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## **Militarised Youth in Zimbabwe.**

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### **Summary:**

The problems of militarised youth are well known in Africa. The use of youth militia in "informal repression" is perhaps less well known than in the use of child soldiers in civil conflicts, but informal repression is increasingly becoming a serious problem in Africa.

Many reports have emerged from the current Zimbabwe crisis indicating that youth militia have had a significant role in the informal repression that has taken place since February 2000. Much of the evidence is related to violence and intimidation around elections, but there is also significant evidence suggesting that the National Youth Service programme, initiated in 2001, is the basis for the sustained use of youth militia.

This paper examines the phenomenon of youth militia in Zimbabwe, and contrasts this use of the youth with the views and opinions of ordinary young Zimbabweans

### **Background:**

The phenomenon of very young people, and even children, participating in war is as old as history itself, but it is only in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, together with the general social recognition that children require protection, that attempts have been made to increase the age at which young persons can be combatants. This is now generally recognized in international law, and given effect in a number of human rights standards. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, now ratified by all countries except the US and Somalia, gives effect to this general recognition, whilst the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which came into effect in 2002, recognizes that children under the age of 15 should not be involved in military activities. The international community is now being pressured to raise this age to 18.

However, this general recognition has had many transgressions, and some of these transgressions have been frankly horrifying. The use of very young soldiers and cadres by the

Khymer Rouge in Cambodia produced one of the more horrible genocides of the modern age, whilst Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mozambique were equally awful. In Rwanda alone, over 1,000 former child soldiers -simultaneously both victims and perpetrators - are languishing in jail to be eventually charged with committing crimes against the civilian populace<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, children below the age of 16 have been made to fight as child soldiers in no less than 25 out of about 40 countries that currently experience armed conflicts. In 1988 alone, approximately 200,000 such child soldiers were engaged in active combat on either side, be it government troops and/or armed groups of different political leanings.

Because of their immaturity and lack of experience, child soldiers usually suffer higher casualties than their adult counterparts. Even after the conflict is over, they are often left physically disabled or psychologically traumatized. Frequently denied an education or the opportunity to learn civilian job skills, many find it difficult to re-join peaceful society. Schooled only in war, former child soldiers are often drawn into crime or become easy prey for future recruitment. Girls are also used as soldiers in many parts of the world. In addition to combat duties, girls are subject to sexual abuse and may be taken as "wives" by rebel leaders in Angola, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

So there is great repugnance against involving children in war, but much less inhibition in involving the youth. Indeed, young men and women, who are not children, are frequently in the vanguard of civil struggles, and it is often the case that, without their involvement, many important struggles for justice and liberty would not proceed so successfully.

However, there is also a sinister side to the involvement of young people in political struggle, and this is in what has been termed "informal repression". As described by one human rights report,

*It describes a phenomenon which has no agreed name but one which has become increasingly widespread across the continent in recent years. Governments secretly employ surrogate agencies, such as ethnic or religious militias, to attack supporters of opposition political parties or government critics. Thereby they perpetuate at a local level the restrictive structures of one-party rule, while proclaiming their fidelity to democratic principles at a national level<sup>2</sup>.*

Informal repression was widely seen during the time of the military juntas in Latin America, where so-called "death squads" were responsible for the torture and extra-judicial execution of left-wing opponents of the juntas. Denied by the governments, and certainly not investigated by

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<sup>1</sup> See HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1994), *Easy Prey. Child soldiers in Liberia*, NEW YORK: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AFRICA/HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROJECT.

<sup>2</sup> See Article19 (1997), *DEADLY MARIONETTES: State-Sponsored Violence in Africa, October 1997*, LONDON: ARTICLE 19.

the state, these informal structures successfully destroyed all opposition and created a climate of terror.

*This phenomenon of "informal repression" is, by its very nature, difficult to investigate. The government is able to present itself as above the conflict, an impartial enforcer of law and order. It is often both very difficult and risky for human rights groups to gather sufficiently detailed evidence to call the government to account for human rights abuse. The problem of evidence is exacerbated by the fact that such informal restrictions on free expression are often a rural phenomenon. Increasingly, in many African countries, there is a gap between the towns, where a free press and political opposition are allowed to function relatively openly, and the rural areas where freedom of expression is not permitted and the ruling party and surrogate bodies continue to restrict political activities. When the urban press tries to report on informal repression, as in Kenya, it too becomes subject to reprisals. Informal restrictions on freedom of expression can also operate in less overtly violent ways. For example, the control of food relief or other forms of patronage can be used to influence political activity and to mute criticism. The use of traditional authorities to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation can be as effective as outright violence in restricting free expression and often creates a culture of self-censorship amongst journalists<sup>3</sup>.*

