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IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Zimbabwe: Viva Zimbabwe party, including leadership, structure, objectives, and activities; requirements and procedures to become a member of the party; treatment of youth activists and members of opposition parties since the resignation of President Robert Mugabe in November 2017 (2016-May 2018) [ZWE106107.E]

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1. Viva Zimbabwe Party

Sources indicate that the Viva Zimbabwe party was founded in June 2016 by Acie Lumumba, a former member of ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) (*Daily News* 9 Apr. 2018; eNCA 30 June 2016). Sources indicate that Acie Lumumba is also known as William Mutumanje (*The Herald* 31 July 2017; *NewsDay* 13 Apr. 2017).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor at the University of Johannesburg, who has studied Zimbabwe politics for at least 35 years, indicated that Viva Zimbabwe "seems to have been dissolved, although some members claimed toward the end of November [2017] that its ostensible leader did this without consultation, so they remained" (Professor 27 Apr. 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on the structure of the party and on requirements and procedures to become a member of the party could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1 Leadership

According to Open Parly, "a portal for young Zimbabweans" that aims to "increase citizen engagement" (Open Parly n.d.), Acie Lumumba was expelled from the Viva Zimbabwe party in November 2017 "for berating other opposition parties and also because of his intentions to rejoin Zanu PF" (Open Parly 29 Nov. 2017). An April 2018

article by *Daily News*, a Zimbabwean newspaper, indicates that Lumumba re-joined ZANU-PF, as a supporter, after President Mnangagwa's inauguration [in November 2017] (*Daily News* 9 Apr. 2018). According to the same source, Lumumba has "declared he is out of politics" (*Daily News* 9 Apr. 2018).

A January 2018 Open Parly article names Patson Mashingaidze as Viva Zimbabwe chairman (Open Parly 29 Jan. 2018). The same source had previously indicated that Mashingaidze, Viva Zimbabwe spokesperson, had become interim chairman after Lumumba's expulsion from the party in November 2017 (Open Parly 29 Nov. 2017). 2016 sources name Agency Gumbo as Viva Zimbabwe spokesperson (*The Zimbabwean* 5 July 2016; 263 Chat 4 July 2016) and legal secretary (*The Zimbabwean* 5 July 2016).

1.2 Objectives

According to the news website Newzimbabwevision, Lumumba "accused top Zanu PF officials of using [s]tate security agents to crush dissenting voices" (Newzimbabwevision 1 July 2016). According to sources, Lumumba faced charges for "insulting" and "undermining the authority" of President Mugabe in 2016 (*The Zimbabwean* 5 July 2016; 263 Chat 4 July 2016). British daily newspaper *The Times* reports that Lumumba left ZANU-PF due to corruption and "broken promises," and that Lumumba himself "was accused of corruption, but no charges were laid against him" (*The Times* 18 Nov. 2017). According to eNews Channel Africa (eNCA), a South African television news channel, Lumumba has admitted involvement in corruption while he was part of ZANU-PF (eNCA 30 June 2016).

Daily News indicates that in 2016 Lumumba said that Viva Zimbabwe "is aiming to garner support of youths, who constitute 60 percent of registered voters" (*Daily News* 29 June 2016). According to Open Parly, Mashingaidze indicated in 2017 that

Viva Zimbabwe pledges to facilitate and be the vehicle for young people who have political interest especially in [the] 2018 elections [1] and that it will continue to fight for political space for the young youths who want to be part of the political dispensation.

Viva Zimbabwe said youth political inclusion is at the top of what it stands for and that young people should come and join it as such opposition parties as MDC-T [Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai, an opposition party] are now led by old people and are losing relevance in as far as the needs for the youths are concerned. (Open Parly 29 Nov. 2017)

Founder and former leader Acie Lumumba, as quoted by *Daily News*, indicates that "[t]he reason why we created the platform Viva Zimbabwe was to give young people an opportunity to participate in politics in Zimbabwe whereby they could run for political office even at presidential level. We wanted to see a young president" (*Daily News* 9 Apr. 2018).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the Professor indicated that Lumumba is generally considered to have set up the Viva Zimbabwe party in support of Mnangagwa and against Mugabe (Professor 25 Apr. 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. In a November 2017 interview on Morning Live, a television show broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Lumumba stated that “in order for normalcy and stability to come back,” Mnangagwa “is an inevitability ... to be the president of Zimbabwe: the quicker he gets into office, the quicker everybody else can get back to work” and that Mnangagwa was currently “the best placed man for the job” to lead Zimbabwe (SABC 21 Nov. 2017).

