

ZADHR



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Report: Victims of Organised Violence and Torture 2nd to 9th June 2003 (Period of National Mass Action)

Over the past three years medical personnel in Zimbabwe have observed the regular and increasingly organised use of violence, including torture, by agents of the state and ruling party.

This report includes case summaries, with histories, examination findings and two photographs, of incidents of violence inflicted during the week of the National Mass Action 2nd-9th June 2003. Medical reports were obtained and are available for at least 150 people who sought medical help for injuries sustained as a result of state organised violence. Testimonies taken during this time from many of the victims of violence in the high density suburbs of Harare included stories of being invaded forcibly by uniformed military personnel in the early hours of the morning, and then being severely assaulted with blunt objects for periods of up to an hour while being accused of having organised the “mass action”. They were then made to carry all their groceries, cash and valuables such as cell phones to the waiting vehicles and surrender them to the invaders. On June 4th more than forty people were examined in hospital casualty departments following assault in this fashion in two adjacent high-density suburbs. More than half of them required hospital admission for extensive soft tissue injuries and fractures of the bones of their hands and arms.(See Case Reports)

This pattern was repeated throughout the week in different high-density suburbs, and continued during the weekend after the mass action had finished. On the first day of the action forty five university students required hospital treatment after they had attempted to stage a march from the university to the centre of the capital city Harare, and two people from a high density suburb were admitted to hospital for gun shot wounds. The numbers reported here represent a minimum figure, as many witnessed attacks did not result in victims seeking help from hospitals, so that these incidents were not recorded.

A further alarming development occurred on Wednesday June 4th when there was an intimidating presence of armed soldiers and police (uninvited by the hospital authorities) in and around the Avenues Clinic¹.

Deliberately inflicted violence of this nature is unacceptable to any degree but ZADHR is deeply concerned at the extent in terms of numbers and severity of the injuries documented. The apparent sense of impunity for their actions demonstrated by the perpetrators is very disturbing. The most fundamental of Human Rights are abused when people are injured in this way. ZADHR also condemns in the strongest terms the interference with or intimidation of health care personnel, and of patients attempting to access health care for their injuries.

¹ The Avenues Clinic is the largest private hospital in Harare.

Case Reports

These patients were seen by members of the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights and represent a small sample of the total number seen by doctors throughout the country.

All names have been removed for the safety of the victims, as there has been retribution inflicted on people seeking medical treatment.

Case 1

35 year old Male from Glen View 1, Harare, Zimbabwe.

History

“They came to my house at about 3am today, Wednesday 4th June, 2003. There were between 10 and 20 soldiers dressed in camouflage uniform and carrying AK 47 rifles and batons. There were a few men in civilian clothing. They broke open the front door of my house, shouting to me to get out of the house and open the garden gate. When I had opened the gate the soldiers called my neighbours (2 men) and told us to sit by my front door. We were then made to lie on our stomachs and the soldiers beat us with the batons. They were shouting “What’s happening at this house, are you having meetings?” I did not recognise any of the assailants. After they had beaten us they stole my cell phone and \$5000 cash from me. I sustained injuries to my back, upper arms and sides. I noticed that they were in a large green army lorry.

Examination findings

The victim had extensive bruising over his back and upper arms and shoulder, many linear and some confluent, consistent with assault with batons. He also had deep bruising of his buttocks and posterior thighs consistent with repeated assault with blunt heavy objects.



Case 1 photograph

Case 2

27 year old Male from Glenview 1, Harare, Zimbabwe.

History

“I was at the house of an MDC councillor. There were about 30 of us MDC youths present. At about 3am today, Wednesday 4th June, 2003 the front door of the councillor’s house was forced open and a group of about 15 soldiers came into the house. They were dressed in camouflage uniform and one was in Police Riot blue uniform, and all carried AK 47 rifles and batons. They asked us why we were there, “you are the guys we want to see, you are MDC”. They told us to chant our slogans. At first we kept quiet, then we chanted the MDC slogans. One of our group was seen climbing under the bed and he was dragged out, the bed was then put up against the wall and we were made to lie on our stomachs and were beaten again with the batons and rifle butts. The soldiers were saying “why do you want Mugabe to go, how much money are you being given, where is Madzore (MDC Member of parliament for Glen View)?”. Afterwards they made us collect all the food and groceries in the house and carry them out to their Army lorry and a light blue Mazda 323. I did not recognise any of the soldiers but I did see Elliot Manyika MP with them. I sustained injuries to my back, right leg and arm and buttocks.”

Examination Findings

The patient had multiple bruises of his back and right upper arm, linear, consistent with being assaulted with

a baton. He also sustained a fracture of his lower right ulna, a classic defence injury, and had deep haematomas of both buttocks and thighs, indicating he had been repeatedly beaten with blunt heavy objects while in a prone position.



Case 2 photograph

Case 3

26 year old male from Glen View 1, Harare, Zimbabwe.

History

“I was sleeping at my home when at approximately 3am today, Wednesday 4th June, 2003, between 10 and 20 soldiers banged on my front door. I opened it and they wanted to know what party I belonged to. My brother J. and I were asked so many questions and were then told to lie on our stomachs and they beat us with batons. They took \$10,000 cash from my pocket, my wrist watch and cap and told us to go back to sleep.”

Examination Findings

The Patient had deep haematomas of both buttocks extending to the posterior thighs and lower back, consistent with repeated beating with blunt heavy objects.

Case 4

27 year old female from Highfield, Harare, Zimbabwe.

