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Treatment of people in Zimbabwe who refuse to support Zanu PF including people who may not be open supporters of MDC

In a section titled “Overview” the 2009 *Freedom House* report on Zimbabwe states:

“Following the March balloting, ZANU-PF militias and state security forces began a brutal campaign—known as Operation Makavhoterapapi, or ‘Where did you put your cross’—aimed at punishing and intimidating MDC members and their suspected supporters. In April, police repeatedly raided MDC offices, arresting at least 250 refuge-seekers and sending leaders into hiding. Also that month, state-armed militias reportedly burned hundreds of homes, set up informal detention camps where suspected MDC supporters were tortured, and assaulted MDC activists. By the time the presidential results were released, the MDC was claiming that at least 15 of its activists had been killed and hundreds severely beaten in these attacks.” (Freedom House (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World 2009 – Zimbabwe*)

This section of the report also states:

“The violence escalated in May and June, ahead of the runoff between Mugabe and Tsvangirai. ZANU-PF militias continued to threaten, attack, rob, and kill opposition supporters, including scores of teachers in rural areas, while security forces extended their crackdown to civil society groups and journalists. Several trade unionists, human rights lawyers, and journalists were arrested, as were more than 100 election officials; police also raided church-affiliated organizations in Harare. In June, the government banned nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—including aid agencies—from conducting field work; also that month, Tsvangirai was arrested for the eighth time in three months, along with MDC spokesman Tenda Biti, who was accused of treason and detained for two weeks. The wife of Harare’s MDC mayor was murdered, their home was burned down, and many MDC activists sought refuge in neighboring countries. Hundreds of ZANU-PF supporters—many armed with knives, clubs, and rocks—attempted to prevent a large MDC rally in Harare; previous rallies had been banned. A few days before the June 27 election, Tsvangirai withdrew and took refuge in the Dutch embassy, claiming that postelection violence had killed over 85 MDC supporters and displaced 200,000. ZANU-PF and security officials accused the MDC of instigating the violence and exaggerating its scope. Running unopposed, Mugabe won 85 percent of the vote amid low turnout and many spoiled ballots.” (ibid)

The Introduction of an *Amnesty International* report states:

“People suspected to have voted for the opposition parties, human rights defenders and officials of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) were targeted for beatings, arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary killing, abduction, forced eviction and displacement. The victims also had their homes destroyed, their food reserves plundered, their livestock killed, or were injured so badly that they could no longer earn a living. Few of these cases have ever been investigated as perpetrators appear to enjoy state protection.” (Amnesty International (31 October 2008) *Zimbabwe: Time for accountability* AI Index: AFR 46/028/2008, p.2)

In a section titled “27 June presidential run-off” this report states:

“During the period leading up to the presidential election run-off, the government of Zimbabwe created or allowed conditions of extreme insecurity in the country. Known MDC activists, their family members, sympathizers and other government critics at all levels were at risk of abduction, torture and other ill-treatment and, in some cases, death. In rural areas people suspected to have voted for the MDC in the March election were identified with the help of traditional leaders and local ZANU-PF leaders. Victims had their homes burned down, livestock killed, and granaries plundered or destroyed as a form of punishment.” (ibid, p.7)

See also the *Amnesty International* report which, in the Introduction, states:

“Amnesty International has documented unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings, as well as harassment and intimidation of mainly Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters and human rights defenders in Zimbabwe following elections on 29 March 2008. By the end of May dozens of people had been killed and over 1600 people had been treated for injuries sustained from politically related violence. Human rights groups in Zimbabwe have been unable to document all the cases of violence as their movements have been severely restricted and some of them have fallen victim to the on-going violence. The bulk of the human rights violations have been perpetrated by supporters of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party and members of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWA) (generally known as ‘war veterans’). State security organisations, in particular the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) have been unwilling to act against these perpetrators – allowing them to kill, torture, assault and burn homes and businesses of suspected MDC supporters with impunity. In fact, in some cases authorities have instigated or even directed attacks by these groups.” (Amnesty International (3 June 2008) *Zimbabwe A trail of violence after the ballot*, p.1)

In a section titled “‘War veterans’ compel local young men to join in carrying out acts of violence in Midlands and Mashonaland Central” this report states:

“Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that ‘war veterans’ had threatened local youths, mainly unemployed young men in their late teens and twenties, with violence if they did not join them in carrying out acts of violence and intimidation against alleged MDC supporters. For example, in Mberengwa in April, a group of ‘war veterans’ told young men at Mt. Belingwe farm that their families would lose their plots if they did not join them in beating up suspected MDC supporters in the district. Youths who reportedly refused were labelled MDC supporters and beaten.” (ibid, p.7)

A *Human Rights Watch* news report states:

“Human Rights Watch documented numerous incidents of intimidation, violence and manipulation of the vote by Mugabe’s ruling ZANU-PF party before, during and after the June 27 runoff vote. In the capital, Harare, Human Rights Watch documented incidents of reprisal attacks by ZANU-PF supporters against people who did not go out and vote for Mugabe. In the neighborhoods of Chitungwiza and Westlea, several people told Human Rights Watch that in the early hours of June 28, ZANU-PF supporters went door to door, forcing people to show their fingers for signs of the indelible ink which shows that a person voted. The ZANU-PF supporters took those who did not have ink on their fingers to ZANU-PF bases in the areas and beat them with batons and thick sticks. Others were targeted because their names did not appear on a list compiled by ZANU-PF that showed who had voted in particular polling stations.” (Human Rights Watch (29 June 2008) *African Union: Reject Result in Zimbabwe’s Sham Election*)

This report also states:

“In the days before the vote, ZANU-PF supporters rounded up and beat scores of people in the suburbs of Epworth and Chitungwiza on the outskirts of Harare. Many people sustained serious injuries, including multiple fractures, and were hospitalized at Parirenyatwa hospital in Harare. In one incident, three people told Human Rights Watch that ZANU-PF supporters forced them to attend a rally in Epworth at which former Minister of Mines Amos Midzi spoke. He told people that they would be beaten because they supported the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC); then ZANU-PF supporters beat them with batons and sticks. After the beatings ZANU-PF supporters informed people that if they valued their lives they would go and vote for Mugabe. The ZANU-PF supporters also told the people that they would go door to door after the vote checking peoples’ fingers for the ink. Human Rights Watch received similar reports of threats and intimidation by ZANU-PF supporters in other suburbs in Harare. People informed Human Rights Watch that ZANU-PF had dubbed this new campaign of violence and intimidation ‘Operation Where Is the Ink?’ or ‘Operation Red Finger.’” (ibid)

An article from *The Independent* states:

“A source inside the national electoral commission told *The Independent* that full details of polling patterns throughout the country have been handed to the ruling Zanu-PF party, allowing them to target ward by ward those who failed to vote for Robert Mugabe. The terror campaign that has seen 104 confirmed murders and more than 3,500 beatings of opposition supporters failed to deliver either the turnout or compliance sought by the regime.” (*The Independent* (30 June 2008) *Opposition fears for those who refused to back Zanu*)

In a section titled “Enforced Disappearances and Illegal Detentions” a *Human Rights Watch* report states:

“Since the end of October 2008, ZANU-PF has used the police and other state agencies to arbitrarily arrest and ‘disappear’ more than 40 MDC members and human rights activists. The first wave of abductions and

'disappearances' took place on October 29 when 15 MDC members, including Violet Mupfuranhehwe and her two-year-old child, were abducted from their homes in Banket, Mashonaland West. The assailants in these pre-dawn raids were 12 armed men in civilian clothing claiming to be members of the Law and Order section of the Zimbabwe Republic Police Force. On December 3, Jestina Mukoko, a leading human rights activist and Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) director, was taken from her home in Norton at around 5 a.m. by at least 15 men who identified themselves as working for the Law and Order section of the Zimbabwe Republic Police Force. Zachariah Nkomo, the brother of Harrison Nkomo, a human rights lawyer working for Mukoko's release, was abducted from his home in Rujeko, Masvingo province, around midnight on December 5 by four unidentified men in civilian clothes. On December 8, two of Mukoko's colleagues, Pascal Gonzo and Broderick Takawira, ZPP's provincial coordinator, were abducted by five unidentified men from the ZPP premises in Harare. The men, in civilian clothes, forced Gonzo and Takawira into one of six Mazda Familia sedans outside. Another MDC activist, Ghandi Mudzingwa was abducted by unidentified men in Harare on the same day. Police initially denied holding Mukoko and her colleagues. However, on December 22, lawyers working on the cases learned that the 32 activists were in various police stations in Harare. They had been held by the security forces in unknown detention centers for between two and eight weeks." (Human Rights Watch (22 January 2009) *Crisis without Limits: Human Rights and Humanitarian Consequences of Political Repression in Zimbabwe*, pp.24-25)

In a paragraph headed "All in the cause of the 'revolution'" an *IRIN News* report states:

"Over the last two weeks, the ZANU-PF militia has unleashed violence on the urban population, where opposition support has traditionally been strong. The physical intimidation is backed up by attempts to indoctrinate them, and ZANU-PF has set up "reorientation bases" in schools or clinics in every neighbourhood. Residents are ordered to attend all-night vigils in these bases every night, when they are forced to praise Mugabe and denigrate Tsvangirai. There have been several allegations that the bases are also used to torture and rape supporters of the opposition. Information minister Sikhanyiso Ndlovu dismissed these allegations, saying: 'These are not torture bases, but public workshops at which seasoned politicians explain the history of the country to the people.'" (IRIN News (9 July 2008) *Zimbabwe: Political violence surges after Mugabe assumes presidency*)

See also *IRIN News* report which, in a section titled "Rape as a weapon" states:

"Pishai Muchauraya, the MDC spokesperson for the country's eastern province of Manicaland and newly elected parliamentarian for Makoni South, told IRIN the violence intensified after Mugabe was sworn in as president two days after the vote, on the eve of the African Union summit in Egypt. In many instances, the victims cannot remember the number of people who raped them but it is usually more than 20, and that increases the chances of infecting the victims with HIV/AIDS 'The torture camps are still in place, and since the beginning of July three supporters of the MDC have been murdered by ZANU-PF militia and war veterans at the torture camps. Several women, including a 70-year-old grandmother and a 15-year-old girl, have been gang-

raped, while beatings and displacements continue. People are being forced to donate goats, cattle and women to the bases to avoid being victims.' Rape was being used as a 'deplorable' weapon against those perceived as not supporting ZANU-PF, and 'In many instances, the victims cannot remember the number of people who raped them but it is usually more than 20, and that increases the chances of infecting the victims with HIV/AIDS,' Muchauraya said. 'The perpetrators ... also expose themselves to infection, which could have a significant impact on reversing the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.' Muchauraya said 'the siege' by government supporters was an attempt to change the political culture and thinking in rural areas, and that rather than being dismantled, 'more torture camps are being established.'" (IRIN News (9 July 2008) *Zimbabwe: Political violence surges after Mugabe assumes presidency*)

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

"Mushonga said there was sufficient evidence to prove that the rape of women and girls was also being extensively used as a means of political persecution. He said torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment are normal practices used by the militias during attacks on MDC supporters in the province. 'People live in constant fear. We had the worst number of murder cases here and the militias usually return to remind the surviving relatives of the victims of the consequences of not supporting ZANU PF,' Mushonga said." (SW Radio Africa (30 October 2009) *Zimbabwe: MDC Activists Still Live in Fear of Violence in Mashonaland Central*)

In a section titled "Political Violence against MDC Activists and Perceived ZANU-PF Critics" a *Human Rights Watch* report refers to attacks on persons other than MDC members, stating:

"Ongoing human rights abuses are not restricted to attacks on MDC supporters. On July 26, 2009, police arrested 12 members of the local civil society organization Restoration of Human Rights (ROHR) and three members of the public for taking part in a public protest against Mugabe's three-day national healing and reconciliation program, which, according to the president, was supposed to counter political violence. Further, ZANU-PF officials in the new government of Zimbabwe have refused to drop politically motivated criminal charges (for banditry and trying to recruit people for training in banditry) against 15 human rights and MDC activists whom ZANU-PF loyalists in the government arbitrarily arrested from October through December 2008—after ZANU-PF and MDC factions signed the GPA on September 15, 2008. The 15 activists were unlawfully held in secret detention for periods ranging from two to eight weeks, before being brought to court. These delays are well outside the 48-hour deadline by which arrested persons must be arraigned, as mandated by Zimbabwean law." (Human Rights Watch (31 August 2009) *False Dawn: The Zimbabwe Power-Sharing Government's Failure to Deliver Human Rights Improvements*, pp.5-6)

In a section titled "Attacks and Beatings" a *Human Rights Watch* report refers to attacks on family members of MDC supporters as follows:

"In the days before the June 27 runoff, many MDC activists were abducted and brutally beaten and tortured by ZANU-PF supporters, youth militia and 'war veterans.' Their families were also victimized and subjected to similar

torture and beatings.” (Human Rights Watch (12 August 2008) *“They Beat Me like a Dog”: Political Persecution of Opposition Activists and Supporters in Zimbabwe*, p.17)

An article from *The Times* states:

“The families of Zimbabwe's opposition leaders are being targeted for brutal execution in the latest twist to the brutal electoral violence gripping the country. With Robert Mugabe seeking to stifle the challenge to his power before a presidential run-off vote on June 27 the most recent victim of the his supporters was the wife of the unofficial mayor of Harare. Abigail Chitoro was so badly beaten by the mob that dragged her and her four-year-old son from their home that even her brother-in-law struggled to identify the body. The clothes she was wearing, her distinctive haircut and the blindfold that Zanu (PF) supporters forced her to wear as they firebombed her home gave the only clue to her identity. In the past week the wives of at least three opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) officials have been murdered. The tactic, as President Mugabe and his generals try to avert electoral defeat, has had the desired effect: the husbands have been rendered useless with terror and grief.” (The Times (19 June 2008) *President Mugabe's mobs target opposition families*)

A *SW Radio Africa* report states:

“The past few days have seen a serious escalation of violence, targeting the families of MDC officials. The 78-year-old grandmother of Chamisa, along with his mother and young brother, were severely assaulted when armed soldiers raided their rural homestead in Gutu. The family of MDC MP elect for Mbare in Harare Piniel Denga, was attacked by a group of Zanu-PF supporters at Daybroke resettlement scheme in Chivhu. Several nephews and nieces were force-marched from the family homestead to a torture camp at a place called Chipisa.” (SW Radio Africa (9 June 2008) *Zimbabwe: MDC Families Targeted in Escalation of Violence*)

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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