

ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM

The Unleashing of Violence: A report on violence against peaceful protestors in Harare

**A report compiled by the Zimbabwe Human
Rights Non-Governmental Organisations Forum**

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1. Background

1.1 Increase in violence

As Zimbabwe moves towards the holding of a general election, which, according to President Mugabe, will be held in May 2000, the political situation has become increasingly troubled and violent. There have been violent clashes between supporters of the ruling party, ZANU (PF) and the main political opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Additionally raiding groups consisting of some war veterans, but mostly of men and women who were too young to have taken part in the liberation struggle, have invaded numerous white owned farms. Regrettably, the President and other ZANU (PF) leaders have instigated much of the violence perpetrated by ZANU (PF) supporters or at least have condoned it.

1.2 The referendum and its aftermath

As regards inter-party violence, although MDC supporters have on some occasions taken violent action against ZANU (PF) members, whether with or without provocation, the majority of the instances of violence and intimidation seem to have been perpetrated by ZANU (PF) supporters. There have been concerted attempts by members of the ruling party and high-ranking police officers to demonise the Movement for Democratic Change and depict them as a party intent on using violence and intimidation to come to power. The State media have given great prominence to violence allegedly committed by MDC supporters whereas they have played down violence allegedly committed by ZANU (PF).¹

1.3 Co-option of the veterans and farm invasions

In order to trace the build up of this violence in Zimbabwe, it is necessary to go back to the events surrounding the holding of the referendum held in mid-February. (12 and 13 February). A government Commission had drawn up a draft constitution. Before putting the draft to a referendum, government made various amendments to the draft. The most important amendment was to amend the land acquisition provision so as to provide that if Britain did not pay into a fund for land acquisition, the government could proceed to expropriate land without compensation. The government then endorsed this constitution and joined with the Constitutional Commission in campaigning for its acceptance by the people. Especially towards the end of its publicity campaign, the executive of the Constitutional Commission used racist and politically inflammatory rhetoric. It alleged that persons opposed to the draft constitution were sell-outs and puppets of their colonial masters and that the whites, who were reactionary and racist, were campaigning against acceptance of the draft out of self-interest. When the majority of the voters rejected the draft, the executive of the Constitutional Commission and various government officials alleged that whites had been instrumental in the rejection of the draft constitution. It was alleged that the whites had voted in large numbers and white farmers had intimidated their workers into voting against the draft.

To start off with the President seemed prepared to accept the will of the people expressed in the referendum. He publicly stated that government would accept the referendum result. This statement was, however, only the calm before the storm. As time went on it was clear that government was certainly not going to accept the referendum result as regards the land issue. There was also a welter of recriminations against whites, especially white farmers. Recently, for instance, President Mugabe said that the whites were determined to fight against ZANU (PF) and the President declared that the fight was on against them and that they would not win the fight. If they aligned themselves with the MDC they would be treated as MDC and MDC would never win the election.² Other members of the ruling party made statements in which they have tried to generate anti-white sentiment.

The conditions for a major escalation of violence in Zimbabwe were created by the fateful decision by the ruling party to co-opt the war veterans to spearhead their election campaign. The ruling party announced that the war veterans would help with its election campaign. The war veterans were allocated Z\$20

million for this purpose, although the Chairman of the War Veterans Association, Dr Chenjerai Hunzvi³ complained that this amount was inadequate.

In early March war veterans together with many young people started to invade white owned farms. They proclaimed that they were going to take back the land that had been stolen from the indigenous people of Zimbabwe by the white settlers after Zimbabwe had been colonised.

The white farms that were particularly targeted belonged to farmers who had allegedly campaigned against the draft constitution, who supported the MDC or had successfully resisted by legal action previous efforts to take away farms. The farmers believed that the leadership of ZANU (PF) was orchestrating this whole campaign of farm occupation in order to drum up support for the ruling party whose popularity had been declining.⁴ They allege that the occupiers have been transported to the farms in various types of government vehicles and that these trucks have delivered regular supplies of food to the occupiers and that these persons are being paid wages of between \$50 and \$200.

1.4 Violence and intimidation

In recent weeks numerous threatening and intimidatory utterances have been made by government officials and persons connected with government. In mid-March one of the leaders of the National Liberation War Veterans Association threatened to use violence to overthrow the MDC if it won the upcoming election. Andrew Ndlovu⁵ said that the war veterans would never allow the country “to go back to Smith” and that if they did come back to power they would “declare a military government”. Ndlovu said the war fighters had stashed arms in caches all over the country. “We will get arms from government armouries. We are a reserve army and we have the right to use the arms to defend the government of ZANU(PF). We will invade military camps just as we have gone to the farms.”⁶ This statement amounts to treason as Ndlovu is in effect saying that if MDC is democratically elected, the war veterans will then overthrow it by the use of force. No government leaders have seen fit to condemn Ndlovu for advocating treason and the police have turned a blind eye to the commission of a serious criminal offence by Ndlovu.

A few days later speaking in Shona at a ceremony relating to the opening of the water pipeline between the Pungwe and Mutare, President Mugabe said: “Those who try to cause disunity among our people must watch out because death will befall them.”⁷

Towards the end of March President Mugabe threatened violence against white farmers. Talking about the farm invasions Mugabe said that they had largely been peaceful with no major incidents of violence reported. He said: “There have been very few cases of violence, but if farmers start to be angry and start to be violent, then of course they will get that medicine delivered to them. And it can be very, very, very severe, but we don’t want it to get there.”⁸ This was subsequently reiterated when President Mugabe urged white farmers not to seek confrontation with the war veterans as this could result in them getting hurt.⁹

In actual fact the white farmers had tried hard to behave in a way that would not antagonise the war veterans and the ZANU (PF) youths who were accompanying them. The Commercial Farmers Union called on farm owners to exercise maximum restraint and avoid any violence. At first the persons occupying these farms, although threatening in their words and gestures, were relatively non-violent in their actions. Since the end of March, however, they have become increasingly aggressive and there have been numerous reported cases of beatings of farm labourers and white farmers and the holding hostage of various people. At least two white farmers have been seriously injured as a result of beatings administered by groups of “war veterans”.

1.5 Inaction of the police

When the invasions started to occur the Police Commissioner washed his hands of the matter. He said that the police could not act because the matter was political.¹⁰ The President denied that the government had encouraged these farm invasions but said he would not intervene in this matter for as long as the war

veterans remained peaceful. He said that their action simply constituted a form of protest against the rejection of the draft constitution.¹¹ On 17 March 2000 the Commercial Farmers Union obtained a High Court action, which declared the invasions to be illegal, and ordered the police to evict the unlawful occupiers from the land within twenty-four hours.¹² This High Court ruling was made **with the consent of all the parties**, including Dr Chenjerai Hunzvi. In his affidavit in connection with this case, Dr Hunzvi denied that he had been involved in organising or encouraging the farm invasions. Yet in an interview at the beginning of March Hunzvi had said that it was within the rights of the former combatants to invade the farms as they were bitter about the fact that the white farmers had engineered the rejection of the draft constitution which contained a provision for state acquisition of land without compensation.¹³ The police have not attempted to comply with this order, claiming that it would be impossible and counterproductive to do so.¹⁴ The Attorney-General has appealed against the order. Leaders of the war veterans have proclaimed that they would not comply with the court order but instead they will intensify the programme to occupy farms.

There have also been reports of ZANU (PF) supporters using intimidation and threats of violence to pressurise people to attend ZANU (PF) rallies. There have also been reports of these supporters telling people that there will be war and killing in Zimbabwe if the MDC wins the election.¹⁵

1.6 The reign of terror

The ruling party has thus orchestrated a reign of terror by the war veterans and has very much encouraged a campaign of racial hatred against white farmers and other whites in Zimbabwe. A wave of lawlessness has swept across the country. The police have not been prepared or able to offer proper protection to persons who have been affected by this lawlessness.

2. The violence on 1 April 2000 in Harare

2.1 Events leading up to the march

The National Constitutional Assembly, a grouping of various civic, religious and political organisations, had organised what it called a peace march in Harare city centre to start at 9.00 a.m. from the Causeway Post Office. This march had been widely publicised with notices in the newspapers and posters.

According to Minister Dabengwa and the police, the NCA had been advised in writing to postpone their march because the war veterans had made prior arrangements to hold a “meeting” on this day. The police told the NCA not to proceed with its march because it feared that there would be a clash between the two groups. The NCA, however, maintain that they had notified the police well in advance of the intended march and that it had been given permission to go ahead. It was only later that it was advised by the police not to go ahead with the march because the war veterans had already been given permission to march on the same day following almost the same route as the NCA. The NCA asked when it could march if the march was postponed and was not given a satisfactory answer. It then offered to change the route to be followed on its march so that it would not encounter the war veterans. (When finally the march took place, the NCA organisers altered the route so as to avoid the route that was supposedly going to be followed by the war veterans.) The NCA believes that in fact the war veterans had not been planning to march at all until the NCA decided to hold its march.¹⁶

On the day of the march, the police tried to prevent this march from taking place. The police cordoned off the entire city and mounted numerous roadblocks on the main roads leading to the city centre. Vehicles had been held up in long queues. The police searched all vehicles for weapons and turned back buses and other vehicles found to be carrying or suspected to be carrying persons who were intending to join in the protest march. All persons found wearing NCA or MDC tee shirts were turned back by the police. At a road block in Avondale a number of University of Zimbabwe students en route to the march were arrested for refusing to dismount from their commuter omnibuses and walk back to the University Campus.

The march was scheduled to start from Causeway Post Office at 9.00 am. At about 8.30 a small number of marchers had gathered at the starting point and there were a number of reporters. There was a sizeable body of police present. A member of the NCA presented to the Officer in Charge the High Court order ordering that the march be allowed to proceed. This officer advised that at the road blocks around the city they had confiscated a lot of weapons from ex-combatants but they had not arrested the persons from whom these weapons had been confiscated. When asked why these persons had not been arrested, the officer was alleged to have replied: "You know what politics is like."¹⁷ Those who had gathered were told by the police that the march had been banned and that they must disperse. The police were asked under which law the demonstration had been banned. The police refused to respond to this question although the police did tell a member of the Media Monitoring Project that the police wanted to stop the march because the war veterans had also applied to demonstrate, and the police feared violence.

Another group of marchers tried to come to the starting point of the march down Central Avenue from the Second Street side. They were intercepted by the police. Dr Madhuku tried to get the police to accept the court order that NCA had obtained from a High Court judge ordering that the march should be allowed to proceed. The police refused to accept this. Members of this group then sat down on the road. They were ordered by the police to disperse as they were "forming an illegal gathering" and a contingent of the riot squad came towards them. One of the police officers ordered them to get up and disperse but they refused to do so. A group of about twenty riot police, reinforced by a truckload of uniformed policemen, moved in on the seated demonstrators and arrested journalist Grace Kwinjeh and architect Mick Pearce and three others, dragged them up from the ground and pushed them into a police truck. The persons arrested by the police were entirely passive and offered no physical resistance and had in no way been violent. The police had to lift them up and drag them to the police vehicle.

