



**Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 October 2014**

**Are there any recent reports regarding violent retribution by WOZA member against suspected spies for the police. Any recent report on police corruption. Any information on: - meetings of WOZA in Matshobane Hall, Bulawayo - General behaviour of police towards WOZA meetings (rounding up/arrest?)**

No reports of members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) exacting violent retribution against suspected police spies were found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

An International Crisis Group policy briefing document, in a section titled “Another Violent Election?”, refers to the Zimbabwean police force as follows:

“The police are a broken, largely corrupt force in which most people have little faith.” (International Crisis Group (29 July 2013) *Zimbabwe’s Elections: Mugabe’s Last Stand*, p.6)

The 2014 Bertelsmann Foundation country report for Zimbabwe, in a section titled “Stateness”, states:

“The state monopoly on the use of force is established nationwide, yet problem is not its capacity but its legitimacy. The police and army are highly politicized and act on behalf of only one of the three coalition partners of the Government of National Unity (GNU), the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF).” (Bertelsmann Foundation (January 2014) *Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2014 – Zimbabwe Country Report*, p.6)

This report also states:

“The legal system is differentiated in that law enforcement is a problem when ZANU-PF officials are concerned or with regard to accusations of corruption. The judiciary and the police are highly controlled by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party, and corruption is widespread.” (ibid, p.7)

The US Department of State country report on Zimbabwe for the events of 2013, in a section titled “The Role of the Police and Security Apparatus”, states:

“The police were ill equipped, underpaid, and poorly trained, particularly at the lower levels. Police authorities lacked sufficient fuel and resources, which reduced police effectiveness. Poor working conditions, low salaries, and high rates of dismissal resulted in corruption and high turnover. Implicit assurances

of impunity and a culture of disregard for human rights contributed to police use of excessive force in apprehending and detaining criminal suspects.” (US Department of State (27 February 2014) *2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe*, p.8)

This section of the report also states:

“Security forces were infrequently held accountable for abuses. Senior government officials often dismissed allegations of excessive force and torture, claiming that such actions were necessary to maintain public order. Authorities routinely ignored court orders for investigations into allegations of abuse. ZRP leadership loyal to ZANU-PF stifled, derailed, or did not authorize the efforts of those police who sought to investigate political violence and corruption. Police were reluctant or refused to record reports of politically motivated violence or property destruction perpetrated by ZANU-PF-aligned individuals against political opponents, often blaming the lack of fuel for vehicles for their failure to investigate. The continued politicization of the ZRP’s upper echelons, mostly composed of war veterans loyal to ZANU-PF, made it difficult for lower-ranking police to remain politically impartial or to show support for non-ZANU-PF parties. There were reports of police and army personnel suspected of being sympathetic to the MDC’s or other political parties’ being threatened with demotion, suspension, incarceration, or transfer to remote areas. Most low-ranking personnel lived in ZRP-provided housing, which allowed the monitoring of their votes.” (ibid, pp.8-9)

In “Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government” (paragraph headed “Corruption”) this report states:

“Corruption occurred at every level of the police force but took different forms, depending on position, rank, or location. At the lower levels, corrupt officers extorted nominal to exorbitant fines from the public for varying claimed offenses to augment their low salaries. Armed police routinely erected roadblocks, claiming to be looking for criminals or smuggled goods. In many cases, police arbitrarily seized goods for their own consumption or extracted bribes from commuters. Municipal police in urban areas often raided vendors and confiscated their wares for personal use. No records of the confiscated goods were generally kept, despite this being required by law.” (ibid, p.34)

A 2004 report from the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, in a section titled “Overview”, refers to the detention of WOZA members at Matshobana Hall in Bulawayo as follows:

