



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 2 March 2016

Who are 'the Green Bombers'?

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information on youth militias in Zimbabwe, in a paragraph headed “Green Bombers”, states:

“The Green Bombers, which are also considered to be a youth militia, are referred to as such because of their green military uniforms. Education International notes the existence of a ‘youth militia, known as ‘green bombers’ because of their green uniforms and notorious ruthlessness’. The Green Bombers are also reportedly members of the NYS. In an article, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) states that a Zimbabwean journalist referred to ‘ruling party militias ... as the “Green Bombers”’. The lecturer from Midlands State University indicates that once they had completed camp training, the NYS members continued to wear their uniforms during their activities in the community.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (17 May 2011) *ZWE103749.E – Zimbabwe: Youth militia activities, including those of the National Youth Service (NYS) and of the Green Bombers; training programs and incidents of violence since February 2009; whether youth militia target supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)*)

A report from the UK-based SW Radio Africa states:

“According to the Daily News Kasukuwere told a parliamentary portfolio committee last year that the ‘ward officers’ coordinate government activities in wards. But Zimbabweans know the youth militia as the violent “green bombers” responsible for assaulting MDC supporters. Nearly 7,000 were recruited by the Mugabe regime just weeks before the 2008 presidential runoff between Robert Mugabe and MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai. The youths were implicated in the violent campaign against the MDC and any perceived enemies of ZANU PF, committing brutal acts of assault, torture and murder. This led to a decision by Tsvangirai to pull out of the race, in which Mugabe was controversially declared the winner.” (SW Radio Africa (26 March 2012) *Zimbabwe: Zanu-PF Youth Militia Removed From Government Payroll*)

A report on the website of the Zimbabwean radio station Radio Vop states:

“President Robert Mugabe’s Zanu PF party says it will soon revive the compulsory training of the infamous Border Gezi youth militia, a paramilitary group previously used to harass political foes in past elections, a senior official has said.” (Radio Vop (17 October 2013) *Zim Govt Revises Infamous Youth Militia Training*)

This report also states:

“We had only stopped recruitment, but the centres are there and soon we will start recruitment for the program,’ said Major Tongofa, who is the Chivi north Legislator. The recruitment was stopped after MDC party formations that partnered Zanu PF in the coalition government complained about the program, saying it was propping Zanu PF in elections. The youth militias were accused of raping and maiming suspected MDC party supporters while trainers were accused of sexually assaulting trainee girls. Tongofa said the youth militia training under the national youth service will this time be taken to schools where young boys and girls will be recruited and indoctrinated with the Zanu PF ideology.” (ibid)

An article from the Zimbabwean newspaper Daily News states:

“The national youth service programme, whose graduates were derogatorily dubbed the ‘Green Bombers’ because of the colour of their uniforms, was launched by the late Youth minister Border Gezi in 2001 to ‘transform and empower youths for nation building through life skills training and leadership development’. The programme was, however, discontinued due to lack of funding and after recruits had been widely accused by opposition parties of inciting political violence especially during election time. The government was accused of conscripting desperate and unemployed youths into its controversial national youth service and brainwashing them to become blind and violent zealots of the ruling Zanu PF party. The government denied the charge, saying national youth service was vital to instil discipline and patriotism among youths. The youths want government to enact legislation making it mandatory for all school-leavers to undergo the programme before being enrolled in colleges and universities or being employed by State institutions.” (Daily News (11 August 2014) *Reinstate Green Bombers: Zanu PF youths*)

An article from the UK-based newspaper New Zimbabwe states:

“Many youths have been shunning the NYS training because it is believed to be a Zanu PF programme meant to indoctrinate young minds to learn and follow the ruling party's ideology and values. Zanu PF, while it is supposed to be an involuntary organisation, is known to be violent and intolerant, forcing people to dance to its tune. Many reports by civil society groups and international research organisations have found President Mugabe's party responsible for most of the violence that has characterised local politics since 1980. NYS trainees, known as Green Bombers, are known to harass opposition members, especially villagers.” (New Zimbabwe (29 December 2015) *Zimbabwe: Zhuwao Says Green Bombers Training Will Soon Be Back, Only Fools Can Boycott Such a Valuable Project*)

An article from the independent Zimbabwean newspaper NewsDay states:

“Political analyst Takura Zhangazha hit the nail on the head saying: “The track record of the national youth service isn’t one that has been coherent or organised, but seen as a move to propagandise young Zimbabweans on issues Zanu PF feels are important. The partisan nature of the previous service casts doubts on its significance to improve the livelihoods of the people.” Indeed, previous products of the so-called national service have

served as nothing more than functionaries of Zanu PF. They rose to notoriety when they set up roadblocks and no-go areas in the run-up to elections to stop the opposition from campaigning in rural areas, earning themselves the uncomplimentary nickname of 'Green Bombers', derived from people associating their green uniform and uncouth behaviour with the nasty, repellent, stomach-turning green bottle fly. There has been nothing national about it. They have served as militias answerable to no one else, but Zanu PF. They were drilled into partisanship, making them a mere extension of the ruling party." (NewsDay (4 March 2015) *It's baffling to talk about reviving 'Green Bombers'*)

See also NewsDay article which states:

"Graduates of the National Youth Service have, since inception of the programme in 2001, been accused of unleashing orgies of violence, including murder, abuse and rape, on suspected opposition supporters in the run-up to different elections over the past 10 years. MDC-T spokesperson Obert Gutu slammed Zhuwao's plans and accused Mugabe of 'preparing for a new terror campaign'. 'Green Bombers are the Zanu PF regime's stormtroopers in any election period. They are a grouping of brainwashed young political thugs who are fed on a regular diet of Zanu PF propaganda,' Gutu said. 'The Zanu PF regime knows that it has not got a snowball's chance in hell of winning a free and fair election against the MDC led by Morgan Tsvangirai. Hence, the regime is already preparing for a terror campaign against opposition political parties in the watershed 2018 harmonised elections.'" (NewsDay (30 December 2015) *Zanu PF recruits 80 000 Green Bombers*)

A report from Voice of America states:

"According to Solidarity Peace Trust, a human rights organization, the early government youth policy documents focused on the need to provide the nation's youth, referred to as those aged between 10 and 30 years of age, with a 'sense of national pride and history, as well as skills suitable for employment'. However, the group says, 'contrary to early claims that the youth militia training would not be politically partisan, there is overwhelming evidence that the youth militia camps are aimed at forcing on all school leavers a Zanu PF view of Zimbabwean history and the present. All training materials in the camps have, from inception, consisted exclusively of Zanu PF campaign materials and political speeches. This material is crudely racist and vilifies the major opposition party in the country, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).' Solidarity Peace Trust added that the militia have an ambivalent relationship with law-enforcing agencies including the army and police. 'On the whole, the youth militia have impunity, often working under the direction of war veterans and alongside government agencies in their illegal activities.'" (Voice of America – Zimbabwe (30 December 2015) *Fear Grips Opposition Parties as Zimbabwe Plans to Revive Feared Youth Militia*)

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.

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