A short time later, led by Mike Auret, a small group of marchers tried to set off from the Causeway Post Office. When the police stopped them they sat down and Mike Auret led them in prayer. Members of this group had told the police that they were marching for peace and that the police should join them in this march. After a few minutes a large group of marchers came from the Second Street into Central Avenue. They had with them the court order ordering that the march was legal and should be allowed to proceed. The organisers addressed the marchers and stressed that the march should proceed peacefully. The main body of marchers had already been marching around the city. The smaller group joined ranks with the larger group. The riot police made no further attempt to stop the march and the marchers proceeded down Second Street towards the city centre. A small contingent of police accompanied the marchers as they moved around the city.

2.2 The march

The marchers were carrying various placards and posters. Most of these called for peace, justice, reconciliation and the restoration of the rule of law. There were some posters protesting about the conduct of the war veterans in occupying farms. Some of the marchers wore NCA and MDC tee shirts. As the marchers proceeded around the city, some of the marchers called out to the public for peace; some called out political slogans and used the MDC open hand sign; some may have shouted remarks derogatory of the war veterans. As the march proceeded others joined it.



The number of marchers has been variously reported. Some reports put it at 2000 whereas as one press report puts it as high as eight thousand. As the march proceeded through the city others joined in. A realistic estimate of the number of marchers after others had joined in is between 3000 and 4000.

The march proceeded around the streets of Harare and it was completely free of violence. The marchers had gone down Second Street and had turned into Jason Moyo Avenue. It then proceed via Chinhoyi and Mbuya Nehanda, back down Nelson Mandela to Leopold Takawira and then up to Samora Machel. They had then turned from Samora Machel into First Street and had arrived at the intersection of First Street and Union Avenue. Throughout the protestors were cheerful and non-intimidating and many of the members of the general public seemed to respond positively to the message being put across by the demonstrators.

2.3 The attack upon the marchers

As the marchers were turning from First Street into Union Avenue in order to go to Africa Unity Square they were set upon by a group of at least 200 armed men and some women. This group had set off from ZANU (PF) headquarters in Rotten Row. The Chairman of the War Veterans, Dr Chenjerai Hunzvi had been present at the headquarters and may have addressed the group prior to it setting off. They were carrying various weapons such as pick handles, iron bars, axes and strands of barbed wire. They had also armed themselves with branches they had broken off trees and with large stones they picked up. Films taken of this group of armed men clearly show that, although there were some people who were old enough to have been war veterans, there were a large number of persons in the mob who were obviously too young to have been fighters in the liberation war.

The armed men obviously knew exactly where the marchers were at that point because they proceeded directly to the place where the marchers were located. They went past some contingents of riot squad and these members of the riot squad made no attempt to stop them. As they neared the marchers, a few members of the riot squad attempted to interpose themselves between the armed mob, but the mob simply swept past them. The numbers of riot squad on the spot were small and they were greatly outnumbered by the attackers. The question still remains why the police had not been monitoring the movements of the “war veterans” and had not been prepared to intercede if these persons displayed belligerent intentions. It is clearly unacceptable that a group of armed men could be allowed to move across the city centre without any attempt to disarm them or restrain them.



As will be seen below, it has been alleged by the war veterans that they were simply defending themselves after they had been attacked by having stones thrown at them and they had used sticks taken away by the marchers. There is no doubt whatsoever that this is entirely false. All witnesses to the course of events testify that the marchers were completely unarmed and that they were attacked by a mob carrying sticks, stones and other weapons. There is film footage that proves beyond any doubt that this is what happened.¹⁸ It is possible, however, that war veterans could have been monitoring the march and could have been offended by some of the posters and remarks shouted out during the protest. This of

course is no justification or excuse for a violent attack upon defenceless protestors. Neither is the fact that some of the protestors were wearing MDC tee shirts.

After the attackers had swept past the police they launched a vicious attack upon the peace marchers. People fled in terror. Amongst the fleeing people were shoppers and bystanders who were not part of the peace march. A barrage of stones was flung at the fleeing people. The stones thrown were very large stones. Several people were hit on the head and various other parts of their bodies by the stones. Some were badly injured. People were chased and beaten with sticks and various other implements including in one case a strand of barbwire. Whites were particularly targeted during this attack and a number of women were injured including two women who were trying to assist an elderly black and a blind man to get out of the way of the attackers.¹⁹ Some of the injured had not taken part in the march such as a white man who was attacked after he had come out of his bank. Only after the thugs had swept past did the police intervene by throwing tear gas to disperse people.



After the attackers had swept through the city attacking people they first proceeded to the ZANU (PF) Harare Province Headquarters. Thereafter they went to the ZANU (PF) Headquarters in Rotten Row. At least some of the attackers were picked up and transported in white trucks. The chairman of the Harare Province War Veterans Association, Mr Douglas Mahiya, addressed them. He told them: “The NCA and MDC must not demonstrate against us. The NCA and other church members should not provoke us.”²⁰ He is also alleged to have made the following statements. He said that the war veterans should keep pressure on and should attack MDC supporters wherever they found them. What was happening was only the beginning. “We need to show them that we are the ones who are the legitimate rulers of this country. It’s our legitimate right to rule this country forever whatever the outcome of the elections. What MDC is aiming at is to give this country back to the British. We will not allow this even if it means going back to the bush to stop them.” The mood at this meeting was self-congratulatory and jubilant. The feeling seemed to be that the MDC had been taught a lesson by the attack on the protestors.²¹

No arrests have been made of any of the persons who perpetrated this violence. There has been no condemnation of this violence by any members of government. This creates the impression that the government either approves what happened or at least condones it.

2.4 Persons known to have been injured

The persons known to have been injured in this attack are as follows:

Mr Payne

Mr A Meldrum

Mr A Warner

Ms S Jarvis

Ms Trish Swift

Ms Barbara Vitoria

Mr and Mrs McComish

Richard Calder

A woman called Patricia

At least three black people, the names of whom are unknown.

The Standard report on the incident says that eight people, most of them Saturday shoppers, were injured. “Five of them – four women and one man – were taken to the Baines Avenue 24 Hour Emergency Rooms where they were treated before being discharged. Three others were taken to the Avenues Clinic, where two were discharged in the afternoon and one was said to have been admitted to the High Dependency Unit. He was, however, said to be in a stable condition.”



2.5 The response by government officials and the police

Following this incident Minister Dabengwa, the Minister of Home Affairs, made a statement which was reported in a local newspaper²² in this way:

Clarifying developments prior to the violent clashes in Harare last Saturday, Cde Dabengwa said the National Constitutional Assembly had been advised to postpone their march to another date since war veterans had already made prior arrangements to hold their meeting on that day.

The NCA co-ordinator, Mr Isaac Maphosa, rejected the advice given by the police and the NCA demonstration went ahead as planned.

During their demonstration, Cde Dabengwa said, the NCA members started shouting derogatory remarks about the Government and the war veterans for occupying white-owned farms.

“The war veterans, who were monitoring the situation, were incensed by these derogatory remarks. A violent clash ensued between the two groups numbering about 3 500 NCA members and 1 500 war veterans. The police who were on stand-by quickly intervened and restored relative order. No lives were lost and injuries were kept to a minimum.”

Cde Dabengwa said he was disturbed by the violence that reflected election campaign strategies based on fear and intimidation. He appealed to leaders of all political parties to restrain their members from engaging in violent activities.”

Speaking in a BBC interview, the Minister of Information, Chen Chimutengwende said that it was a lie that the violent attackers had come from ZANU (PF) Headquarters.²³

Zimbabwe's High Commissioner to the UK, Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, denied that police had taken sides. "Whenever you have such an explosive situation developing, the police have a responsibility to move in, and they did move in," he said.

2.6 The response of members of the war veterans

Speaking on the ZBC main news on 4 April 2000 the National Secretary of the National Liberation War Veterans Association, Mr Andrew Ndlovu, denied that members of his association had attacked unarmed protestors. This is what he said:

"It was caused by unscrupulous supporters of the MDC and ANC (sic) who I think had an agenda and advanced to attack the war veterans because they used abusive words and they were wearing MDC tee shirts and when war veterans and ZANU PF supporters were making a peaceful marching in support of land reform they were insulted and they were attacked by stones. And then it made war veterans, as trained people, go into defensive. It was then they took the sticks which they were attacking the war veterans with them and they retaliated in defence."

The interviewer then asked another war veteran whether there was anything wrong in wearing tee shirts with insignia of other political parties. His reply was as follows:

"There is no problem with wearing MDC tee shirts. The problem is that they were carrying placards saying "we can beat up War Vets. You are now old – you can't fight us". The War Vets were surprised at what was happening."

(This is a translation from the Shona language which was being used by this war veteran.)

2.7 Response of Commissioner of Police

Speaking in a television interview²⁴, Police Commissioner Chihuri said: "The NCA/MDC informed us that they wanted to demonstrate. We advised them in writing that this will spark problems because they wanted to demonstrate against the war veterans and yet we were aware, and we informed them that the war veterans were holding a meeting, their own meeting at the party headquarters, and even after the incident they carried on holding their meeting. And we knew that problems will ensue but against that advice they still went on to demonstrate. They did not only do that, they went by night to seek a court order. And this surprises me, where court orders are obtained at night and we were not even aware of their own court order until after the event and these are some of the problems which we are experiencing."

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum sought to have a meeting with the Commissioner over this and other issues of violence, but the Commissioner declined to meet with the group, and referred it instead to the Officer Commanding (Harare Province). The Human Rights Forum has declined to do this since it believes that the issues are serious matters of policy that can only be dealt with by the Commissioner.

Eyewitness accounts of the march

No 1 – Account by Bev Clark and Brenda Burrell

On Saturday 1st April, we (Brenda, my sister Debbie, my two nephews aged 8 and 11 and myself) marched for peace in Zimbabwe. Even before we had left the house we were telephoned and warned that there were numerous road blocks blocking movement into the city. On Enterprise Road in Newlands we waited for about 20 minutes to get through a road block. All cars were being searched. Later in the day, on news reports, cars filled with MDC and NCA supporters were actually being turned back.

We met up with Patricia at Causeway Post Office, the starting point of the March. There were only a few people there. Probably more riot police than potential marchers. It was good to see familiar faces and

inspiring to be a part of such a multiracial and joyful group of people in spite of the ominous police presence. Mike Auret was there. His towering yet calm and diplomatic presence gave me a lot of reassurance.

The Police were trying their best to convince everyone that the gathering was an unlawful one. Apparently a few of the earlier arrivals had already been arrested for not “dispersing when instructed to do so”. Mike Auret asked everyone to sit on the road and led the group in prayer asking for God’s forgiveness for those leading Zimbabwe into such despair.