1.3 Activities

The 2016 *Daily News* article indicates that Acie Lumumba “ruled out forging ties with existing parties, saying they have nothing to offer” (*Daily News* 29 June 2016). In the SABC interview, Lumumba indicated that Viva Zimbabwe had two objectives: “make sure young people are registering to vote, make sure young people are running for office. Now in every constituency across the country, you have young people registering to vote, and you have young people standing for office. So our job is done” (SABC 21 Nov. 2017). According to *Daily News*, Lumumba indicated that “his party, Viva Zimbabwe, had served its purpose but was reluctant to comment on whether or not it was participating in the forthcoming elections, saying he is no longer involved” (*Daily News* 9 Apr. 2018).

The January 2018 article by Open Parly indicates that Viva Zimbabwe chairman Patson Mashingaidze “says his party is going to write a very comprehensive letter dubbed Youth Inclusion Document (YID) to President Emmerson Mnangagwa demanding inclusion of youths in government and other state owned institutions” (Open Parly 29 Jan. 2018). According to the same source, “the letter also talks about the need to build more vocational schools in the country that have an ideological empowerment module [,] among other things” (Open Parly 29 Jan. 2018).

2. Treatment of Youth Activists and Members of Opposition Parties

In November 2017, Robert Mugabe was replaced as president by Emmerson Mnangagwa (US 20 Apr. 2018, 1; Human Rights Watch Jan. 2018), his “former deputy” (Human Rights Watch Jan. 2018). According to the US Department of State’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017*, “[d]uring the military intervention in November [2], political opponents of President Emmerson Mnangagwa alleged that military forces arrested, detained, and tortured them at military facilities” (US 20 Apr. 2018, 3). In its *World Report 2018: Events of 2017*, Human Rights Watch notes that “[s]tate media remains partisan in favour of the ruling ZANU-PF party while limiting coverage of opposition political parties” (Human Rights Watch Jan. 2018). According to the March 2018 *Monthly Monitoring Report* by Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), an organization that “seeks to foster dialogue and political tolerance through non-partisan peace monitoring activities,” “[m]embers of the ruling party, at least at a local level, appear to continue to

revel in impunity" and this "situation is likely being exacerbated by the police who appear to be reluctant or hesitant to bring down the full weight of the law against the ruling party's officials or supporters" (ZPP Mar. 2018, 2, 11).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate professor at York University, whose research and publications focus on Zimbabwe politics and who was in Zimbabwe in April 2018 and spoke with "trusted sources in civil society," indicated that

the environment for civil society activism and opposition political party activities has changed significantly since November 2017. The verbal and legal threats have for the most part vanished; President Mnangagwa has repeatedly stated in public that harassment of critics must end and that open political engagement and dialogue is needed; the MDC-Alliance has been able to be more active in public and visible (its leader Nelson Chamisa was invited to the official independence day celebrations this year, for example); and a series of large, well-attended public meetings involving direct criticism of government's record, involving a wide range of political parties including ZANU-PF, are taking place. (Associate Professor 29 Apr. 2018)

International Crisis Group also indicates that "Mnangagwa and his administration have set a different tone, promising to clean up government, reach across political, ethnic and racial lines, strengthen Zimbabwe's democracy and reform its moribund economy," including a focus on the need to "open the political system" (International Crisis Group 31 Jan. 2018). In response to a question about the treatment of opposition parties since Mugabe's resignation, the Professor indicated that opposition groups, including MDC [3] leaders, have had a "relatively easy time" since November 2017 (Professor 25 Apr. 2018). ZPP indicates that in March 2018 "[c]ases of outright political violence were comparatively low," although

[c]ases of political violence and/or intimidation were more prevalent in some provinces than others. Provinces like Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, and Manicaland, and districts like Mazowe, Mudzi and Guruve, remain hotspots of political violence, intimidation and coercion of local residents, opposition or perceived opposition supporters by local ZanuPF officials and supporters. (ZPP Mar. 2018, 3)