We have a number of highly undesirable phenomena in Zimbabwe: child soldiers, or more accurately the youth, and informal repression. And when the two come together, with all the apparatus of formal state repression, as in the case of Zimbabwe, the effects are very disturbing<sup>4</sup>. As a recent study on Zimbabwe indicates, Zimbabweans have now all but given up on the idea that they can live in a democracy<sup>5</sup>, and, whilst this report establishes the pernicious effect of propaganda as an important factor in this situation, the fear produced by two years of informal repression clearly has had an effect. As one senior Zimbabwean commentator put it, "when they hold a gun to your head, you do what they say".

### **The development of the youth militia:**

A crucial component of the strategy for maintaining political power was the use of militia, and especially the youth as militia. But why the youth in particular?

Since 1980 the demographic character of Zimbabwe has shifted very dramatically. Notwithstanding the depredations of HIV and AIDS, more than 50% of the population is under the age of 18, which means that a very large proportion of the population was not alive during the Liberation War, and has no recollection of either the racism of the previous government or

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<sup>3</sup> See again *Article19 (1997), DEADLY MARIONETTES: State-Sponsored Violence in Africa, October 1997, LONDON: ARTICLE 19*

<sup>4</sup> The number of reports on organized violence and torture in Zimbabwe is now enormous. A large collection of these can be seen at [www.hrforumzim.com](http://www.hrforumzim.com).

<sup>5</sup> See *Chikwanha, A, Sithole, T, & Bratton, M (2004), The Power of Propaganda: Public Opinion in Zimbabwe 2004, Afrobarometer Working Paper No.42.*

the effects of colonial policies. Since 1980, education, at least for primary school, has largely been free, but the promises of an education have not been matched in the aspirations of most young Zimbabweans. During the 1900s, under the economic structural adjustment programme voluntarily adopted by the Mugabe regime, the situation worsened considerably, especially for the young and the rural. The proportion of school leavers obtaining jobs has shrunk annually, as has the economy. The reality for most young Zimbabweans is the prospect of leaving school without a job, and little likelihood of getting one. In effect, there has been a huge disaffected population, without any basic allegiance to the philosophy of "liberation", and amenable to the persuasions of any opposition group. And certainly, since the government of the day always bears the responsibility for the misfortunes of the country, this was a group that might well turn against ZanuPF.

Thus, there was a careful process of engaging the youth, and then of incorporating them into the political campaigning machine<sup>6</sup>, as well as using them for other areas of political control<sup>7</sup>. This involved at least three distinct phases, as summarised below:

◆ **The First Phase: using the "War Veterans"**

The first phase of the militia programme involved the use of the "war veterans". This first phase may have only been intended to last as long as the Parliamentary Election which ZanuPF considered they could win overwhelmingly, but the results of the election clearly indicated that the Presidential Election would be exceedingly difficult for Mugabe. Furthermore, the very large number of election petitions (39), with the possibility of a losing a large number of bye-elections if the MDC petitions were successful, meant that the hold on political power was still threatened seriously.

◆ **The Second Phase: Training and Recruiting**

The second phase was mostly a formal consolidation of the processes involved in the first phase. It was evident from the scanty information available that a degree of training had been given to the young men recruited into the militia groups during the Parliamentary elections. This training was mainly in the nature of modelling through exposure: that is, the youth were exposed to methods of torture, running *pungwes* and rallies, carrying out military-type actions in the community, using mass psychological techniques such as slogans and songs. From the reports this exposure strongly resembled the types of tactics seen both in the Liberation War and also in the Gukurahundi period in the 1980s.

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<sup>6</sup> A recent report shows strongly the link between the organized violence and torture and political campaigning for elections. Here see REDRESS (2004), *ZIMBABWE. TORTUOUS PATTERNS DESTINED TO REPEAT THEMSELVES IN UPCOMING ELECTION CAMPAIGN. Preliminary Study of Trends and Associations in the Pattern of Torture and Organised Violence in Zimbabwe, July 2001 - December 2003*, LONDON: REDRESS TRUST.