Organisers reassured us that a court order was on its way, to prohibit the police from interfering in the peace march. True to their word, the order was produced shortly thereafter, together with word that other NCA supporters were on their way after being held up by the numerous police blocks.

Suddenly there was a sound of cheering, because behind the row of riot police blocking our way, came a huge number of fellow marchers to help us set off. What did we need to actually get moving? MORE PEOPLE. There is such strength in numbers and this was one of the most obvious examples of how efforts to effect change in Zimbabwe were being frustrated by the lack of involvement of citizens of this country. We surged forward. People proudly carried posters with slogans like: “Cry Our Beloved Country”; “Stop This Nonsense”; “United We Stand; Peace For Zimbabwe”. The atmosphere amongst the marchers was a mixture of emotions. One Greek woman was so overcome by the occasion that she sobbed and shook. Others danced and whistled. Marchers greeted Saturday morning Harare shoppers with the MDC open hand gesture. At one stage an elderly white man in a wheel chair, struggled onto his crutches and made a few faltering steps forward. There were two white women pushing his wheelchair the length of the march until a young black schoolboy took over to give them a break. The “Over The Edge” theatre group was there, marching with colourful peace flowers in their hair.

All through the city, onlookers encouraged the marchers by greeting them with a raised open hand symbolising the huge support for peace and a new leadership in this country. At a construction site in Jason Moyo Avenue, hundreds of construction workers in bright blue overalls voiced their united approval and support as we marched by.

Marching with children caused a mixture of emotion in me. At the beginning when the children were faced by a row of arrogant and aggressive riot police with batons in hand and tear gas on their hip, they were visibly shaken and upset. “I want to go home” was tearfully suggested a number of times. But once we had got going, they settled down and I could feel the wonder in them. How amazing it is at eight years of age, under a despicably oppressive government, to take over the centre of Harare. I continually emphasised to them that if something was wrong, how could we not join together and try to change things?

The relationship between the marchers and onlookers (pedestrians, motorists, shopkeepers) was friendly and the marchers showed complete respect for peoples’ property. No-one was hurt and nor was property vandalised in any way.

Unfortunately, roughly two hours from the time the peace march set off, at the corner of Union Avenue and First Street a group of so-called war vets ambushed the Peace March. I can’t emphasise enough that these were not war vets but rather ZANU (PF) paid thugs. They were young and violent and they were looking for whites. How is it that the police allowed them into the city to violently attack a peaceful demonstration? The police, instead of repelling the violent mob that disrupted the march, chose to fire teargas at the fleeing NCA supporters. Film footage shows the police running with the disgusting thugs, chasing the marchers.

Patricia and my family made a desperate attempt to avoid tear gas canisters and the stampede of people trying to get away from both the police (how ironic) and the thugs. In a way I think it was lucky that we had two little boys with us. We were so focused on their safety that we made sure to get out of the firing line. Patricia wasn’t so lucky. She had noticed a blind busker sitting in his usual downtown spot playing

his guitar. She ran past him but returned to help him get out of the way of the mob. After moving him some distance up the road, she huddled with him and two black women in a doorway. A thug spotted them and laid into Patricia with a stick, splitting her head open and kicking her in the stomach, accusing her of being an MDC supporter. The two black women tried to shield Patricia from the blows.

When we emerged from the building that we had taken refuge in there were torn placards laying strewn in the streets. A MARS ambulance was parked in First Street Mall attending to injured NCA supporters and scores of dazed people wandered around questioning how the police could have let thugs harm peaceful Zimbabwean citizens. In particular, the fact that people who were helping other injured marchers, were viciously assaulted is completely abhorrent. Perhaps one of the most poignant symbols of the morning was the blind busker's guitar lying on the sidewalk, broken and useless. Just what Robert Mugabe and ZANU (PF) are trying to do to the Zimbabwean nation's spirit?

Brenda picked up the remains of the guitar and took it back to the busker's chair on the corner, hoping that at least he would emerge unscathed. Happily he did and a number of us, including other passers-by contributed money to help him replace or repair his guitar.

A white man walked passed with a bandaged arm and what looked like sjambok cuts on his back, as if he had been whipped. We had seen him bleeding from his head a short time before. Andy, a reporter, had a rock thrown in his face. Trish, who had stopped to help someone injured, was head-butted and had to go to hospital. I've just read that Impi had his legs beaten by a policeman.

My family made our way back to Causeway Post Office and met up with a reassembled group of marchers on Second Street. Their spirits were not broken. We joined them and continued clapping and singing. When we rounded the corner in Central Avenue, the vision that greeted us was masses of police in full riot gear. They were waiting for us. My family skirted the police and looked back to see the NCA supporters sit down on the road well away from the police, chanting PEACE, PEACE. What reply did they get? The police fired several tear gas canisters into them, seated and completely unarmed. As we continued up Central Avenue, the riot police followed, waving their batons threateningly and chasing on-lookers away. Meanwhile military helicopters circled the city.

What did this experience mean to me? On the one hand I was truly inspired being with so many motivated and patriotic people. We came together in the hope of encouraging change. I must emphasise that by getting out of my safe world and stretching my own boundaries and being involved in collective action gave me the opportunity to see very clearly that black, white, coloured, Greek – all of us in Zimbabwe, for the most part, like and respect each other. During the march and after the violence, everyone helped each other. Willingly and with respect. I never imagined that I would “high 5” commuter drivers but I did and when these moments happen our country is a better place. It is clear that Mugabe and his cronies need hired thugs to do their dirty work. Mugabe is milking the race card for all it's worth. Don't succumb to fear and paranoia in the face of the continued bombardment of racist propaganda from the state-controlled broadcasting sector. On the ground it's different. The people of Zimbabwe want peace and stability not civil war.

No 2 – Account by Robert Standish-White

On the way in to join the Peace March from Highlands there was a Police roadblock at Newlands which was stopping and searching all vehicles, and all bus and commuter passengers were required to disembark. This naturally caused an enormous back up of traffic that one can only imagine was to discourage people coming in to the city. I was told at the rally the situation was similar on other main roads into town.

Having been held up for nearly an hour there I was a little late for the start of the rally, but was told that when it did start the riot police immediately tried to block it but fell back as numbers grew.

The march went down Second Street, Jason Moyo Ave., did a sort of loop via Chinhoyi and Mbuya Nehanda, back down Nelson Mandela to Leopold Takawira and then up to Samora Machel, and then turned in at the top of First Street. The atmosphere was excited but happy, almost carnival. There was some singing, whistling, occasional shouting but all in good spirits, and those on the street, in cars and buildings all waved back cheerfully. Most encouraging was the composition of the march – all ages and races. There were Nuns, disabled people, many children either walking or on their parents' shoulders, people greeting those they knew, the elderly and schoolchildren all come together to demonstrate their desire for PEACEFUL CHANGE in this country. There were a wide array of banners calling upon God, fellow citizens, the Government, and so on to help bring about change and progress.

At various points the march paused, and one of these was the junction of First Street and Union Avenue. It seemed there was a group coming in on Union Avenue to join, but as they drew closer there were cries of "It's ZANU (PF)!" and people began to flee as the newcomers hurled rocks and other missiles. The few riot police on the scene ran to intervene but were vastly outnumbered and the attackers rampaged on up Union Avenue, wielding sticks and other weapons and lashing out at anyone who looked as if they might have been involved in the march. I was with two friends and we retreated under a shop canopy but were set upon and beaten on our faces and about our torsos. Our attackers appeared to be middle aged and set upon people indiscriminately. I could not say from our own situation whether whites were being more attacked than blacks; it seemed to be anyone connected with the march. Their weapons seemed to be opportunistic: sticks and branches, bricks and stones grabbed in a hurry. I saw no pangas or 'formal' weapons.

My friend was hit in the face with a piece of concrete; his wife turned to help him and a man came in with a large stick to attack her; I yelled at him "Get away, she's a woman!" and he backed off. My friend was bleeding profusely from his mouth and another head wound. He was also thoroughly beaten on his back and shoulders. His wife sustained a gash and large bump on her forehead, a nasty scrape down her arm, and other signs of being beaten. After an initial blow across the face that left me disoriented and sporting bits of leaf, I received a hard blow behind my right ear that put me down, another hard blow across the right shoulder, and various lesser blows. As we continued to be struck the shop personnel (Truworths, Union Avenue) in the face of this mayhem opened the door and took several of us in, including a pregnant woman. Inside we did what we could to attend to the injuries, which was somewhat hampered by the fact there was no water in the pipes! We tried to attend to the wounds and saw there was tear gas beginning to appear in the street. There were a small bunch of Police in the back alley who appeared to be discussing matters.

As people dispersed we were later able to fetch our vehicles and take the more seriously hurt to medical facilities. However as we were collecting our friends there was further trouble and the tear gas canisters started to pop around us. We were relieved to get out of the city centre as the helicopters came roaring in overhead and the police began to seal off streets at risk."

No 3 – Report by members of the Media Monitoring Project

MMPZ had five monitors covering the NCA march.

Before the march, the Zimbabwe Republic Police manned roadblocks near the city and turned back some vehicles carrying people wearing Movement for Democratic Change and NCA tee shirts.

A small number of members of the public and press gathered for the "March for Peace" by 8.30 a.m. outside Causeway Post Office. There were many uniformed police and reservists and riot police in the city and they were reluctant to let the march proceed, saying it was illegal.

A group of about four or five at the post office were told to "disperse" as they were "forming an illegal gathering." MMPZ was told by police they wanted to stop the march because war veterans had also applied to demonstrate, and the police feared violence.

By 9.30 the police officer in Central Avenue was handed a High Court Order which made the march legal. He threw it onto the tarmac. The police instructed about 20 demonstrators to disperse from Central Avenue near the Causeway Post Office or face police action. The police did not tell the demonstrators what law they had allegedly contravened. Many of the demonstrators were wearing MDC or NCA tee shirts and were shouting party political slogans. About 50 sat down on the tarmac and refused to move. A group of about 20 riot police, reinforced by a truckload of uniformed policemen moved in on the seated demonstrators and arrested journalist Grace Kwinjeh and architect Mick Pearce and about five others, dragged them up from the ground and pushed them into a police truck.

The rest of the demonstrators toyi-toyed into the city centre singing revolutionary songs and shouting anti-ZANU (PF) slogans. The police did not follow this growing group who went down Second Street, into Samora Machel, Julius Nyerere and on until they made it back to Causeway Post Office. There was no violence, no threats, and the demonstration was at this stage noisy and good-natured. There was no police escort except for a lone police truck, which followed slowly behind the crowd which had grown by this stage to about 2000.

Back at Causeway, the NCA leadership announced that the police accepted the High Court order. NCA spokesman Brian Kagoro addressed the demonstrators and emphasized that proceedings should be peaceful. He gave directions for the route for the second stage of the march.

The demonstrators followed the designated route with a limited police escort. The marchers sang anti-government songs but there was never any threat nor sign of violence.