“Members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), who have frequently been arrested in the past for holding peaceful demonstrations in support of various causes, were again arrested while engaging in a peaceful demonstration in Zimbabwe. On 16 June 2004, 43 WOZA women were detained at Matshobana Hall by CIO agents and ZRP officers in Mpopoma constituency (BULAWAYO Province) where they were scheduled to have a community meeting. Jenni Williams, leader of WOZA, claims that two plain-clothes policemen interrupted the opening session of the meeting wherein the facilitators were discussing project formulation. The officers stopped the meeting and informed the women that they would be charged under POSA. Williams reports that the women were locked up in Mathsobana Hall for about 15 minutes. A group of fully geared anti-riot police then reportedly arrived at

the scene and ordered the women to get into a police Santana vehicle parked outside the hall. The women were taken to Western Commonage Police Station in the Santana in several loads.” (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (9 September 2004) *Political Violence Report June 2004*)

See also 2005 article from the Zimbabwe Independent which states:

“Police in Bulawayo have arrested 40 members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (Woza) for holding a meeting in the high-density suburb of Matshobane in the city. Woza spokesperson, Jenni Williams, confirmed the arrest of the 40 women but said they were arrested before the start of the meeting. ‘The women were arrested on Wednesday while they were still preparing tea before the start of the meeting at Matshobane Community Hall in the western suburbs,’ said Williams.” (Zimbabwe Independent (6 May 2005) *40 women activists arrested in Bulawayo*)

More recent arrests of WOZA members are referred to in the 2013 Amnesty International report for Zimbabwe which, in a section titled “Arbitrary arrests and detentions”, states:

“Throughout the year, activists from the activist organization Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) had their activities routinely disrupted by anti-riot police. Many were beaten and some sustained injuries. At least 200 arrests of WOZA members were recorded.

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On 19 January, 17 activists were arrested in Bulawayo and taken to Donnington Police station where some were beaten and ill-treated. They were later transferred to Bulawayo Central Police station where the abuse continued, before being released without charge.

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On 12 March, WOZA leaders Jennifer Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, who were appearing in court on bail for trumped-up charges of kidnapping and theft, had their bail unjustly revoked by a Bulawayo Magistrate and were remanded in prison. The defence lawyers had asked for postponement of the case as Jennifer Williams was in poor health and had a doctor's letter substantiating her state of health. However, the prosecutor accused her of feigning illness.

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On 27 June, 101 WOZA members were arrested in Bulawayo the morning after a peaceful march and detained for five hours, before being released without charge.” (Amnesty International (23 May 2013) *Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 – Zimbabwe*)

A report from the UK-based SW Radio Africa on the arrest of WOZA activists in July 2012 states:

“Nine activists from the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) group were arrested in Bulawayo on Monday evening while conducting their ‘occupy and demand the draft constitution’ campaign. The women went around the suburbs painting messages on the roads like, ‘Fire Chihuri (the partisan police commissioner); devolution for development; we want separation of powers and we want education.’ Coordinator Magodonga Mahlangu told SW Radio Africa that the women were arrested in two separate locations on the night and held at three different police stations in the city, including Western

Commonage.” (SW Radio Africa (3 July 2012) *9 WOZA activists arrested in Bulawayo*)

A SW Radio Africa report on the arrest of WOZA’s leaders in September 2012 states:

“Tuesday morning saw a group of more than fifty WOZA members march together to the Bulawayo offices of the Joint Operating and Monitoring Committee (JOMIC) to deliver letters of complaint about their treatment at the hands of the police. This followed the indiscriminate arrest of WOZA’s leaders, Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu last week. The pair was arrested after riot police were called in to disrupt a peaceful protest. They were detained at the Bulawayo Central Police Station for the afternoon before being released without charge. Their letter of complaint now threatens to make a ‘citizen’s arrest’ of any riot police officers who violate their commitments by disrupting peaceful protests.” (SW Radio Africa (18 September 2012) *WOZA slams police intimidation as another member arrested*)

A SW Radio Africa report on alleged police violence against WOZA activists in February 2013 states:

“Police on Wednesday violently broke up a peaceful demonstration by the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) and briefly detained eight activists outside Parliament building in Harare. WOZA leader Jenni Williams sent SW Radio Africa a text message saying: ‘8 terribly beaten and tear gassed, me, Magodonga (Mahlangu) and 6 others.’ Our correspondent Lionel Saungweme witnessed the police using ‘sjamboks’ as the WOZA women were being bundled into a police car.” (SW Radio Africa (13 February 2013) *WOZA women beaten & detained after anti-constitution demo*)