<sup>7</sup> See REELER, A.P. (2003), *The Perpetrators of Gross Human Rights Violations in Zimbabwe from February 2000 to March 2003, Paper presented to "Civil Society and Justice in Zimbabwe: A Symposium", organised by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Themba Le Sizwe and the International Bar Association, Holiday Inn, Johannesburg, 11-13 August 2003.*

◆ **The Third Phase: Deployment into the communities**

Although the third phase seemed initially to be wholly concerned with the Presidential Election, it is evident that the militia have remained a cornerstone in the Mugabe regime's strategy for maintaining political control in the aftermath of highly discredited election. During the Presidential Election, the relationship between the militia, both "war veterans and youth militia, and the bases was once again seen.

In the first phase, described above, the target for the militia strategy was the rural unemployed youth. There were clearly great advantages for this group in joining the militia, and, as has been described in other African settings, much of the recruiting did not have to rely upon force since the excitement and power that came with being associated with the militia was inducement itself. There are good reasons for using the young, as has been described in Liberia<sup>8</sup>:

*I think they use kids because the kids don't understand the risks. And children are easier to control and manipulate. If the commanding officer tells a child to do something, he does it. In this society, children are raised to follow instructions.*

Similar comments could be made about Zimbabwe. The strength of a patriarchal, commandist society puts young people in a position where they are amenable to control and adult authority. However, this is only part of the story: the susceptibility to authority and control was complimented by excitement and inducements. This too has been seen in other African settings<sup>9</sup>:

*Food was very scarce; some joined to get food for themselves and their families. Some joined from peer pressure; they saw their friends join. Some joined fro adventure. Most of them joined voluntarily. Sometimes they were promised money or told they would learn to drive.*

There were many reports that the young men that joined the militia would get jobs, be paid, or get further education. This is evidenced not only by these reports, but also by the reports indicating that the youth were very disgruntled by the failure of ZanuPF to make good on its promises after the Parliamentary Elections and the Presidential Election. In one story carried in

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<sup>8</sup> See HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1994), *Easy Prey. Child soldiers in Liberia*, NEW YORK: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AFRICA/HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROJECT.

<sup>9</sup> See again HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1994), *Easy Prey. Child soldiers in Liberia*, NEW YORK: HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AFRICA/HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROJECT.

the Zimbabwean press, Vice-President Msika was confronted by angry youth demanding payment for their "support" during the Presidential election<sup>10</sup>.

*"We worked for you and you should pay us because we sacrificed our lives campaigning for the party in dangerous conditions but some of the people who were supposed to pay us put the money to their own use," the youth said.*

Loyalty is not merely bought by inducements however. The militia, and certainly the adults in the "war veterans" and ZanuPF Youth, must all have been aware that many of the activities in which they were engaged were criminal, but the rationale – another "Chimurenga" – helped overcome many of the militia's scruples. For the young though, there was no prima facie allegiance to the rhetoric of the Liberation War: these were the stories of the previous generation. Thus, other methods must have come into play, and the most likely method was compulsion, which operated in two ways.

Both methods use well-known psychological techniques. The first revolves around creating a forced commitment: quite simply, get someone to participate in an act and they will be more likely to continue to do so. The process of commitment will be stronger if such commitment is done publicly, and putting young men in the situation where they commit actual violence is well known as a form of recruiting in many countries, as has been shown in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda. This will be more effective if allied to a strong psychological induction process. The second method also relies upon compliance, and is produced again through exposure to violence: witnessing the torture of others for their political or religious beliefs will produce a strong self-protection motive, identification with the aggressor, and at the least compliance to the aggressor.

However, it is probable that the strongest motive for young men, and occasionally young women, to associate with the militia was community pressure, and some evidence for this comes from an analysis based on the reports on organised violence and torture by the Human Rights Forum<sup>11</sup>. This report indicated that a very high proportion of the names of known perpetrators were similar, as was their place of operation, suggesting that, in the rural areas, youth militia were being recruited through family

The suggestion that recruiting to the militia operated through family and community pressure is perhaps different to other settings. The point here is that not all situations in which militia operate are the same. Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda are distinct in many ways. Recruitment

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<sup>10</sup> See the *Zimbabwe Independent*, 24 May 2002, *ZanuPF militia confront Msika over allowances*.