Traffic came to a standstill on some of the roads. MMPZ estimates there may have been 3 – 4 000 demonstrators at this stage.

Meanwhile other MMPZ monitors went to ZANU (PF) headquarters where there was a group of about 200, (with ZANU (PF) flags and banners,) preparing to leave. War veteran leader Chenjerai Hunzvi was among them. Some pulled down branches of trees, others already had sticks and umbrellas. This crowd ran towards town, brandishing weapons and singing revolutionary war songs.

When challenged on BBC Focus on Africa on Monday April 3, information minister Chenhamo Chimutengwende said reports that the armed crowd began their march at ZANU PF headquarters were “a lot of lies.”

Initially NCA demonstrators appeared to believe the group, armed with dangerous weapons, were part of the peace march. The NCA marchers paused after they realized the new group was not part of their demonstration.

As the group of war veterans and ZANU (PF) supporters approached the peace demonstrators on the corner of First Street and Union Avenue, they began throwing stones, and beat up several peace marchers and damaged a car parked nearby.

It appeared as though, in proportion to the numbers of whites and blacks involved in the peace march, more whites were attacked than blacks. MMPZ is not as convinced as the foreign press that whites were specifically “targeted” by ZANU (PF) supporters and war veterans.

However several black and white people who were attacked were not part of the NCA demonstration. MMPZ is not sure how many people were attacked but saw at least four wounded taken away by ambulance.

Several more, maybe up to 20, were seen with bleeding faces and limbs after the attack by ZANU (PF) supporters and war veterans. A blind beggar on the corner of First Street and Union Avenue was attacked by ZANU (PF) supporters and war veterans. The blind man’s guitar was broken. A woman who went to the assistance of the disabled man was herself attacked. A correspondent from a British newspaper was attacked with a large stone by ZANU (PF) supporters.

The small group of police near the street battle was slow to react. At this stage they may have been outnumbered by ZANU (PF) supporters and war veterans. At first the police made no effort to stop the assaults on NCA demonstrators and members of the public. Police reinforcements arrived on the scene shortly afterwards. The police allowed the armed group to close in on NCA marchers who ran away in several directions. Then police finally intervened to stop the violence and fired teargas near parliament, by Union and Nelson Mandela Avenues. The police fired teargas at fleeing NCA demonstrators rather than ZANU (PF) supporters.

Many of the armed group of attackers made their way without being apprehended by the police to ZANU (PF) provincial headquarters next to the Fourth Street bus terminus. On their way the group, using sticks, attacked people walking past the Wimpy restaurant on George Silundika Avenue and damaged a nearby shop window. They were heard accusing their victims of being supporters of the MDC. Riot police in Jason Moyo Avenue could see what was going on but did not stop the attacks or make any arrests.

Later MMPZ found that the foyer of the Quality International Hotel had also been attacked. Three army helicopters were circling above the city and the demonstrators and attackers dispersed. Shortly afterwards a few hundred NCA demonstrators reconvened and returned to Central Avenue where they were again tear gassed with at least five canisters of gas. All entrances to Central Avenue were cordoned off by a human chain of riot police. The remaining MMPZ monitor was prevented from talking to people on the pavement by a policeman who said this was illegal. The fleeing demonstrators were also tear gassed again by the police at NSSA House, Park Lane and the municipal car park.



Members of the public said the police arrested five demonstrators who were wearing MDC or NCA tee shirts as they left the city centre. An MMPZ monitor was detained for two hours by the police who wanted to confiscate a video camera.

On April 4 on BBC Network, Home Affairs minister Dumiso Dabengwa said police had not arrested anyone in connection with the city violence and were still investigating. He also claimed ZANU (PF) supporters and war veterans had also been injured in the march. MMPZ monitors saw no evidence of this.

No 4 – Account by Kuda

On Saturday 01.04.00, I was among the NCA marchers, whom I had joined shortly before the clash with ZANU (PF) supporters. I did not actually see them coming, but the next thing I knew, just as I joined the march, was people running back towards me some shouting “WAR VETS”, and warnings such as “THEY ARE COMING” from others. I ran for a nearby food court for refuge. I managed to look back towards the UDC CENTRE corner and could see a riot policeman holding one white guy in a bear hug just as one of the “ZANU (PF)” supporters came up from behind this white guy (in a yellow T-shirt and a cap) and caught him smack across his back with a stick. A teargas canister was fired at the corner and another right in front of us at the food court and we had to close up the sliding doors, but could actually see some other people running for their lives, children and the elderly included, with tears and snot running down their faces and others coughing all over the show. The crowds dispersed.

About twenty minutes later, as I was waiting for a friend at the corner of First Street and George Silundika Avenue, with an army copter making its rounds overhead and giving everyone the jitters, a group of war vets came down George Silundika Avenue chanting war songs and beating up just about everyone in their way, and once again shoppers had to abandon their business and run to safety. There was a truckload of riot policemen watching from the Jason Moyo Ave. corner. They did nothing but grin at the people, who had by now started shouting at them for doing nothing and seeming to condone (if not enjoy, in my opinion) the actions of the so called War Vets. It was only about ten minutes later that a group of about seven riot policemen came running down George Silundika avenue, seemingly after the war vets. It was quite a scary experience, to say the least.

No 5 – Account by Christine Mwaba

A driving School Instructor at Lister Building on Jason Moyo was beaten up by the ZANU (PF) mob for just wearing an NCA T-shirt. A lot of people witnessed this and were all afraid of being beaten up as well and just watched as ZANU(PF) pounced on anybody who happened to be on the same road as they were.

No 6 – Account by Dave Mills

A peace march was arranged in Harare on 1 April 2000 and the authority of the courts was obtained allowing the march to proceed.

Traffic trying to enter the city found that road blocks had been erected on all entry roads and vehicles were being turned back. One lady, Linda was in her pickup with a twelve people on the back, not only was she refused entry to the city but her vehicle registration number was recorded by the Police. Her “crime” was that the people in the pickup were all wearing opposition party shirts.

The official assembly point for the march was cordoned off by police and the people who assembled were denied the right to march by the Police. A second group of marchers formed elsewhere and marched to join the first group. The police refused to let the march proceed. I spoke to the Policeman who was giving the orders to the police and asked him to speak to an official who had a copy of the court order. The policeman said that he was not interested in the court order and that the matter should be discussed with the authorities at the Central Police Station.

The march moved around the Police cordon and started to march only to be confronted by a line of riot police. Holding their hands in the air the march forced its way peacefully through and around the line of riot police. No one in the march was carrying anything more offensive than placards and banners. The police were armed with guns and tear gas. The march leaders repeated on more than one occasion a call to make sure that the march was peaceful and orderly.

The march proceeded around the centre of the city in a peaceful manner with singing and greetings from the onlookers. As the march proceeded the numbers swelled from a around two thousand people to in excess of ten thousand people. The march was made up of a complete cross section of the nation from blacks to whites and from young to old.

The news is that the Police picked up two officials of the march, presumably because the march proceeded as allowed by the court order which the police were instructed to ignore. The march was peaceful and orderly from 10:00am when it started until 11:30am when a group of ZANU (PF) supporters arrived carrying pangas, sticks and stones arrived to confront them. The sticks had barbed wire wrapped around them.

These ZANU (PF) supporters began to attack the peaceful opposition march as well as innocent bystanders. One bystander trying to get into his car was attacked by a group of ZANU (PF) and badly injured, it could not be assessed at the time of writing if he was alive and seriously injured or dead. Another man coming out of a bank was attacked with a panga and his condition is extremely serious. Young girls were seen running away with bleeding lacerations.

This has to be a deliberate act of anarchy orchestrated by ZANU (PF) in an effort to try and retain its grip on power by intimidation, the rule of fear and violence.

The ZANU (PF) supporters have brought tear gas and violence to the streets. The city is now being patrolled by helicopters and riot police as the peaceful marchers and bystanders flee for safety from the stick welding ZANU (PF) supporters and the tear gas and riot police they bring with them.

No 7 – Account by Mick Pearce

I arrived outside the Causeway Post Office at 9.15am as advertised in several papers previously to attend the N.C.A. march for Peace. I soon found out that the 50 to 60 policemen armed with batons and helmets were there not to protect us but to tell us that the march was illegal. At about 9.45 a large truck full of armed police with an officer speaking through an amplifier. “This gathering is illegal disburse in 2 minutes” I saw an N.C.A. official walk up to him with the court order which stated that the police were not to interfere with this march, that it was permitted and should have police protection. The officer disregarded the N.C.A. official saying that the court order was a photostat copy and repeated his order to the crowd to disburse.

Grace Kwinjeh and I looked at each other and decided to sit down and many others behind us followed. The police marched forward and picked me up. I went limp to increase my weight but in no way resisted. Shame Chisirimunhu, Oniah Ndambakuwa and Shepherd Towindo were bundled into a Landrover with us and we were taken to the Central Police Station. After two hours we were in the Law and Order department where we were asked to sign an admission of guilt statement, pay a \$200 fine and we could go. We all refused and said we wanted a lawyer. Concern Ncube arrived. The police then produced their charge that we had acted in a manner to provoke public disorder and violence. We all denied this charge and we each signed our statement of denial. We were then told that we would have to spend the weekend in the cells before trial on Monday morning.

The only good thing about the cells was the 24 inmates. The accommodation was not good. Only six bunks and eight blankets and one WC in a room 2.1mtrs x 6 metres wide with a very small high level slit window and one glaring fluorescent tube over the door.

After the first four hours an officer from Law and Order came and again asked us to sign the admission of guilt statement and we could go. We all refused. We were brought food by friends so that we did not have to eat the sadza and cabbage diet and generally the wardens were jovial well disciplined and sometimes quite charming. My fellow prisoners were very friendly and supportive.

On Monday morning we were led out to the Law and Order department and then to a Landrover taking us to court via the Attorney General’s office. We waited in the street outside while the officers consulted with the AG. They returned half an hour later and we were taken, not to court, but back to the Central Police Station.

Here we were lined up and told that we could go free but the case was “pending further investigations”. This was not very satisfactory for us because clearly there was no case to answer and they were avoiding an embarrassment.

No 8 – Report by Standard Reporter

This report appeared in a local newspaper, *The Standard*, on 2 April under the headline “Havoc in City.” Riot police unleashed teargas in Harare’s Central Business District to break up violent clashes yesterday when ZANU (PF) supporters descended on 8 000 demonstrators participating in a peaceful march organised by the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).

The ZANU (PF) supporters, wielding iron bars and clubs, confronted the NCA marchers along Harare’s Union Avenue, between Julius Nyerere Way and First Street. Saturday shoppers, who were unaware of

the impending confrontation, were caught in the cross fire as they unknowingly created a buffer zone between the two parties.

