

## Executive Summary – March 1 2005

As the general plebiscite draws near, reports received from the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) community-based primary monitors indicate that there were steady increases in incidents of human rights abuses in just a fortnight.

Serious incidents of murder and rape have been reported. In **Masvingo**, an alleged murder of a political nature was reported in **Bikita East** on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March in which GM, a 32 year old MDC supporter is said to have been fatally assaulted at Mawere Bottle Store in Masarakufa village (ward 17) by SM, a Zanu PF youth over differing political ideologies.

What disturbs the mind most is that attempts by the said victim's relatives to institute investigations are said to have been foiled by Zanu PF supporters who reportedly threatened to 'deal' with them.

Rape cases ostensibly motivated by political disparities are quite prevalent in the country, particularly in urban areas. In **Mabvuku** for example, information reaching the organisation has it that on 11 March 2005, two girls F and R were reportedly gang-raped by 12 suspected Zanu PF youths who were coming from a ruling party meeting at Circle Cement Stadium.

This apparent notion of carrying out criminal acts with impunity has been the trend since the last general elections.

In a separate incident in Mabvuku, two women are said to have been raped by suspected Zanu PF youths at Guther beer hall.

Generally in most parts of the country, harassment and intimidation are the most common, with death threats topping the list of political intimidations.

In **Bulawayo**, reports say the MDC had its fair share of blame in perpetrating violent acts. In **Lobengula-Magwegwe**, on 12 March, suspected MDC supporters are alleged to have forced JN, of no known political affiliation to paste MDC posters advertising an MDC campaign meeting that was to be held at Enkanyezi Primary School

In what is perhaps the most disturbing incident of intimidation and harassment involving top politicians, Mt Darwin South legislator SK, on 13 March allegedly threatened MDC activists with death, and urged supporters at a rally at Chimumvuri secondary school to exterminate MDC supporters after the March 31<sup>st</sup> election.

Politicisation of food distribution programmes allegedly by ruling party officials is on the increase. Harassment and victimisation inevitably accompany this irregular conduct sometimes by traditional leaders and Grain Marketing Board (GMB) officials. In **Chimanimani**, on 6 March, PG, a geriatric woman (approximately 105 years) of Manyangadze Ward was reportedly barred from receiving her monthly ration of a 50kg

bag of maize and \$35 000 monthly stipend from the Social Welfare by Clr. AM and Major M the Zanu PF Chairman for Ngaone ward for failing to attend Zanu PF meetings, and having a granddaughter who strongly supports the MDC.

In **Matebeleland South, (Gwanda North)** on 9 March 2005, SN was allegedly kidnapped and bundled into a car at Impu School after attending an MDC rally which he had assumed was a development meeting. The alleged kidnappers are said to have dumped him 30km away from his home. The said victim reported the matter to the police who made necessary arrests.

ZPP commends the swift action taken by the police in arresting the suspects.

In **Matebeleland North**, campaigning has reached its peak, with the contesting parties adopting different strategies of campaigning. Both the ruling ZANU PF and MDC have so far held star rallies in Hwange, Nkayi and Lupane constituencies.

In an unsettling trend that has become traditional during election periods, Zanu PF is alleged to have set up torture camps headed by National Service-trained youths at Hwange Colliery 1 & 3, Kamativi and Gwayi River Shopping Centre.

The Colliery 3 base is said to be visibly close to a ZRP post, where it is alleged that the law enforcement agency is reluctant to disband the youth militia.

Reports however indicate that the opposition MDC has penetrated Nkayi constituency which had been traditionally regarded as a no-go area for the opposition party.

ZPP urges all political parties contesting the general elections to refrain from inciting their supporters into engaging in riotous acts likely to disturb peace throughout the country.

Below are incidents of mostly victimization, harassment and intimidation that took place during the reporting period.