<sup>11</sup> See Reeler, A P (2003), *Who should be sanctioned?* [[www.zwnews.com](http://www.zwnews.com)].

of the youth in the first two countries was in the context of civil wars, involving massive internal disruption and destruction of communities: children and young people were dragged in by force of circumstances, although their individual motives for joining an armed group may have varied greatly, as suggested above. In Rwanda, there was a deliberate process of recruitment along ethnic lines, backed by a ferocious propaganda campaign to foster recruitment.

Unfortunately few of the reports on Zimbabwe provide detailed enough information on the breakdown of the perpetrators by category other than gross political affiliation, and thus it is hard to determine trends in any statistical fashion. Regarding the identification of the perpetrators of organised violence and torture, virtually no reports show the changes over time in this, part from very gross indices. One report, relying wholly on medical examinations and affidavits, showed that "war veterans" and youth militia was a very significant proportion of the total (33%). This is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.**

***Perpetrators identified by victims.  
(Taken from Amani Trust, "Beating your opposition. Torture during  
The 2002 Presidential Election in Zimbabwe", 25 June 2002)***

<b>Perpetrator</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>ZanuPF supporters</b>	46%
<b>Youth militia</b>	29%
<b>Zimbabwe Republic Police</b>	12%
<b>MDC</b>	5%
<b>War veterans</b>	4%
<b>Zimbabwe National Army</b>	2%
<b>Unknown</b>	2%

However, the assertion here is not that the youth militia were the organisers of the organised violence and torture rather that they were the "foot soldiers" under the control of other leaders (see above). In 2000, these were assumed to be "war veterans", and this assumption seems to be held by a recent analysis of the worst perpetrators<sup>12</sup>. As the analysis above indicated, relatively stable numbers of perpetrators were found per category – MP, police, "war veterans", etc – between the two elections, but, interestingly, when the data was sorted according to frequency of mention, then "war veterans" and ZanuPF youth were much less frequently mentioned. "War veterans" however were a very high percentage of the top 50 worst offenders, and some "war veterans" were the most frequently mentioned of all. When ZanuPF MPs, many of whom make much of their "war veteran" credentials, are added to the "war veteran" category, then these two categories make up 15% of the total of the worst perpetrators mentioned by victims. It thus is not difficult to see a link between the youth militia and their likely leaders. In fact, given the

<sup>12</sup> See Reeler, A P (2003), *Who should be sanctioned?* [www.zwnews.com].

decision by the Mugabe government to constitute both “war veterans” and the youth militia as official auxiliary forces, this link must be denied rather than proven.

Another interesting use of the data is the examination of the use of the bases and their association with militia and the violence. Using the reports of the Human Rights Forum, it is possible to see some trends and some changes over time. As is seen from Table 2, there are some marked changes. It is clear that no strong statement can be made about the overall number of bases operating at any time, but it can be seen that there is a reported increase in the number of bases identified in the reports of victims. There is nearly a four-fold increase in the number of bases from 2000 to 2002, which clearly correlates with the many reports from human rights groups and the increased number of gross human rights violations attributed to the youth militia.

**Table 4.**  
***Number of bases identified by victims of gross human rights violations.***

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Bulawayo</b>	0	14
<b>Harare</b>	3	3
<b>Manicaland</b>	3	2
<b>Mashonaland Central</b>	12	26
<b>Mashonaland West</b>	4	18
<b>Mashonaland East</b>	12	21
<b>Masvingo</b>	0	3
<b>Matabeleland North</b>	0	30
<b>Midlands</b>	5	6
<b>Total:</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>123</b>

A considerably more sinister change is reflected in the actual positioning of the militia bases, and, as can be seen from Table 3 below, there was a very dramatic shift towards using schools as bases. The use of official buildings – government offices, council offices, etc – and farms does not change very much, but the shift to schools is dramatically large.

**Table 3.**  
***Positioning of militia bases in Parliamentary [2000] and Presidential Elections [2002].***

	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Official building</b>	<b>Public building</b>	<b>Farm</b>
<b>2000</b>	0	22%	61%	17%
<b>2002</b>	41%	18%	19%	22%

The use of schools as bases must be read together with the blatant campaign to target teachers as potential MDC supporters. As was seen in an earlier report of the Forum, teachers became

increasingly targets during 2001 and 2002<sup>13</sup>. The effects upon the personal lives of the teachers and their families are only part of the story, as the attacks and subsequent displacement had powerful effects upon their pupils and the communities in which the schools were placed<sup>14</sup>. Closure of schools and the consequent disruption of pupils' education were one obvious consequence, but added to this was the effect of pupils witnessing the humiliation and torture of their teachers.