Eight people, most of them Saturday shoppers, were injured in the scuffle. Five of them – four women and one man – were taken to the Baines Avenue 24 Hour Emergency Rooms where they were treated before being discharged. Three others were taken to the Avenues Clinic, where two were discharged in the afternoon and one was said to have been admitted to the High Dependency Unit. He was, however, said to be in a stable condition.

Zimbabwe's former colonial master, Britain condemned the violence as "thuggery orchestrated from on high".

The 'peaceful' march was organised to call for an end to the recent spate of invasions of commercial farms and an end to officially backed threats of violence should ZANU (PF) lose in the forthcoming election. The demonstrators were taken by surprise by the ZANU (PF) members, whom they initially thought were another group that was coming to join the peaceful march. They only realised too late that the mob, which numbered about 300, was in a war mood as they swooped on them, brandishing all sorts of weapons, including concrete blocks which they hurled indiscriminately at shopper and onlookers.

Police watched helplessly as the ZANU (PF) louts started beating anyone suspected to be part of the NCA demonstrators, causing part of the demonstrators to scurry for safety.

Narrating what happened, a participant in the demonstration told *The Standard*: "At various points the march paused, and one of these was the junction of First Street and Union Avenue. It seemed there was a group coming in on Union Avenue to join, but as they drew closer, there were cries of 'It's ZANU (PF)!' And people began to flee as the newcomers hurled rocks and other missiles. The few riot police on the scene ran to intervene but were vastly outnumbered and the attackers rampaged on up Union Avenue."

Richard Calder of St Luke's Anglican Church, one of the victims who sustained injuries on the head and back and was admitted to the Avenues clinic said: "It was a great victory for peace. We felt that the evil side of ZANU (PF) has come out."

A woman who was helping a beggar to get out of the way during the clashes was assaulted by ZANU (PF) supporters who accused her of being an MDC supporter. She was admitted at the Avenues and had three stitches on her head.

"We are disgusted. This is sickening," said Thoko Matshe, the chairperson of the NCA.

Earlier in the day, Grace Kwinjeh, an MDC executive member and Mick Pearce, a local architect, along with three others were arrested for refusing to obey police orders to disperse. The five were given an option to an admission of guilt, but they refused on the grounds that they had been granted a court order. They are now expected to appear in court tomorrow.

Brain Kagoro, the NCA's spokesman, said what irked them was that police watched as their members, who were holding nothing but placards, were beaten up. The police only reacted after several people had already been floored by the attackers.

Kagoro said the police had tried to deny them their right to carry out the peaceful march in the city despite the fact that they were awarded a court order by Justice Chatikobo compelling the police to allow the march to proceed. Kagoro said they submitted the court order to Senior Assistant Commissioner Emmanuel Chimwanda and Assistant Commissioner Banda, who is in charge of operations, but were surprised when some of their members were arrested.

Chimwanda told *The Standard* that NCA wrote a letter to them asking for permission to carry out the march and they were referred to the Officer Commanding District for permission. He said they were not granted permission because the War Veterans had also asked for permission to march in the city centre on the same day.

Said Chimwanda: “I wrote to them saying we were unable to give them protection because we were afraid that they would clash with the War Veterans, but this morning we saw them running around with a court order.”

Chimwanda said the NCA march also coincided with their operation where they were searching for dangerous weapons in vehicles that were coming into town so they did not have enough officers to offer protection during the NCA march.

No 9 – Reports from BBC Reporters

Running street battles broke out as the demonstrators were attacked by government supporters armed with clubs and stones. Police at first stood back, but then intervened with tear gas, as helicopters flew overhead. Correspondents say the attackers – many of them veterans from the war of independence – singled out white people. The demonstrators included elderly couples and families who walked peacefully through the capital until they were set upon.

The BBC’s correspondent in Harare, Grant Ferrett, says that for the next thirty minutes, government supporters swaggered through the streets beating people, apparently at random.

Protester Jenny Yon said: “I stood with a poster which said ‘no violence’, and they beat me.”

Eyewitnesses, including a BBC correspondent, say white protesters were singled out for attack by people thought to be former fighters in the independence war. The Harare demonstration was called to protest against the takeover of more than 700 white-owned farms by black war veterans.

A British journalist was among those injured. Andrew Meldrum of the Guardian was struck on the head by a missile, which he described as a “very large rock”. He said: “I was just writing something in my notebook when I felt this massive thud. “The original protest had been very joyful and peaceful but then the so-called bush war veterans came along. I saw people being beaten with steel bars, pickaxe handles and rocks. One man was on the floor unconscious and having convulsions.” Mr Meldrum said he believed that President Mugabe’s men were behind the attack. “They were targeting white people who weren’t even involved in the protest, even people coming out of the bank,” he said.

A BBC reporter Jane Standley who was present at the demonstration filed this report:

The march was peaceful, but seriously provocative in the eyes of the government. Traffic in downtown Harare was brought to a standstill as thousands of demonstrators walked, danced and ran through the streets, chanting anti-government slogans. This would have been unheard of only a few months ago in Zimbabwe, where opposition is rarely tolerated. Several times, a confrontation with the riot police was avoided as the demonstrators chanted: “Peace, peace, peace.” But when the riot police moved in, the violence was extremely ugly. As the tear gas was fired and the demonstrators ran away, many were caught and beaten by men in plain clothes.

Some are believed to have been from the security forces; others were veterans of the war of independence who were clearly being used as a government force. I saw a middle-aged white woman severely beaten with a club; all the blows were targeted around her head. Her husband suffered the same fate, as he tried to help her. They had been crossing the road after going to the bank when a man in plain clothes set upon them. They were clearly targeted. I was told by a black Zimbabwean woman to get off the streets or I would be beaten, too. She said she could do nothing to help me.

The race card has been played increasingly by the Zimbabwean government in recent months.

President Robert Mugabe has blamed white Zimbabweans for his humiliating defeat in a constitutional referendum in February. Since then, more than 600 white-owned commercial farms have been targeted by squatters from the Veterans’ Association, who, like many black Zimbabweans, are hungry for land. But many people here – black and white – think this is not the way to change things.

No 10 – Account by David Blair in Harare and David Graves for *Guardian* newspaper

A close relative of the Queen will telephone her today to express concern at the “evil actions” of Zimbabwe’s police after her son was badly beaten by them in Harare during an opposition march.

Margaret Rhodes, 74, first cousin of the Queen and a Lady in Waiting to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, said she would relay her son’s account of the march. She would ask the Queen to consider advocating sanctions against Zimbabwe, including possible suspension from the Commonwealth.

Mrs Rhodes, of Windsor, Berks, said last night: “What happened was evil and total anarchy. The demonstrators were chanting ‘peace, peace, peace’ and the atmosphere was happy and jolly. They came up against a line of police, which parted and allowed them through.

“It was then that the demonstrators were ambushed by Mugabe’s men. It seemed a well-planned operation, which was obviously condoned and orchestrated by Mugabe. It seems there is a total breakdown of law and order in Zimbabwe and that should not be tolerated in any country of the Commonwealth. The Queen, who loves the Commonwealth, should be told exactly what is happening there.”

Her son Simon, a naturalized Zimbabwean, said he had joined the demonstration by chance after encountering it in central Harare. Before the violent intervention of thugs from the ruling ZANU (PF) party, the march was “an extremely good-natured, happy” occasion. He said: “There were kids there and the response from all the pedestrians we passed was wonderful.”

Mr. Rhodes, a tourism consultant who has lived in Zimbabwe since 1977, left the demonstration to run some errands before it was attacked, but saw the violence from a window. He said: “I saw a poor chap who was bludgeoned and it was painfully obvious that the police allowed the attack to go ahead. They didn’t even help the casualties.”

With tear gas billowing through the streets and calm restored, Mr. Rhodes was walking back to his car when two policemen grabbed him from behind. He was thrown into the back of a Land Rover “in an extremely violent manner” and assaulted by four policemen.

He said: “One constable twisted both my arms behind my back and a sergeant repeatedly punched me in the throat. Another one hit me on the side of the head.” None of the police said a word or offered any explanation until the burly sergeant said: “People like you will have to learn to respect the government.”

He was taken to Harare central police station and questioned by an Inspector. Realising that he faced imprisonment, Mr. Rhodes succeeded in defusing the situation. Before being freed, he asked the Inspector whether the role of the police was to protect all Zimbabwean citizens. “He told me, ‘No, Mr. Rhodes, we are here to protect the interests of the government’. That was a very revealing comment.”

No 11 – Report from *Guardian* reporter, Jan Raath

Defiant marchers, bloodied after Saturday’s attack by a mob from President Mugabe’s ruling party, vowed yesterday to “intensify mass action”. The organisers of the march – the National Constitutional Association (NCA), an alliance of churches, labour unions and human rights groups – said that they were planning 100 days of peace marches and prayer vigils.

“We have a President who does not uphold the law he has sworn to uphold, and a police force so politicized that it is actively supporting the breakdown of law and order,” Canon Tim Neill, canon for the Anglican church’s Central African province, said.

At yesterday’s main service in the multiracial parish of St Luke’s in Harare’s suburb of Greendale, Canon Neill, who called the attack “state terrorism”, gave no sermon. Several members of the congregation were in bandages from injuries sustained during the attack. “I didn’t say anything. I let them speak,” he said.

Among those speaking up was Musa Kasimonje, who runs a shelter for nearly 400 street kids. He said he had overheard police officers during the march speaking over radios in Shona, giving the location of the march to the mob assembling at the ZANU (PF) headquarters.

Five NCA supporters were still in custody in Harare central police station yesterday, after being arrested on Saturday for disobeying police orders to disperse, even though they had a court order affirming their right to demonstrate, and directing police to protect the marchers.

The mood among those injured continues to be defiant. On Saturday I saw a young man run at 52-year-old Trish Swift as she stood in First Street in a daze after being beaten with sticks. He head-butted her at full tilt and sent her flying. She had to have stitches. "I don't think it spoiled what was achieved by the march," said Ms Swift, who helps runs a Buddhist centre. "ZANU (PF) ended up looking stupid."

Statements from senior police and government officials have been uncompromisingly threatening. Tim Henwood, President of the Commercial Farmers' Union, was told in a meeting with senior officers from the army and Mr. Mugabe's secret police that whites should keep out of politics, sources said. "They said if whites stick their heads above the parapet, they will get shot at. More, they will be aimed at," he said. Sources also confirmed yesterday that Mr. Henwood was warned by Joseph Msika, the second Vice-President, that if white farmers wanted the thousands of belligerent guerrilla war veterans off their farms, they would have to stop supporting the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. "He said if they do, it [the campaign of farm invasions] will stop tomorrow," the source said.

Many are pessimistic. "I believe a decision either has been made or is about to be made, that if I [Mugabe] cannot have it, I will destroy it," said Mr. Neill. "The addiction to power is so strong there is no way he will go towards a general election without throwing everything at the electorate."

