



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 August 2016

Information relating to the Chipangano group.

Footnote 138 in a report published by Human Rights Watch refers to the Chipangano as follows:

“ZANU-PF Chipangano is a youth militia group that operates in the Mbare suburb of Harare. The group was largely responsible for spearheading the ZANU-PF 2008 election campaign in Mbare. Chipangano has been accused by local human rights groups of waging a terror campaign against MDC supporters in Mbare since 2003.” (Human Rights Watch (8 November 2008) *“Our Hands Are Tied”: Erosion of the Rule of Law in Zimbabwe*, p.39)

In a section titled “Police Complicity in ZANU-PF Abuses” this report states:

“On June 25, 2008, 63 Mbare families were evicted from their homes by the Chipangano militia. The militia told them that they were being evicted because they supported the MDC in the March 29 elections. On June 26 three family members went to file a report at Matapi police station in Mbare. When the report was made, the officer-in-charge allegedly first phoned the ZANU-PF youth leader in the area before directing complainants to go and meet with the youth leader at Mudyadzo Bar in Shawasha Flats, Mbare.¹⁴¹ One of those bringing a complaint told Human Rights Watch:

When the Chipangano youths came at Mudyadzo, they said, ‘We now want to teach you that we are above the police—they can do nothing about us, they cannot help you.’ Then they proceeded to beat us using hosepipes, iron bars, knobkerries and sjamboks from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., after which they let us go. They remained in their office laughing. We went to hospital and reported the assault, this time, at Mbare Police Station. Since that day no arrests have been made and yet I know the people who evicted us and beat us and these people are also known to the police in Mbare. Even now, ZANU-PF activists are staying in our homes from where they evicted us.

A police officer based in Harare told Human Rights Watch that police had no control over ZANU-PF youths operating in Harare.” (ibid, p.40)

A report from the formerly UK-based but now defunct SW Radio Africa states:

“A ZANU PF gang in the Mbare high-density area of Harare has continued to victimize residents suspected of being MDC-T supporters, amidst allegations that the police are siding with the perpetrators. The MDC-T losing candidate for Mbare, Eric Knight, told SW Radio Africa that at least a dozen more families were seeking shelter at the party headquarters Thursday, saying they had been evicted by the ZANU PF Chipangano gang and were now

homeless.” (SW Radio Africa (8 August 2013) *Zimbabwe: Police Take No Action As MDC-T Evictions Continue in Mbare*)

This report also states:

“The victims say the police in Mbare have been notified but no action has been taken to stop this illegal action by Chipangano, a gang with a long history of terrorizing residents in Mbare and other suburbs of Harare.” (ibid)

A report from SW Radio Africa states:

“The MDC-T MP for Sunningdale in Harare, Margaret Matienga, says she was horrified that the terror group Chipangano brutally attacked her party supporters, including children, in the presence of armed police. ‘They just stood there and watched helplessly as Chipangano waged criminal terror on innocent civilians. One wonders what would have happened if the opposite happened. All the police cells would now be packed with MDC-T supporters,’ Matienga said. Nine MDC-T members ended up needing hospital treatment on Saturday after the Jim Kunaka led terror group stormed a rally in Sunningdale and beat up people with logs and iron bars. Kunaka has been implicated in a number of the groups’ murders, beatings and torture cases, but none of the crimes linked to the group have ever been investigated by the police so far.” (SW Radio Africa (13 March 2012) *Zimbabwe’s MDC concerned over escalating attacks on party supporters*)

An IRIN news report states:

“The Chipangano is alleged to be a ZANU-PF-supporting youth militia in Mbare. They are said to extort money from vendors and public transport operators with apparent impunity. ‘I know that the terror group is being used by my political rivals in ZANU-PF who do not want me and the MDC to get credit for developing the constituency. Community members are the real victims,’ Denga said. Mbare has been affected by water-borne disease in recent years, but after five boreholes were drilled, the Chipangano took control of two and vandalized the other three, Denga reported. They have hoisted Mugabe’s party’s flag over the two working boreholes, where they provide water to residents with ZANU-PF membership cards. Those without are charged \$1 per bucket.” (IRIN (11 October 2012) *The politics of suffering*)

See also IRIN News report which states:

“Bustling Mupedzanhamo, where shoppers can buy anything from hairpins to refrigerators, has for many years provided traders with a small income and an escape from the country’s economic woes, but recently groups of youths have descended on the market, brandishing letters they claim authorise them to eject any trader that they believe is opposed to the black empowerment programme. Miriam Raradza, 38, a stallholder and widow living in the populous nearby suburb of Mbare, was forced out of the market last month after they accused her of belonging to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai, the prime minister in a coalition government formed in early 2009. ‘They accused me and other stall owners of belonging to the MDC, which they said is opposed to indigenisation, and said we should stop doing business at Mupedzanhamo. Hundreds of people who are known MDC supporters have been booted out

since the beginning of this year,' Raradza told IRIN. She said members of the Chipanganos - a gang with a reputation for violence, based in Mbare and thought to have links with President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party - had hijacked the stalls and, in some cases, also the goods that their victims were selling, she said." (IRIN (14 October 2011) *Some are more indigenous than others*)

An SW Radio Africa report states:

"Police in Harare have launched a city-wide crackdown on a gang linked to the notorious Chipangano group, arresting more than 300 people since Wednesday. The operation has targeted suspected members of the 'mandimbandimba', who pose as touts and rank marshals at bus ranks across the city and use intimidation and harassment to force minibus drivers to hand over 'protection fees'." (SW Radio Africa (13 September 2012) *Zimbabwean police arrest 300 members linked to ZANU PF youth militia gang*)

This report also states:

"The group has been repeatedly linked to the ZANU PF youth militia-fronted Chipangano gang, who have taken over control of market stalls and bus ranks across the capital. ZANU PF has previously turned a blind eye to the terror tactics employed by the youth gang, who have led a campaign of violence against Harare residents and perceived opposition supporters for years. But the gang is understood to be out of control and Muchemwa reported Thursday that Harare residents are questioning why the usually partisan police are clamping down on the gang." (ibid)

An article from South African newspaper the Mail & Guardian states:

"Zanu-PF had deployed the youth militias to seize control of rebellious urban centres, but now the party appears to be losing control of the gangs, which fund themselves through extortion. It began in Harare, where the Chipangano group took over the capital's largest township, Mbare, in the name of Zanu-PF. The outfit quickly dismantled the structures of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in the township and helped to increase the numbers at Zanu-PF rallies by shutting down markets to force people to attend meetings. For a while it worked for Zanu-PF; the MDC was being pushed out of the areas it won in elections and senior party officials also took a cut from the militia's extortionist activities. But now Chipangano has spun out of Zanu-PF's control and the party is scrambling to try to crush it. The group has engaged in clashes with soldiers and police over control of taxi ranks and markets. The fights have been a major embarrassment to Zanu-PF, but the party appears clueless about how it can regain control of the militias." (Mail & Guardian (5 October 2012) *Zimbabwean authorities reportedly unable to contain "violent" militia gangs*)

An article from the Zimbabwe Independent states:

"Sources in the party claim ZANU-PF has deployed militia groups coordinated by sitting Members of Parliament and other officials in order to thwart the MDC formations attempts to woo rural voters. 'ZANU-PF has redeployed youth militia groups countrywide which includes Chipangano in Harare, Top Six in Chinhoji, Jochomondo in Hurungwe, Jambanja in Maramba-Pfungwe

and the recently established Al-Shabab in Kwekwe,' ZANU-PF sources said. 'The groups are coordinated by ZANU-PF legislators anxious to block the two MDC formations from reaching out to the masses by intimidating them or instilling fear in the electorate to shun the MDCs.' According to a source who runs a flea market in Mbare, Chipangano has restarted its intimidation tactics by going around the community singing revolutionary songs and issuing threats. 'The group goes around the community singing, dancing and blocking traffic. The police do not even stop them because they are from ZANU-PF. They have not yet attacked anyone but their behaviour reminds us of 2008,' said the source." (Zimbabwe Independent (31 May 2013) *Sources says Zimbabwean president's party "reactivating terror networks"*)

The US Department of State country report on the events of 2015 in Zimbabwe, in a section titled "Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment", states:

"ZANU-PF supporters--often with tacit support from police--continued to assault and mistreat scores of persons, including civil society activists and known Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) members and their families, especially in Harare neighborhoods and nearby towns. Violent confrontations between youth groups of the ZANU-PF (known as 'Chipangano') and the MDC-T, or the MDC-Ncube (MDC-N) continued, particularly in urban areas. ZANU-PF supporters were the primary instigators of political violence." (US Department of State (13 April 2016) *2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe*, p.4)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

Human Rights Watch (8 November 2008) *"Our Hands Are Tied": Erosion of the Rule of Law in Zimbabwe*
<https://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/zimbabwe1108/zimbabwe1108web.pdf>
(Accessed 24 August 2016)

IRIN (11 October 2012) *The politics of suffering*
<http://www.irinnews.org/report/96514/zimbabwe-politics-suffering>
(Accessed 24 August 2016)

IRIN (14 October 2011) *Some are more indigenous than others*
<http://www.irinnews.org/report/93965/zimbabwe-some-are-more-indigenous-others>
(Accessed 24 August 2016)

Mail & Guardian (5 October 2012) *Zimbabwean authorities reportedly unable to contain "violent" militia gangs*
<https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/#/product/80172446>
(Accessed 24 August 2016)

This is a subscription database

SW Radio Africa (8 August 2013) *Zimbabwe: Police Take No Action As MDC-T Evictions Continue in Mbare*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201308090052.html>

(Accessed 24 August 2016)

This is a subscription database

SW Radio Africa (13 September 2012) *Zimbabwean police arrest 300 members linked to ZANU PF youth militia gang*

<https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/#/product/80168861>

(Accessed 24 August 2016)

This is a subscription database

SW Radio Africa (13 March 2012) *Zimbabwe's MDC concerned over escalating attacks on party supporters*

<https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/api/product-printable/80138238>

(Accessed 24 August 2016)

This is a subscription database

US Department of State (13 April 2016) *2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe*

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252957.pdf>

(Accessed 24 August 2016)

Zimbabwe Independent (31 May 2013) *Sources says Zimbabwean president's party "reactivating terror networks"*

<https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/#/product/80214754>

(Accessed 24 August 2016)

This is a subscription database

Sources Consulted:

All Africa

BBC Monitoring

European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Human Rights Watch

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UNHCR Refworld

US Department of State