There was also the consequence of pupils being "taught" political correctness, and the very high possibility of them experiencing considerable fear if their parents were teachers or supporters of the MDC. It is not difficult to appreciate all the possible consequences of targeting teachers and using schools as places of torture and political indoctrination.

### **The National Youth Service Programme:**

These structures of "informal repression" have been given greater vigour through an official programme dealing with the youth, the National Youth Service scheme. This began as a formalization of the first phase, as described above, and was the brain child of the former Governor of Mashonaland Central, Border Gezi. Gezi first mooted the scheme in late 2000, and the first training camps were established in 2001, with the first graduates emerging in October 2001.

Perhaps no aspect of the current Zimbabwe crisis has attracted so much controversy as this scheme. The government and its supporters see the scheme as a valuable way of engaging the unemployed youth, giving them vocational skills, and ensuring that they have a patriotic view of their country. The opponents see the scheme rather differently, and argue that the scheme is a blunt process of indoctrination, involving learning hate and violence<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Here see *Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2002), Teaching them a lesson. A report on the attack on Zimbabwean teachers*. HARARE: ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM.

<sup>14</sup> The Daily News, for example, carried stories on the attacks on teachers. On 20 June 2001, the newspaper reported that 32 teachers had been fired and 8 headmen deposed in Buhera by war vets and ZanuPF supporters for supporting the MDC. Later, the same newspaper carried a story on a report from the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe that teachers forced to pay protection fee, with 107 000 affected, and thousands had been reported kidnapped or raped (Daily News, 5 September 2002).

<sup>15</sup> See *Solidarity Peace Trust (2003), National youth service training. "shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner". An overview of youth militia training and activities in Zimbabwe, October 2000 – August 2003*, SOUTH AFRICA & ZIMBABWE: SOLIARITY PEACE TRUST.

It will be appreciated that it is not easy to investigate these claims, any more than it was easy to demonstrate the “third force” elements during the struggle in South Africa. However, the allegations, which are strongly supported by the evidence from human rights organizations, does suggest that many youth – some say as many as 50,000 – have been subjected to fierce ideological training. They have been trained in methods of violence – mainly torture – and have learned to have contempt for the law. They have operated with complete impunity, not merely in respect of the violence, but also in respect of frank criminal activity.

As the mounting evidence shows, the National Youth Service scheme has not only produced young people who are able to carry out human rights violations with little compunction, but these same youth are now being placed within the normal structures of Zimbabwean society. Graduates of the scheme are being offered preferential access to many jobs within the state, but also educational opportunities in many different fields. Reports indicate that most new recruits to the police and army are such graduates, whilst places in training institutes, colleges and universities are being opened to the same population. So there clearly are advantages to joining the scheme, and this can be rather sinister if the allegations of indoctrination and training in violence are accurate.

#### **The views of Zimbabwean youth:**

The youth militia and the National Youth Training scheme have not found favour with all the youth, and not even all the unemployed youth. Idasa has been working with unemployed township youth during 2004 in a civic education programme, and it has been instructive how differently Zimbabwean youth view their country and its problems<sup>16</sup>.

As part of this process a survey was conducted in February 2004 using the Revised IDASA Democracy Index.

The sample was drawn from 5 areas in Zimbabwe: Chitungwiza [18], Bulawayo [17], Masvingo [16], Mufakose in Harare [20], and Mutare [23]. The sample was composed equally of men and women. The sample was educated up to school-leaving in the main, with 94% having reached O’Level, but none had gone beyond this level and attained A’Level, College, or University. AS regards age, 25% were under 20 years, 70% under the age of 25 years, and 96% were under the age of 30 years.

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<sup>16</sup> See *Chitsike, K, & Reeler, A P (2004), Democracy and Youth in Zimbabwe, (in preparation).*

As regards employment, 47% were unemployed, whilst 43% had some form of employment in the informal sector, 4% had a short-term contract job, and 1% had a temporary job. No-one had permanent employment. It is perhaps unsurprising that no-one in this sample had a permanent job since the sample was derived from the members of youth groups set up to support youth, and clearly unemployment is the major attraction for joining these groups.

The survey asked questions on the following areas: consensus and citizen participation in self-government; popular selection of decision makers; popular control over decision makers; protecting citizens' equality and their ability to control decision makers; and socio and economic rights.