Poppy McComish, 34, and her husband, Jim, 39, had to be treated in hospital after she was whipped with sticks and he had rocks hurled in his face from close range. "I couldn't sleep last night," she said. "Every time I closed my eyes I saw this woman with crazy eyes lashing me with branches. What we saw yesterday is that ZANU (PF) will grab at anything on their way down. "That's why I am frightened. It can get really ugly. Mugabe is dangerous."

No 12 – By a female who participated in the march

Here is my account of the march last Saturday. I have written a fact based 'history' as well a heart response 'her story'. I think that having them both fills out the picture more fully. I set off at 10 o'clock, but as I was approaching 2nd Street, I saw that the road was blocked by police. I guessed it was police stopping people going into town to the march, and went down Mazoe Street and into 4th Street.

The march started outside Causeway Post Office. There were very few people there when I arrived at about 10.15am (maybe 30). There were a small number of riot police there initially – about a dozen. Some drove off after a while. Maybe they thought the march would not happen with so few people, or maybe they went to Africa Unity Square, where other marchers had apparently gathered? Someone arrived with posters and banners of various kinds, some in Shona, some in English, some with messages related to peace, some about the war vets, some about the land going to chiefs. I took one with 'Peace in our time'.

We then progressed a short way down Central Ave towards 2nd Street, but were blocked before we reached 2nd Street by a wall of riot police. Perhaps about 20-30 of them. I am not sure where they came from, as I had not noticed so many before.

The crowd meantime had swelled to about 70-100 people, I would guess about half black, half white. Because the police were blocking our way, we sat down on the road opposite the Southgate and Bancroft offices. Mike Auret said a prayer about the need for peace in Zimbabwe. Then a black man addressed the crowd briefly, saying that if we were tear gassed and dispersed we should reform at Causeway post office.

He said that we should beware of ZANU (PF) supporters who might be disguised wearing MDC T-shirts. We were also urged to keep the march peaceful. He said other things, but I could not hear more than this.

Very soon after that a court order arrived giving us permission to march. Almost simultaneously as this arrived, so did a crowd of people – about 100-200 or so I would guess, all black that I saw. They turned in from 2nd Street into Central Ave. The riot police were sandwiched between the newly arriving crowd and our group. The riot police moved to the sides to avoid being hemmed in by crowds to their back and front.

Then the march began, setting off down 2nd Street, with the riot police walking alongside the marchers. I was with a group of three other white women and two children. The crowd grew as we progressed, with people waving and giving MDC waves from office windows and construction sites. It was a real carnival atmosphere. We went into Nelson Mandela and walked towards First Street, and the crowd seemed to be growing all the time. Many people on the pavement waved and cheered us as we went by. At First Street and Nelson Mandela a bus load of supporters arrived and joined the march, singing and waving. At this point it seemed to me that the march had the feeling of a post election victory march. ZANU (PF) was history and MDC were now in power.

We proceeded down Nelson Mandela Ave. to Leopold Takawira, where we passed by the commuter omnibus station near CIMAS. More cheers and waves of support. Motorists, who had to stop, hooted their support. At about this point a man whom I think on reflection was a ZANU (PF) supporter came up to me and walked alongside me. He was shouting things in Shona about the war vets and Mugabe that the people on the pavement seemed to find amusing. He said he was a welder, but when I asked what NEC grade he had he seemed not to be very sure. He seemed to appear by my side at various intervals during the march, despite the large crowd.

We then turned and walked up Leopold Takawira Street and into Samora Machel Avenue, walking towards First Street. The crowd was huge by this time, and easily filled a block long stretch of road. At this point I spoke to two riot police who were walking along side the crowd. They asked me if I was happy about the march, and I replied that it was important for people to express the way they felt. I said that this was a march for peace in our country and that peace was very much needed and that was why I had come. I also said that peace was about making friends – and this meant with the police as well as the marchers. We agreed that they had a tough job to do, and I wished them well and I moved off.

The march had been going on for about an hour at this stage. There was a good feeling amongst the crowd, e.g. people of all races were talking with other marchers, I saw one of the nuns from the Convent giving a high five to a commuter omnibus driver, and there was a white man in a wheel chair being pushed along as part of the march.

We turned into First Street and stopped at the corner of Union Ave. I could not make out what was happening as I was at the back of the crowd on the east side of the intersection. After a few minutes, word came that ZANU (PF) supporters were coming up Union Ave. from the Angwa Street side.

I said to my friends that I thought it would be good to leave now. As we turned to go, the crowd started running. I ran up Union Ave. towards Second Street, but spotted a blind beggar with a guitar. Knowing he would be caught up in the violence and not be able to see, I grabbed him by the hand and said “Madala you have got to run. Come”. I went a short distance, but by Truworths entrance the ZANU (PF) supporters caught up with us. They were dressed in civilian clothes and were carrying truncheons and branches. I also saw rocks being thrown from the direction of the ZANU (PF) supporters.

As I reached the Truworths doorway they (maybe two? Maybe more?) started beating me and kicking me. They grabbed the old man’s guitar from my hand and smashed it. They continued to hit me with truncheons. The look of hate on the face of one of the men who hit and kicked me was one of pure hatred. He said something about looking for MDC supporters. I shielded myself as best I could, but was hit on my arms and head, and kicked on my thigh. I did not see what happened to the old man, but my friends told me later that he was OK. I managed to squeeze myself amongst some other people (all black, maybe

half a dozen) sheltering in Truworths' doorway, and hid behind two black women. Their bodies screened me from view and the thugs moved on. At this point I noticed that my head was bleeding. I thought how similar this was to Jews in Nazi Germany.

Then we noticed tear gas. The three of us huddled together covering our faces with my towel. When the street calmed down after about 5 minutes, we made our way down First Street, holding the towel over our faces because of the tear gas. The two women were kind and were concerned about my wound and about my safety. Eventually I met up with a friend and the two women who had shielded me said that now that I was with a friend they could leave me with her.

I asked my friend to go with me to the Emergency Centre at Baines Ave. She did and I had 3 stitches to a cut in my head, as well as head X rays. While I was there I met a friend – Trish Swift – who said that she had been attacked whilst helping a man who was being beaten up. She was beaten and also head butted just above her left eye. Her eye was completely closed because of the swelling. She needed stitching to this wound. She said that the police only started to intervene once people were being beaten up.

When I got home I counted the number of times I had been hit or kicked. I was attacked at least 8-9 times. The kick mark on my upper thigh even showed the outline of the toes of the man who kicked me. This was vicious and prolonged attack. I was an unarmed woman who was clearly not fighting back. Another friend, Pip Curling, apparently recognised several 'street kids' in the attacking mob.

What is significant to me about this attack on the marchers is:

- a) that it was unprovoked – it had been completely peaceful until it was attacked.
- b) that the march was for peace and it was premeditatively attacked by armed men emanating from ZANU (PF) headquarters.
- c) that armed young men chased and attacked unarmed men, women and children.
- d) that whites were specifically targeted
- e) that people who were helping other people – such as my friend and I – were attacked whilst doing this.
This is one of the lowest of the low levels of behaviour in my opinion.
- f) that the above a) – e) was planned and supported by our government.

I believe that President Mugabe is greatly responsible for what happened at the march through his statements threatening "death" and "very, very, very, severe violence" to his political opponents. This incites people to the kind of violence we saw on the peace march. I believe that Parliament should impeach him for inciting violence, because by doing this he is acting unconstitutionally.

Since the violent attack on the Peace March last Saturday by ZANU (PF) war veterans/supporters, there have been so many kind and generous responses by people both in Zimbabwe and overseas. Their response brings home to me that in the midst of the hate and violence of a small number of people on Saturday, there are many people whose hearts have been deeply touched by what happened. And it seems increasingly to me that the kindness and compassion that has welled up this week, dwarfs the violence and anger of the few ZANU (PF) war veterans/supporters who chased and beat up unarmed men, women and children. For example, two black women hid me from the view of the ZANU (PF) war veterans after I had been beaten up. They were very concerned about my head wound, and stayed with me until I found a friend whom I could walk back with.

At the Baines Avenue Emergency Services, where the staff were great, two other friends arrived, one of whom had been beaten up and also needed stitching. She had been head butted above her eye whilst helping a man who was being beaten up by the ZANU (PF) war veterans. We sat on the beds sharing Cokes and bananas and directed loving kindness to the injured parts of our bodies, while my friend and I were stitched up. It was all rather family and supportive amidst the iodine and blood.

After the blind beggar's guitar was smashed by the war veterans, people spontaneously gave him several hundred dollars towards a new one. I have since received further cash for him from friends to whom I told the story. I went to see him a few days later. He was sitting in his usual spot, but was playing a harmonica in the absence of his guitar. I greeted him and told him that it was me who'd run with him on Saturday. He said that he had been very worried about what had happened to me and that he had prayed to God that I would be all right. He then bent down and pulled out a cassette tape of his music from his bag and said: "I want you to have this". I was very touched.

I then went around to friends and they showed me the volumes of email messages that they had received from people in Zimbabwe and all over the world, expressing their sadness and anger at what had happened, and offering support, including several offers of a guitar for the old blind man. I understand that a guitar from a Zimbabwean woman was given to the old man on Friday.

During the week I went into town and, as usual, street kids would come up to me and ask if they could look after my car. I said that I was feeling angry and disappointed with street kids at the moment as a friend of mine said she had recognised several of them in the violent mob at the march. They told me that they had not been involved. I showed them my arms, by then black and blue with bruises. Their expressions changed to one of shock, and they were clearly disturbed by what had happened. They shook my hand and said that they were very sorry that this had happened. I could see that they really were genuinely shocked.

The chiropractor I went to see this week to attend to my neck as a result of the attack, said that he had heard that many NCA people surrounded whites and women to prevent the attacking mob beating them.

My growing picture of what happened is that the war veterans have brought shame on themselves through their violent actions and to our government that appears to support them. But the thing that sticks most in my mind is the multiple images of ordinary Zimbabweans caught up in an extraordinary situation, exchanging heartfelt concern for each other. And it is THIS that makes me proud to be Zimbabwean.

No 13 – Account by Mrs S Jarvis

At some time between 11.00 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. on Saturday 1 April 2000, I was walking along Union Avenue on the pavement near the POSB. Although I had come to town to join the advertised NCA march for peaceful elections, I had left them about three quarters of an hour earlier, and was simply a lone middle-aged woman carrying nothing and with nothing to associate me with the marchers.

Just before this I had seen NCA and MDC marchers fleeing past me and being warned that "ZANU was coming". I saw a crowd of men waving sticks coming towards me. One came up close to me and shouted to go away and then with absolutely no excuse or provocation or justification of any kind slammed a large lump of concrete into my face from about 18 inches. I managed to partly shield my face with my hand but was still knocked to the ground with the force of the blow.

The same man then hit me with a stick. I saw other stones being thrown in my general direction, none of which struck me. Another man came over to me and also struck me with a stick. Their attention seemed to be distracted by something else: I was the crowd pursuing two men on the other side of the road and I was able to get away.