See also Amnesty International report on these events which states:

“Eight members of Zimbabwean women’s social justice movement, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), were arrested outside the Zimbabwean parliament in Harare yesterday after they handed out roses and teddy bears during their annual Valentines Day demonstration. The arrests coincided with the announcement by the government that 16 March had been set as a tentative date for the constitutional referendum and that elections could be held some time in July. The women, who included, WOZA leaders Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu were arrested after police fired tear gas at the peaceful demonstration and beat protestors with baton sticks. A man who took a picture of the women being arrested was also arrested. They were later released without charge.” (Amnesty International (14 February 2013) *Zimbabwe’s arrest of peaceful protesters casts doubt on possibility of credible referendum*)

A 2013 update to the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office country report on Zimbabwe states:

“On 29 November, several members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) were beaten in Bulawayo as they peacefully protested under their new ‘right to petition’ in the constitution.” (UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (31

In a section headed "Update: 30 September 2013" this report states:

"Members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) were arrested twice (19 and 20 September) for peaceful demonstrations to mark International Peace Day. The Zimbabwe Republic Police broke up a peace march organised by WOZA and MDC-T youth, with four WOZA members arrested and one beaten up by police." (ibid)

An article from the news archive Zimbabwe Situation states:

"WOZA members intended to deliver a list of demands in accordance with newly enshrined principles in Zimbabwe's constitution, including the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and free expression. Before WOZA members could make their way to parliament, riot police actively obstructed their path and reportedly began to physically assault upwards of 20 individuals. Several WOZA members were also arrested, with reports that Magadonga Mahlangu sustained multiple injuries after being beaten by police batons and thrown into a waiting truck that was then driven to Harare Central Police Station." (Zimbabwe Situation (20 September 2013) *Demonstrators Assaulted during International Day of Peace Event*)

A document published on the Women and Men of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) website states:

"One thousand five hundred Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) members participated in peacefully marching to hand over a list of demands to local and national government on Thursday 19th in Harare and in Bulawayo on Friday 20th September. These peaceful protests were met with the arrest and brief detention of nine members, and over 30 members are nursing wounds inflicted with police baton sticks. Ten of these members had to be taken for medical attention and 3 underwent X-rays to verify level of injury. WOZA leaders, Jenni Williams and Magadonga Mahlangu were arrested on both days in both protests." (Women and Men of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) (20 September 2013) *Police fail PEACE test*)

See also WOZA document referring to the events of November 2013 which states:

"The city had riot or reaction police on most street corners to prevent the start of any protests. Two out of eleven protests arrived at the entrance of Mhlahlandlela without incident but the other eight protest groups were set upon by reaction groups' police who beat members with baton sticks. One protest was stopped and seated in the tarmac by 16 police officers and when there was not clear instruction as to if they were under arrest, member left and continued their peaceful march. Two members have been treated for dislocated knee and grazed elbow from baton stick injuries. Over 50 other members report baton stick injuries but were treated with painkillers. Hundreds of members managed to re- group and made their way to Mhlahlandlela determined to petition as is their right under the constitution. One single police truck seemed to constantly pick up arrested members who were then released and others arrested making the number of arrested hard

to estimate.” (Women and Men of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) (29 November 2013) *Members throng the government( complex in Bulawayo – beaten and dogs deployed)*)

A February 2014 Targeted News Service report states:

“WOZA's founding director, Jenni Williams, submitted a formal petition to parliament in Harare, demanding full implementation of Zimbabwe's constitution, including the right to free primary education. In light of recent corruption scandals, WOZA also demanded increased transparency and accountability for public officials. Thereafter, WOZA leadership reports that at least 10 of its members were physically assaulted by police officers clad in anti-riot gear, accusing them of demonstrating without permission. While violence was not inflicted during today's follow-on demonstrations in Bulawayo, an armed police presence was evident, with the entrances to government buildings cordoned off.” (Targeted News Service (14 February 2014) *Mugabe's Valentine to Women: A Day of Violence*)

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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