History

“At around 10 pm Tuesday 3rd June, 2003, approximately 10 soldiers dressed in camouflage uniform and carrying AK rifles and batons knocked once at our house door and then forced it open. They were asking me for the whereabouts of another lady who is MDC. They were shouting “you are members of MDC and we are going to teach you a lesson”. They hit me on the left knee with a rifle butt and I fell to the ground. They then slapped me a number of times on each side of my face. The other soldiers were busy beating my husband with batons. The soldiers then entered my bedroom and took \$24,000 (which was the cash from the Tuck Shop I run) saying that it was MDC money for the demonstration march. They then started beating us again with the batons. Our baby of 2 years started crying in the bedroom and I was told to go and take care of her. The soldiers then left”.

Examination Findings

The patient had a ruptured right tympanic membrane, consistent with ‘telefono’ or slapping over the ears. She also had a swollen right forearm and hand but with no fractures on X-ray. She had deep haematomas of both buttocks and posterior thighs, consistent with being repeatedly beaten with blunt objects.

Case 5

28 year old male from Glenview 1, Harare, Zimbabwe.

History

“At around 3am today, Wednesday 4th June, 2003 armed soldiers in camouflage uniform forced open the door to my house. They were shouting at us saying “you are MDC supporters going to march to State House, your final push”. We were made to lie on our stomachs and were beaten with batons. The soldiers took my jacket and wallet, \$5000 cash and our telephone. I sustained injuries to my right and left hands, my back and my left eye.”

Examination Findings

The patient had a traumatic haematoma of his left eye, and fractures of his right ulna and left fifth metacarpal consistent with defending himself from assault with blunt heavy objects. He also had extensive deep haematomas of both his buttocks and posterior thighs, and linear haematomas on his back, consistent with being assaulted by batons.

Case 6

27 year old male from Western Triangle, Harare.

History

“On Monday 2nd June, 2003 in the early morning I was waiting at a Bus stop on the Bulawayo road. There were quite a few other commuters also waiting for a Bus. A green Army Defender vehicle pulled up, uniformed soldiers jumped out and just started beating us with baton sticks. They told us to go home and asked us where we were going to. There was no time for explanations – we just ran away. Then last night, Tuesday 3rd June, 2003 at about 9pm there was a knock at the door. Before I could get up from my bed four soldiers appeared and one put his boot on my neck holding me down. The others began to beat me with batons. They were asking me where to find a person called Zhuwake. I told them I did not know. They were saying “you MDC youths are participating in the stay-aways”. They then went to the next door room and beat my two brothers. They were shouting “where are the monies?”. Then they went to the front of the house and broke down our French door and beat the maid who was sleeping at the time. They showed her photographs and asked her if she knew the people and where they were. She is new to the area so was unable to recognise anyone in the photos. It was then that we fled from the house and have not been back today.”

Examination Findings

The patient had many linear haematomas on his back and shoulders consistent with assault with batons, and deep haematomas of both buttocks consistent with repeated assault with heavy blunt objects.

Case 7

23 year old male, Harare.

History

“It was at about 2am this morning, Wednesday 4th June, 2003 and we had just arrived home from a bar. We heard the sound of a truck outside and then footsteps. I recognised a guy from the Youth Militia called Prince – he was dressed in camouflage uniform. He was with other men in uniform. They forced their way into our home and started beating us with batons. They were saying that they were providing us with the final push. They stole cash and three cell phones and they told us to vanish from the premises otherwise face death. Then they left.”

Examination Findings

The patient had multiple linear haematomas on his back and shoulders, and moderate bruising of both buttocks and posterior thighs.

Case 8

50 year old woman from Western Triangle, Highfield, Harare, Zimbabwe.

History

“On Tuesday 3rd June, 2003 I was asleep in my home when I heard a knock at the door and windows being broken. The front door was then forced open. I was asked where Last was. I said he was out. There was only my grandchild with me. They asked where my friend Mamoyo was and what I did when I went to MDC. They then started beating me. There seemed to be many people, some dressed in camouflage uniform, some in Police riot uniform. They were carrying batons, whips and guns. Two of the men beat me with batons and whips on my back, legs and buttocks and hit me on the chest with the rifle butt. They were saying “who gives you money?” I told them that all I did was campaign for my Councillor. They then took me to a house nearby to look for my fellow worker. I was told to sit outside. A soldier then came and spoke to me in Ndebele while another one said “let her go”.

Examination Findings

The patient had multiple linear abrasions across her back consistent with being whipped, and deep haematomas of both buttocks and posterior thighs consistent with being assaulted repeatedly with blunt objects. She also complained of chest pain and was clinically tender over her anterior lower chest wall, but with no visible bruising, and no fractures of her ribs on X-ray.

Case 9

23 year old male from Jerusalem, Highfield, Harare, Zimbabwe.

History

“On Monday 2nd June, 2003 I was asked to go and fetch a friend from the Hospital. On the way I met 5 youths in Police riot uniform carrying baton sticks. We were accused of wanting to go to State House and asked if we really thought we could get there. I was then handcuffed and taken to ZRP Machipisa. En route to the Police Station they beat me on the back, legs, soles of my feet and my head and ear. I cannot hear properly now. They were saying “do you think you can take over the government, you have no Police Force, we will beat you until this comes right”. I was detained in the cells with over 70 others. There was not room to lie down it was so full. There were two other men with me who were also beaten (names withheld) – one of them so badly that he cannot walk. We were released after paying a fine of \$3000 for Breach of the Peace.”

Examination Findings

The patient had a ruptured right tympanic membrane, and painful right cheek. He had extensive linear bruising over his back consistent with being hit with batons, extensive deep bruising of his buttocks and posterior thighs and moderate swelling and tenderness of both plantar surfaces of his feet, consistent with ‘falanga’ (beating of the soles of the feet).