I attach a copy of a medical report showing the injuries sustained. I would say that the concrete used was about the size of a soup plate about two and a half or three inches thick. It was deliberately thrown at me from close range with what seemed to be considerable force. However it did not cause any permanent injury. I would not be able to identify any individual assailants.

The poster with which I had come to town with earlier but had shed before the attack on me bore the newspaper headline followed by my comment on it: "Mugabe threatens violence: All we want is a democratic choice = honest government".

No 14 – Sunday Mail report 2 April 2000

NCA marchers chased by war veterans

Violence marred the National Constitutional Assembly march held in Harare following a clash between war veterans and the NCA members in the city centre yesterday.

Under the banner “March for Peace, Justice and Democracy” hundreds of NCA and Movement for Democratic Change members marched through the streets of Harare yesterday morning disrupting traffic and chanting anti-ZANU (PF) songs and denigrating the government.

Traffic was brought to a standstill as the marchers took over the streets with youths from opposition parties *tyoi-toying* and declaring war on the war veterans occupying white owned commercial farms. A large part of the NCA crowd comprised members of the white community, including a well-known priest.

Although the marchers were initially unchallenged as they went around the central business district, war veterans who were meeting at the ZANU (PF) headquarters later took-up their challenge in the afternoon and violent clashes flared. The NCA marchers took to their heels.

The two groups clashed between First Street and Nelson Mandela Avenue, resulting in scores of people being injured after being attacked with sticks, stones and sjamboks as the two groups fought.

Police were quick to intervene, tear-gassing the fighting groups. People were forced to flee in different directions with the war veterans marching to the ZANU (PF) Harare Province officers before returning to the headquarters where they were addressed by the chairman of the Harare Province War Veterans Association, Cde Douglas Mahiya.

A 59-year-old white man sustained a deep cut on the head during the violent clashes. Despite his cut, NCA marchers hoisted Mr David Payne as he addressed them.



Mr Payne, who runs a construction company, said he was attacked by more than five youths when he was just standing away from the marchers. “I think I was attacked because of the colour of my skin,” he said.

Blind singer, Cde Levias Ruzive, who usually makes public performances at the corner of First Street and George Silunduka Avenue, had his box guitar destroyed by riotous youths suspected to be members of the NCA.

Cde Ruzive was also robbed of \$1 000, several cassettes and compact discs in the ensuing melee. “I have lost my means of earning a living and I am now appealing for help to raise \$4 000 to buy a new box guitar,” said a dejected Cde Ruzive, who said that well wishers could contact him at 13080 Unit N in Chitungwiza.

Addressing the war veterans who had gathered at the ZANU (PF) party’s Harare officers, Cde Mahiya said: “The NCA and MDC must not demonstrate against us. The NCA and other church members should not provoke us. They must respect us,” said Cde Mahiya.

He accused the MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai of being a sell-out, charging that Tsvangirai was a coward who had fled the war.

Cde Mahiya said there was no going back on the land issue. He said whites were supporting the MDC not because they wanted Tsvangirai to rule, but to safe guard their interests on land.

“The issue is about land. The whites know that Tsvangirai cannot rule so they are using him. The war veterans spearheaded the programme to get land after so many years of ‘consultations’, some of which were held in hotels while squandering money. Nothing came out of these discussions,’ he said to the crowd’s applause.

The war veterans national chairman, Cde Chenjerai Hunzvi said the launching of the second phase of the land resettlement programme at Dromoland Farm in Matabeleland North by President Mugabe was a way forward and should be applauded. At the farm war veterans were given 20 per cent of the land.

“We are intensifying the commercial farm occupation. There is no going back. Land will be given to the people. We are in the process of confiscating firearms. We want the police to explain what these guns were being kept for.

“If they do not, we shall confiscate the guns and keep them ourselves,” said Cde Hunzvi.

Cde Hunzvi said the war veterans would make sure that the country went for elections after all land had been given to the people.

Statements made by various organisations condemning the violent disruption of the march

No 1. - Statement by Amani

On the morning of Saturday, 1st April 2000 a large, peaceful march was taking place in Harare. Its purpose was to call for peace in our country and for elections to take place in conditions, which would ensure that they were free and fair. The march had proceeded around the streets of Harare and had been completely free of violence. The protesters were cheerful and non-intimidating and the general public seemed to be responding positively to the message being put across by the demonstrators. The protesters were composed of blacks and whites, men, women and children and even nuns and priests.

As the marchers were turning from First Street into Union Avenue in order to go to Africa Unity Square they were set upon by a group of at least 200 armed thugs. This group had set off from ZANU (PF) headquarters, after having been addressed by the Chairman of the War Veterans, Dr Chenjerai Hunzvi. They were carrying various weapons. They had armed themselves with branches they had broken off trees and with large stones they picked up. They obviously knew where the protesters were at that point. They ran up Union Avenue past contingents of riot squad, who made no attempt to stop them. They then launched a vicious and cowardly attack upon the peace marchers. People fled in terror. Amongst the fleeing people were shoppers and bystanders who were not part of the peace march. A barrage of stones was flung at the fleeing people. The stones thrown were very large stones.

Several people were hit on the head and various other parts of their bodies by the stones. Some were badly injured. People were chased and beaten with sticks and various other implements including in one case a strand of barbed wire. Whites were particularly targeted during this attack and a number of women were injured including two women who were trying to assist an elderly black and a blind man to get out of the way of the attackers. Some of the injured had not taken part in the march such as a white man who was attacked after he had come out of his bank. Only after the thugs had swept past did the police intervene by throwing tear gas to disperse people. The police apparently confiscated some weapons but no arrests were apparently made of violent attackers. Earlier the police had arrested two peaceful demonstrators who had refused to disperse when ordered to do so by the police.

This dreadful violence perpetrated upon defenceless, peaceful people must be condemned in the strongest possible terms by all people who believe in the peace, order and the rule of law. It is shocking in the extreme that such violence upon innocent people could be perpetrated in the middle of Harare. At the time this statement was issued no government official has publicly condemned this violent attack.

Unfortunately this violence was not unexpected. Government itself has created a climate of violence and a climate in which government supporters who commit violent acts against opposition members and whites believe that they will be given impunity. The head of Government, the President, has in recent weeks made various statements that can only be construed as encouraging violent acts against members of the opposition and white farmers. For instance, in one statement the President is quoted as saying: "Those who cause disunity among our people must watch out because death will befall them." Numerous statements have been made by government officials aimed at causing hatred towards members of the white community.

Furthermore ZANU (PF) has publicly admitted to using the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) to assist them in the forthcoming elections. Members of the ZNLWVA have made public statements threatening violence and in one case even threatening war if ZANU(PF) were to lose the election.

Our country is now on the verge of anarchy. To bring us back from the brink, the government and every opposition party must renounce all forms of violence, intimidation and racism. The police must take vigorous action steps to prevent any repetition of the sort of horrible violence by thugs that took place on Saturday. The police must also arrest and bring before the courts any persons inciting or perpetrating violence. The government and the various law enforcement agencies must also give an irrevocable undertaking to abide by all court decisions. The rule of law must be restored and rule by violent thugs must be stamped out. The government should immediately constitute an independent commission of inquiry into the events of Saturday.

Amani calls on all peace loving Zimbabweans to do all in their power to bring about the restoration of peace and justice in our country.

No 2 – Statement by Legal Resources Foundation of Zimbabwe

The trustees of the Legal Resources Foundation are shocked at the unprovoked violence, which occurred in Harare on 1 April 2000 when members of civic groups and the public exercised their constitutional right to demonstrate peacefully by holding a procession in downtown Harare.

Vicious attacks were made on defenceless people, innocent by-standers included, by a substantial group of people who were seen moving from the ZANU (PF) Headquarters in Rotten Row and carrying various weapons. In some cases even those who were helping the elderly and disabled were savagely attacked. Eye witnesses confirm that the initial attack took place without police intervention and that the armed assailants ran past several riot police without being restrained. The police reacted, using teargas, only after the assailants had attacked the peaceful demonstrators.

According to press reports, the police ultimately disarmed the assailants without charging them, alleging that there were too many. Nevertheless, earlier in the day, the police had arrested five of the demonstrators for allegedly disobeying an order to disperse.

The LRF trustees condemn this intolerable, despicable behaviour in the strongest possible terms. The conduct of the attackers, the slow reaction of the riot police and their selective use of their powers of arrest are yet further examples of the breakdown of the rule of law in Zimbabwe. Nor has there been any condemnation of the violence by the President, the Government or the Minister of Home Affairs in particular.

No 3 – Statement by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

ZLHR condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent attack, which was perpetrated upon peaceful marchers and innocent bystanders in last Saturday's March for Peace.

The sequence of events leads to the inevitable conclusion that a group of ZANU (PF) supporters armed themselves with weapons and set out from their meeting at ZANU (PF) headquarters with the clear intention of intimidating and causing physical harm to a group of fellow citizens whom they perceived as "opposition" supporters. Whether they were incited to action by any official of ZANU (PF) or the War Veterans Association cannot be proven at this time but we call for an immediate investigation into this aspect of the attack.

That an armed mob could pass through riot police on duty and attack persons exercising their constitutional right to demonstrate peacefully is also shocking in the extreme.

The behaviour of the police, in "turning a blind eye" to the mob which was visibly armed with weapons, requires investigation, as does the failure to arrest the perpetrators of the attack. This inaction, contrasted with their earlier activity in arresting five peaceful demonstrators before the march for "disobeying a lawful order to disperse", seems to indicate a high degree of partiality. We also question the lawfulness of the police instruction to disperse, since a High Court Order specifically authorising the demonstration to proceed was shown to the Officer in Charge.

We also condemn various recent statements made by the President himself and other Government officials, which could be interpreted as encouraging such violent attacks on members of the opposition and white Zimbabweans.

We call on the Government of Zimbabwe, every political party, and every individual citizen to renounce violence, intolerance and racism.

No 4 – Statement by Faculty of Law on Violence in Harare

The Faculty of Law is appalled by the events in Harare on the morning of Saturday 1 April 2000. A large peaceful march was taking place. The police had been notified of this march in advance and a court order had been served upon the police ordering that the march be allowed to proceed. As the marchers were moving up Union Avenue, a sizeable group of armed assailants without provocation savagely attacked the demonstrators. As substantial numbers of shoppers and bystanders were in the vicinity, they inevitably got caught up in this attack. The violent mob hurled large stones at the people who were fleeing from the attackers. They also set upon people and beat them with sticks, bars and various other implements. At least five people suffered serious head and facial injuries and had to be hospitalised. A number of other persons suffered less serious injuries. The victims included several women. It seems that the police did not intervene to stop this mob as it proceeded from ZANU (PF) Headquarters and went up Union Avenue openly carrying the weapons they were to use in this vicious attack. Only after the attackers had carried out their attack did the police intervene.

