January 2011 – Attachment 13

¹⁵ Lewis, P. 2008, ‘I was being loyal to a government that was not loyal to its people’, *The Guardian*, 5 July <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/05/zimbabwe1> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 6

¹⁶ Campbell, D. and Lewis, P. 2008, ‘Exclusive: secret film reveals how Mugabe stole an election’, *The Guardian*, 4 July <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/04/zimbabwe1?INTCMP=SRCH> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 7

¹⁷ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March, Section 1c – Attachment 2; UK Home Office 2010, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, 24 September, pp.15-16 – Attachment 14

On the other hand, former prisoner Joseph Musonza reported to *The Washington Times* in 2009 that “while it was rare for prisoners to be beaten or physically abused by guards, many died of neglect”. Musonza claimed that MDC members were often scared into silence by the threat of imprisonment, as “[p]eople know that once you are inside, no one in the system cares if you live or die.”¹⁸

Attachments

1. ‘The Zimbabwe Prison Service’ 2009, Paradzai Zimondi’s Death Prisons website, March <http://www.zimondi.com/the-zimbabwe-prison-service/> – Accessed 10 January 2011.
2. US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Zimbabwe*, 11 March.
3. ‘Zimbabwe prison service’ (undated), Zimbabwe Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs website http://www.justice.gov.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58%3Azimbabwe-prison-service&catid=35%3Adepartments&Itemid=55 – Accessed 10 January 2011.
4. Human Rights Watch 2009, *Diamonds in the Rough: Human Rights Abuses in the Marange Diamond Fields of Zimbabwe*, June.
5. ‘Zimbabwe jail likened to death camps’ 2009, *The Washington Times*, 31 March <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/31/zimbabwe-prison-compared-to-death-camps/?page=1> – Accessed 10 January 2011.
6. Lewis, P. 2008, ‘I was being loyal to a government that was not loyal to its people’, *The Guardian*, 5 July <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/05/zimbabwe1> – Accessed 10 January 2011.
7. Campbell, D. and Lewis, P. 2008, ‘Exclusive: secret film reveals how Mugabe stole an election’, *The Guardian*, 4 July <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/04/zimbabwe1?INTCMP=SRCH> – Accessed 10 January 2011.
8. ‘Zimbabwe Prison Service in terror campaign’ 2008, *The Zimbabwean*, 7 June http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13272:zimbabwe-prison-service-in-terror-campaign&catid=31:top%20zimbabwe%20stories&Itemid=66 – Accessed 10 January 2011.
9. Human Rights Watch 2008, *‘Bullets for Each of You’: State-Sponsored Violence since Zimbabwe’s March 29 Elections*, June.

¹⁸ ‘Zimbabwe jail likened to death camps’ 2009, *The Washington Times*, 31 March <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/31/zimbabwe-prison-compared-to-death-camps/?page=1> – Accessed 10 January 2011 – Attachment 5

10. Chimora, A. 2010, 'Zimbabwe: Zanu Pf agents in uniformed forces get double salaries', *Afrik-News*, 20 July <http://www.afrik-news.com/article17998.html> – Accessed 10 January 2011.
11. 'ZIMBABWE: Prison service suspends 16 alleged MDC supporters' 2001, *IRIN News*, 8 October <http://irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=27538> – Accessed 10 January 2011.
12. Guma, L. 2009, 'Zimbabwe: Prison Service Fails to Produce Activists for Remand Court Hearing', AllAfrica Global Media, source: *SW Radio Africa*, 23 January <http://allafrica.com/stories/200901230842.html> – Accessed 11 January 2011.
13. Dhlamini, K. E. 2009, 'Chris Dhlamini – MDC Security Chief's ordeal at the hands of Mugabe's men', DerKeiler website, source: *Zim Daily*, 22 April <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.zimbabwe/2009-04/msg00030.html> – Accessed 11 January 2011.
14. UK Home Office 2010, *Operational Guidance Note – Zimbabwe*, 24 September.