The same source added that "cases of political violence, intimidation and coercion remain under-reported perhaps because of the public's distrust of the police, which has traditionally been viewed as being partisan or ineffective in political cases" (ZPP Mar. 2018, 12). ZPP also indicates that in March 2018 police

arrested and temporarily detained MDC-T supporters following their skirmish with ZanuPF supporters in Caledonia. In another case of suspected political violence in Chivi Central, where a ZanuPF local youth chairperson assaulted two brothers known to be MDC-T supporters, the police were reportedly present but did not intervene. (ZPP Mar. 2018, 3)

The Professor added that "at present, the climate for the MDC and other parties is fairly safe, although this may not hold up to and throughout the election period" (Professor 27 Apr. 2018). Similarly, the Associate Professor indicated that while "the treatment of youth activists and opposition parties has changed dramatically ... this is not to say that the situation may not change in the future" and that ZANU-PF and President Mnangagwa appear "focused on holding 'legitimate' elections and re-engaging with the international community on a new basis" (Associate Professor 29 Apr. 2018).

The Professor indicated that the current regime does not seem likely to be threatened by the "now-defunct" Viva Zimbabwe party, although "it is possible that there are tensions within the party given some members were not happy with its leader shutting it down" (Professor 27 Apr. 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Professor indicated that the "Green Bombers," who had previously been demobilized in January 2018, are back; he described this group as a national service for youth recruited by intelligence services and known for "terrorizing people in the countryside" (Professor 25 Apr. 2018). Similarly, *NewsDay*, a daily newspaper in Zimbabwe, states that Mnangagwa's government has "re-engaged Zanu PF's dreaded national youth service graduates, derisively [known] as Green Bombers to their positions as youth officers," and that the opposition claims that they "have been routinely used" by ZANU-PF to "spearhead violent election campaigns" (*NewsDay* 12 Apr. 2018). The same source quotes [opposition] People's Democratic Party spokesperson Jacob Mafume as stating that "[t]hese youths have been used as merchants of violence and terror" and that they "obviously have one purpose, to frog-march citizens to the voting stations especially in the rural areas and intimidate opposition supporters from voting" (*NewsDay* 12 Apr. 2018). *US Country Reports 2017* notes that "ZANU-PF trained and deployed youths to harass and disrupt the activities of opposition political party members, labor groups, student movements, civic groups and journalists considered critical of ZANU-PF" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 22).

An April 2018 article by New Zimbabwe, an online newspaper, reports that "[a]ccording to NGOs, over 5000 soldiers are deployed in the rural areas to scare villagers into voting for Zanu PF in the forthcoming elections" and that "opposition party representatives said the upcoming elections won't be free, fair and credible with over 5000 military men already terrorising villagers" (New Zimbabwe 29 Apr. 2018). The Professor also indicated that there are "reports of quite a few - maybe 2,000 - soldiers making their presence known in rural areas" and that "many are contesting for ZANU-PF nominations in the primaries" (Professor 27 Apr. 2018). *Daily News* also indicates that the run-up to the ZANU-PF primaries has been "riven by tensions over the entry of candidates from the military" (*Daily News* 2 Apr. 2018).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] A March 2018 press statement by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission indicates that elections are expected to be held in July or August 2018 (Zimbabwe 13 Mar. 2018).

[2] Human Rights Watch indicates that "Mugabe was ousted in a military coup" and that "[d]uring the military takeover between November 14 and 24, the army arrested and detained a number of Mugabe's associates without providing information about the arrest, or places and conditions of detention" (Human Rights Watch Jan. 2018). *US Country Reports 2017* provides the following description of the events of November 2017: "a military intervention, public demonstrations calling for President Robert Mugabe's removal, the ruling party's vote of no confidence, and impeachment proceedings led to Mugabe's resignation" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 1). According to the same source, the ruling ZANU-PF party "nominated former vice president Emmerson Mnangagwa to replace Mugabe as both president of ZANU-PF and the government" and on 24 November 2017, he was "sworn in as president with the constitutional authority to complete the remainder of former president Mugabe's five-year term, scheduled to end in 2018" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 1).

[3] For further information on the MDC, see Response to Information Request ZWE105030 of January 2015.

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Query response on Viva Zimbabwe political party (2016 - May 2018)



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