The survey findings were bolstered by in-depth discussion over three, 3-day workshops with representatives of these groups. The findings of the survey were used as the discussion material, and reasons sought for the findings as well as remedies for the problems. The workshops were characterised by vigorous discussion, and a high degree of understanding about the history and the current problems facing Zimbabwe.

There was continual reference to the National Youth Service programme and the youth militia during the discussions. Bearing in mind the demographic profile of these youths, – virtually all have O'Level and are unemployed – the preferential treatment given to the "graduates" of the programme leads to great resentment. This resentment is clearly fuelled by the perception in these youth that the National Service programme revolves around a political rather than a vocational orientation. The purpose of the service was supposedly a voluntary training programme for vocational skills, disaster management, patriotism and moral education, but the government has repeatedly stated its intention to make youth service compulsory, with access to tertiary education and public sector positions linked to participation.

The overall views of the youths participating in the civic education process can be simply summarised:

- *They do not believe that there are opportunities for open participation in the political, social, and economic life of Zimbabwe;*
- *They do not believe that the government is legitimate, and, furthermore, believe that the government has been illegitimately elected. They believe that there must be significant electoral reform if Zimbabwe is to ensure that government's are legitimately elected;*
- *They do not believe that there are any controls over the government, nor that there are sufficient protections for the rights of ordinary citizens;*

- *They do not believe that Zimbabwe is approaching any form of social justice, and indeed see a marked deterioration in social and economic life;*
- *They do not support the National Youth Service programme, and see the service as partisan and serving only the interests of ZanuPF.*

So we clearly are dividing the youth in Zimbabwe into two camps. There are those who have been subjected to the indoctrination programme of the government, whether formally under the National Youth Service scheme, or informally through induction into violent political campaigning at one of the bases. This group basically identifies with the values of an older generation, and operates under the control of this older generation.

Then there are also those who reject these options and express political views consonant with modern democracy, espouse peaceful political change, and see themselves as having an important role to play in the political and social life of Zimbabwe. They do not see themselves as being under the control of an older generation, but see themselves as instrumental in their own right.

How will these two views be reconciled in the future?

### **Managing the problem in the future:**

Before the helpers can get into action, clearly some radical changes must happen in the political climate, and it is not easy to see when this will happen. Zimbabwe is now a deeply polarized society, not along racial or ethnic lines, but now along ideological lines. The engagement of the youth in informal repression has created deep fissures, and the deliberate indoctrination of the youth with a partisan political philosophy will not be simply eradicated by political change.

The most primary and immediate change that must occur is for the government to stop supporting the informal repression, and some deliberate steps must take place now:

- The government must publicly and meaningfully take steps to stop political violence, and this means an end to partisan policing, practical impunity for perpetrators, and put an end to public hate speech;
- The government must then take steps to ensure that the National Youth Service scheme is purged of all partisan and narrow ideological elements, and indeed there are many that believe the scheme should be closed down altogether;

However, the greatest concern must be in the long term future, and the finding of ways to prevent the polarization of the current generation into the future. The government will need to implement a programme to rehabilitate militarized youth, and this will not be a simple task when

there are many who believe that this should be preceded by an accountability process<sup>17</sup>. Here it must be borne in mind that we are talking mainly about young people who can be made subject to the criminal law and not child soldiers, and we are having to take into account the views of victims who do not easily accept that perpetrators should get special treatment. In country with over 80% unemployment, there will be many who will resent and resist the use of public funds for the rehabilitation of their tormentors.

Obviously, this paper can only raise more questions than it can answer, and it will not be a simple task to overcome the legacy of the past 4 years. However, it is clear that, despite the warming exhortations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and all the attempts to keep children and the young out of war, governments find ways to subvert this. Zimbabwe is yet another example of the ways in which the vulnerable are exploited, and it can be seen has found a new way to subvert the demands of international law. As can be seen they have found a way to marry informal repression and the youth, even children sometimes. But there is hope when it is seen that the young themselves repudiate their exploitation and have dreams of a better society. As it was in South Africa, so perhaps it shall be in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>17</sup> A symposium held last year in Johannesburg made very strong demands for a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, and made several references to the need both to seek accountability and institute rehabilitation for the perpetrators. Here see the Johannesburg Declaration and the Summary of the Johannesburg symposium, reported in *Themba Lesizwe (2004), Civil Society and Justice in Zimbabwe, Proceedings of a symposium held in Johannesburg, 11-13 August 2003, PRETORIA: THEMBA LESIZWE.*