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LEGAL AID BOARD

Zimbabwe - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 19 February 2014

Information on the current political situation including any references to widespread violence or internal armed conflict

Commenting on events of 2013, a report published in January 2014 by *Human Rights Watch* states:

“National elections in July ended a five-year power-sharing coalition, retained Robert Mugabe as president, and gave his Zimbabwe African Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) over two-thirds parliamentary majority. Although the election was peaceful, the electoral process had major flaws, including highly partisan statements by the leadership of the security forces, restrictions on and intimidation of journalists and civil society activists, and a skewed voter registration process” (Human Rights Watch (21 January 2014) *World Report 2014 – Zimbabwe*).

This report also states that:

“The security forces have a long history of partisanship on behalf of President Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party. The partisanship of the security forces’ leadership has translated into abuses by these forces against MDC members and supporters, and civil society organizations. Although the new constitution obligates the security forces to be politically neutral and impartial, this constitutional requirement has been disregarded. Beyond the open endorsement of ZANU-PF, in advance of the 2013 elections, security forces intimidated, beat, and committed other abuses against Zimbabweans perceived to be supporting the MDC or critical of the government. Members of the security forces have committed these abuses with almost absolute impunity” (ibid)” (ibid).

A report published in January 2014 by the *Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum* commenting on events of 2013 states:

“Although cases of politically motivated murders, abductions, disappearances, torture and intimidation had been lower this year than in previous years, the overall situation was still far from perfect. There were ongoing serious human rights abuses, including the selective application of the law, massive corruption and tight control of electronic media. The military loomed large and constantly threatened that they would not accept any transfer of power away from Mr Mugabe’s party, ZANU-PF” (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (8 January 2014) *Zimbabwe Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy 2013 Annual Report*, p.3).

In January 2014 a document released by the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* points out that:

“The overall human rights situation in Zimbabwe from October to December has remained stable. Incidents of post-election violence and intimidation have subsided” (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (20 January 2014) *Human Rights and Democracy 2012: Quarterly Update on Zimbabwe, October to December 2013*).

In February 2014 the *Zimbabwe Peace Project* states:

“The month of December witnessed the least violations recorded within a month in 2013 as the levels of politically motivated human rights violations continued on a downward trend throughout the country. There were 213 recorded incidents of human rights violations during the month of December down from the 317 cases witnessed during the month of November with the majority of recorded cases being of discrimination and the politicisation of the distribution of farming inputs” (Zimbabwe Peace Project (13 February 2014) *ZPP Monthly Monitor, December 2013*, p.2).

A *Reuters* article published in January 2014 states:

“Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe appeared in public for the first time in several weeks on Monday to mourn the death of his sister, ending speculation that he may be bed-ridden, in declining health or even dead. The health of Mugabe, who is 89 and has ruled since the former Rhodesia's independence from Britain in 1980, is the hottest news topic for Zimbabwe's 13 million people and its ruling ZANU-PF party. ZANU-PF is struggling to keep a lid on a battle over succession and there are fears it could implode in a bloody factional fight that might even suck in the army if Mugabe dies without resolving the issue” (Reuters (20 January 2014) *Zimbabwe's Mugabe appears in public, ending death rumours*).

In February 2014 *Reuters* notes:

“The European Union suspended sanctions on eight of Zimbabwe's most powerful military and political figures on Monday, but kept them on President Robert Mugabe and his wife, in a cautious easing of policy after last year's disputed elections. The 28-nation EU, which imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe in 2002 in protest at human rights abuses and violations of democracy under Mugabe, has gradually eased sanctions over the last few years to encourage political reform” (Reuters (17 February 2014) *EU eases Zimbabwe sanctions, keeps them on Mugabe*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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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European Country of Origin Information Network

Freedom House

Google

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International Crisis Group

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Minority Rights Group International

Online Newspapers

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Reliefweb

Reuters

United Kingdom Home Office

United States Department of State

UNHCR Refworld

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