

Executive Summary – February 2005

The much publicised March parliamentary elections, whose prospects were, on several occasions cast in doubt, are being stained by mostly government-induced irregularities, with political violence (murder cases included) and associated human rights violations topping the list of these asymmetrical conditions.

In what could perhaps be described as a disturbing electoral larceny, it is alleged that in **Hwange West**, the ruling party has set up 8-member campaign committees tasked with conducting door-to-door late registration of eligible voters who failed to register to vote by February 5.

It is alleged that the list will be sneaked into the current voters' roll. Further allegations are that the 'new voters' have been instructed by Hwange West Zanu PF District Chairperson, GK to plead illiteracy on the polling day in order to be assisted to vote 'correctly'.

There has been a significant increase in cases of intimidation along political grounds, harassment, torture, alleged murders, death threats, rape, assault, arson (at least eight in **Midlands**) and displacements.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) community-based primary monitors' reports can reveal that in such provinces like **Harare-Chitungwiza**, state arms, notably the police and the army are alleged to have committed acts of torture.

Reports also say at least five alleged murders have been committed, with some very disturbing ones having occurred in **Masvingo** province, as highlighted in this summary report.

There has been a shift from intra-party violence that characterized the better part of late last year to inter-party clashes mainly involving the country's major political parties, Zanu PF and the MDC.

The capital province alone 'boasts' of at least 40 incidents of assaults of a political nature, while **Manicaland**, a traditionally volatile province recorded at least 80 disturbances (some involving the army and police) varying from kidnapping, harassment, arson attacks, victimisation and fresh farm invasions.

For example, a ZRP division, in contravention of the Public Order and Security Act, allegedly assaulted three MDC activists for discussing party issues in Birchenough Bridge district of **Buhera South**.

With barely a month left before the predictably watershed plebiscite, fears are that political intolerance may increase after the poll, especially considering that intolerance is increasing by the day.

It was reported that in the same area, CM, an overzealous Zanu PF supporter 'apprehended' GM, after discovering the later was an avid MDC supporter before 'handing him over' to **Birchenough Bridge** police who immediately released him, finding no offence to merit detention.

The police are also reported to have sided with the ruling party's uncontrollable elements in attempting to politically exterminate opposition parties. In **Harare East** for occurrence, members of the ZRP on 20 February reportedly rounded up revelers in a bar and assaulted them after accusing them of attending a rally addressed earlier by the constituency's incumbent MP, TB.

Rape incidents are still commonplace even in urban areas. In **Mabvuku** on the 15th, four Zanu PF youths C, PC, JB and BK allegedly raped TS and CS who they accused of sympathizing with the MDC close to the Mabvuku turn-off road along the Harare-Mutare highway.

The army still finds itself entangled in the web of state-sponsored violence, despite army officials absolving their subordinates of, and distancing themselves from politically motivated violence. In the **St Mary's** constituency on 7 February, it is alleged that a dozen soldiers accosted four MDC fans and exhaustively assaulted them after accusing them of supporting the country's major opposition party.

It is amazing the extent to which politicians can go in desperate cracks at 'winning' support. In **Goromonzi** on the 10th, two unnamed Zanu PF district party officials allegedly forced MC, a known MDC member to attend a ruling party meeting where she was 'convinced' she should feign illiteracy come polling day in order to be 'assisted' to vote 'correctly'.

Arbitrary and unjustified arrests by members of the police still 'decorate' the political landscape in **Midlands**. On 19 February, it is alleged that police details arrested and detained SM over allegations that the said victim had 'mocked' the ruling party in the **Gweru Urban** constituency.

Political intolerance levels in **Gweru Rural** are quite depleted. On 9 February, MN, a suspected MDC supporter was reportedly interrogated by suspected Zanu PF supporters on his motives for entering the Midlands State University premises during the First Lady, GM's visit. It is reported that he was ordered to leave immediately or face the prospects of being arrested.

Also in **Bulawayo East**, on 19 February, TD, an MDC activist was reportedly assaulted by five suspected Zanu PF militias after he was caught putting up campaign posters at Killarney. The said assailants are said to have gone on to burn MDC posters in the process.

Traditional leaders, as has become the 'norm' in recent months, have increasingly been either used by political parties, or victimized. In **Gwanda North (Umzingwane)** on the

3rd of February, an old man SM, who is a kraal head was reportedly harassed and denied the right to purchase maize from GMB because he had allowed members of the MDC to hold a rally in his village.

Looting in the name of politics was reported in **Chivi North** on 22 February. It is said after the President had donated computers at Chekai Secondary School, two computers allegedly went missing and when a search was mounted, the gadgets were allegedly found in the possession of JM, Zanu PF's prospective parliamentary candidate's son who was reportedly assaulted and subsequently hospitalized.

Cases involving violence against women have of late increased, which has effectively put paid to government claims that women are getting increased state protection. In **Bikita West** for example, TK was allegedly beaten to death on 20 February 2005 by her husband MM for confessing that she supported MDC. It is said the matter was reported to the police who are yet to make any arrests.

In **Mashonaland East**, evictions and displacements of perceived MDC supporters are rife, with at least six evictions having taken place in **Marondera**'s farming community. In **Matebeleland North**, there has been an alleged attempt by politicians to suck in the country's essentially apolitical intelligence service, into the vortex of political intolerance and violence.

In an act of inciting political violence and disappearances in **Binga**, a GN at a ward meeting in Sikalenge ward allegedly accused the country's intelligence services of 'failing to do their job of making opposition party members disappear' in support of the ruling party. He allegedly made a public statement that the CIO was now under the MDC's employ.

ZPP calls for all political parties' leaders to practice what they have been preaching of late, that is peaceful campaigns and political tolerance in the run up, during and after the poll.