The Faculty is concerned about the recent escalation of violence in our country, the Harare incident being one of the worst examples of this. Far from seeking to curb this violence some government officials have made statements that have encouraged the use of violence against members of the opposition and against whites. Some leaders of the war veterans who have been called in to assist government in its election campaign have issued dire threats of violence.

If violence is not to spread further all Zimbabweans must renounce the use of violence. Leaders of the government and the opposition must condemn any resort to violence. Unless government condemns the violent incident in Harare, the impression may be created that government officials were actually involved in planning this attack or, at least, that government condones the attack.

It is imperative that the police investigate the Harare incident expeditiously and bring to justice not only the persons who perpetrated this lawlessness but also all people who instigated it.

No 5 – Statement by various British political leaders

The British Minister for Africa, Peter Hain said: "We strongly condemn all forms of violence, especially this sort of thuggery orchestrated from on high, which drags Zimbabwe's already tarnished image even lower." He added: "There is clear evidence of racist, anti-white attacks, which is especially disturbing coming from a party which came to power 20 years ago on a tide of anti-racist sentiment, committed to the end of white minority rule

The Conservatives have accused the UK government of failing to match its words with actions. Shadow Foreign Secretary Francis Maude said: "It's about time the British Government spoke out against Mugabe's corrupt regime, but as we've seen so often Labour prove to be all mouth and no delivery. We have called for Zimbabwe to be suspended from the Commonwealth until Mugabe's government is removed or until he completely changes his policies. Unless the British Government actually takes firm action, the words of Mr Cook and Mr Hain will prove absolutely meaningless, and the catalogue of corruption in Zimbabwe will simply continue."

No 6 – Statement by MMPZ on ZBC television broadcast at 8.00 p.m.

MMPZ was disturbed by the lack of balance in a news story broadcast on ZBC television on Tuesday 4th April, 8 p.m. bulletin. Part of the story was as follows:

"Newsreader: The National Secretary for projects of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association has denied reports that members of his association attacked members of the NCA and MDC in Harare last Saturday.

Andrew Ndlovu says War Veterans retaliated after being provoked by the 2 organisations during the peace march organised by the NCA.

Andrew Ndlovu: It was caused by unscrupulous supporters of the MDC and ANC (sic) who I think they had an agenda and advanced to attack the war veterans because they used abusive words and they were wearing MDC tee shirts and when war veterans and ZANU (PF) supporters were making a peaceful marching in support of land reform they were insulted and they were attacked by stones. And then it made war veterans, as trained people, to go into defensive. It was then they took the sticks with which they were attacking the war veterans and they retaliated in defence.

Prisca Utete: Are you saying that it is wrong to wear tee shirts with insignia of other parties?

War Veteran 2: Azvina kunge zvakashata kupfeka ma tee shirt e MDC party. Problem yavo ndeyekuti vanga vakasunudza ma placards ekuti isu tinorova, mawarvets machembera hamuchakwanisi kurwa nesu. Ma War vets were surprised kuti chii chirikuyitika. (Translation: There is no problem with wearing MDC T-shirts. The problem is that they were carrying placards saying "we can beat up War Vets. You are now old - you can't fight us". The war vets were surprised at what was happening.)"

All news footage of the event, including that aired by ZBC on Saturday evening, points to the fact that the above statements were not true. MMPZ monitors witnessed the group of war veterans and ZANU (PF) supporters leaving ZANU(PF) headquarters on Saturday 1st April. Many were pulling down tree branches in order to arm themselves prior to their march. MMPZ monitors saw the same group several minutes later in town chasing the NCA marchers with their sticks raised. ZBC pictures aired on Saturday's main news bulletin backed this up. Other news agencies also showed pictures of the ZANU (PF) group physically attacking unarmed citizens. There was no evidence that any of the NCA marchers were armed with sticks and stones. On the contrary, the more nimble NCA marchers fled as the onslaught began and were quickly dispersed with the help of police tear gas fired at them. Those caught and beaten with sticks and stones appeared to be those at the back of the march and passers-by.

MMPZ urges ZBC to be balanced in its reporting of such events, by giving groups accused of violence (in this case the NCA and the MDC) the right of reply. Reports would be further enhanced by neutral eye-witness accounts and the testimony of victims.

No 7 - Statement by Mr Alfred Nhema

Mr Alfred Nhema, chairman of the political science department at University of Zimbabwe said: "The political atmosphere is clearly inflamed. What happened [during the peace march] is a kind of confirmation that Zimbabwe is unfortunately moving towards chaos and that we are likely to see more and more cases of anarchy as we move towards elections." BBC report

No 8 - Statement by Women's Coalition

The Women's Coalition wishes to express regret and concern over the politically motivated violence that has been taking place in Zimbabwe and particularly over the incident that occurred in Harare on Saturday, 1 April 2000.

The creation and preservation of a stable and peaceful democratic nation requires respect for certain fundamental human rights, including freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and the right to hold peaceful demonstrations.

In particular, the Coalition wishes to highlight the failure of the police to provide protection for the marchers on Saturday. It is often the case that women are targets of violence during periods of political instability. The inertia exhibited by the police on Saturday is a cause for alarm to women and the entire population.

Due to the seriousness of the event, we call for an impartial inquiry, the prosecution of the perpetrators of the violence and for immediate action to ensure that such freedoms are secured in the future.

3. Concluding remarks

What happened in the Harare on 1 April 2000 was terrifying and was clearly intended to have this effect. Right in the middle of the city a peaceful demonstration was violently broken up by a large group of persons armed with dangerous weapons. The police failed in their duty to protect defenceless people against these aggressors. The government has not condemned this violent attack but instead government officials made remarks seeking to explain why the "war veterans" acted in the way they did. The failure to condemn this unlawful attack and the failure to arrest and prosecute any of the perpetrators of the assaults upon defenceless people points to a complete breakdown of the rule of law in Zimbabwe. It points to the fact that the protection of the law by the law enforcement agencies will no longer be extended to persons perceived to be demonstrating against government. The government has also withdrawn the protection of the law from white farmers whose farms have been invaded. The government and the police have refused to obey a court order ordering the removal of the illegal occupiers. The police have not offered protection to white farmers and farm labourers against violent attacks by the persons who have occupied their farms.

The President, members of government and the police force have all abrogated their constitutional duty to uphold and enforce the law of Zimbabwe. Gross human rights violations are occurring and these are being instigated, encouraged or condoned by government. A lawless situation is being created in which the rule of law is being cast aside in favour of violent anarchy. Unless this situation is reversed and the rule of law is restored to its rightful place as a key component of a democratic state, Zimbabwe could descend into a state of chaos. The law must be respected and enforced. War veterans and other supporters of the ruling party must not be misled into believing that they can, with impunity, attack defenceless persons exercising their constitutional right to engage in a peaceful demonstration or unlawfully occupy farms and assault and intimidate the people who are lawfully on those farms.

Endnotes

- 1 For an analysis of the biased displayed by the state media in relation to political violence see Africa Watch report no 9 March 2000 entitled "The 2000 Elections Making and Breaking the Rules." In a covering letter to President

Mugabe Africa Watch called on members of government to publicly and collectively condemn all behaviour which is violent, threatening or intended to intimidate.”

- 2 *The Herald* 8 April
- 3 Dr Hunzvi is facing criminal charges of fraud in which he is alleged to have defrauded the War Victims Compensation Fund of \$361 620. He has also appeared in court on a charge of defrauding war veterans companies of \$3 million. Recently police said they were keen to interview him in connection with allegations of fraud at one of the ex-combatants' companies, Zexcom.
- 4 Jerry Grant, vice-president of the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) said "I'm shell-shocked. I just can't believe a government can behave in this manner." The Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) represents most of Zimbabwe's commercial farmers. Grant told AFP that the invasions were orchestrated by the government, which has blamed whites for its referendum defeat. "The word is out that this is punishment for the whites for rejecting the constitution," he said. "It is orchestrated at the highest level. There are government and party vehicles involved in delivering (the invaders)." Grant said white farmers had been subjected to "serious intimidation". "The police are aware of this and they're still doing nothing about it. They've had an instruction from the top not to interfere." But Information Minister Chen Chimutengwende described as "absolute rubbish" allegations that the war veterans' actions were incited by the government. He said "those who voted 'no' (in the referendum) complicated the matter. It's now leading to these invasions and I can only see more of the invasions." *Mail and Guardian* 2 March 2000.
- 5 Mr Andrew Ndlovu is a rehabilitated former anti-government dissident who fought to destabilise Zimbabwe during the mid- 1980s. He operated as a dissident in Matabeleland until he received a government amnesty in 1987. He is alleged to have been involved in the kidnapping and murder of four tourists. He is also alleged to have been involved in a number of murders of DDF workers and a number of rapes.
- 6 *Daily News* 16 March 2000; *The Herald* 16 March 2000.
- 7 *Daily News* 17 March 2000.
- 8 *Daily News* 29 March 2000.
- 9 *The Herald* 8 April 2000.
- 10 *The Herald* 29 February 2000.
- 11 Speaking in a CNN interview he said "We did not order the war veterans to occupy land. They did it entirely on their own, but we can talk to them and we can advise them. As long as the occupation is peaceful and there is no really seizure of any property on the land or any violence, it amounts to a mere demonstration and to the extent that it is a mere peaceful demonstration, we will not intervene. The government has not intervened and if that is encouragement, well let it be, but we haven't actually organised it in that physical sense." The interview was published by the *Sunday Mail* and broadcast by ZBC.
- 12 The High Court also ordered that in taking action to evict the illegal occupiers, the Police Commissioner and his officers are to disregard any executive instruction if that instruction prevented the police from effecting the evictions. The executive has deliberately misinterpreted it to mean that they could not intercede to assist in the process of ending these illegal farm occupations.
- 13 *The Herald* 1 March 2000.
- 14 The Minister of Information, Chen Chimutengwende is quoted as saying "I don't know what the police will do on this issue, it is a very political matter. Chen yesterday. He questioned whether the courts could give orders to Mr Mugabe and the police commissioner, Augustine Chihuri.
- 15 See, for instance, *Daily News* 10 April 2000.
- 16 The official spokesperson for the NCA, Mr Brian Kagoro, supplied this information.
- 17 Verbal report from Mr B Kagoro.

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- 18 In its report on 2 April 2000 the *Sunday Mail* tried to make out that there had been clashes and fighting between the attackers and the marchers. However, the headline for the article reads “NCA marchers chased by war veterans.”
- 19 The *Sunday Mail* reported on 2 April 2000 that the musician had his box guitar destroyed by riotous youths suspected to be members of the NCA. This is entirely false.
- 20 *Sunday Mail* 2 April 2000.
- 21 Report from person who heard this address.
- 22 *The Herald* 5 April 2000.
- 23 Interview with BBC broadcast on programme Focus on Africa on 3 April 2000.
- 24 Broadcast on the 8 p.m. news bulletin on 6 April 2000.