

ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM

**Report on Pre-election Political
Violence in Mberengwa**

17 November 2000

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (also known as the “Human Rights Forum”) has been in existence since January 1998. Nine non-governmental organisations working in the field of human rights came together to provide legal and psycho-social assistance to the victims of the Food Riots of January 1998.

The Human Rights Forum has now expanded its objectives to assist victims of organised violence, using the following definition:

“organised violence” means the interhuman infliction of significant avoidable pain and suffering by an organised group according to a declared or implied strategy and/or system of ideas and attitudes. It comprises any violent action which is unacceptable by general human standards, and relates to the victims’ mental and physical wellbeing.

The Human Rights Forum operates a Legal Unit and a Research and Documentation Unit.

Member organisations of the Human Forum are:

- The Amani Trust
- The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
- The Legal Resources Foundation
- Transparency International (Zimbabwe)
- The University of Zimbabwe Legal Aid and Advice Scheme
- Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of the Offender
- Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
- Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
- Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association

The Human Rights Forum can be contacted through any member organisation or the following personnel:

- The Chairperson, c/o P O Box 5465, Harare – cell phone #091 233 712
- The Co-ordinator, c/o P O Box CY 1393, Causeway – cell phone # 091 337 699
- The Project Lawyer, c/o P O Box 5465, Harare – cell phone #091 238 070

Email: admin@hrforum.co.zw

Website: www.hrforumzim.com

All earlier reports can be found on the website.

Introduction

In the period leading up to elections violence, threats and intimidation were used extensively to coerce voters. Politicians of the ruling party and their supporters made statements indicating that the ballot would not be secret and that reprisals would be taken if people voted in certain ways. Some had been warned that the ruling party had ways of finding out which party each voter had voted for and those that did not vote for the ruling party would 'face the consequences'. Voter education came too little too late, thus those voters that were brave enough to go to the ballot were not aware of their right to a secret ballot in which the choice of who should govern them was theirs.

Many of the victims have been severely injured, some maimed for life. Along with pain and fear, some have either lost their jobs or are unable to return to them. Others live with the emotional trauma that the threats and intimidation caused them. None of the victims have been left unscathed by political violence. It is something that most of them will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum – the “Human Rights Forum” – has previously issued a number of reports in connection with the widespread violence that has characterised this general election. These reports were based upon both the evidence of actual victims of violence as well as the evidence from secondary sources such as journalists and other eye witnesses to the violence.

This present report deals with the area of Mberengwa in particular. However, it is indicative of the huge scale of targeting of members of opposition parties and non-politically connected persons throughout the country. Office holders and supporters of parties in opposition to Zanu (PF) were the primary targets of political violence, in particular those belonging, or suspected of belonging to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). People whose political affiliation was unclear were not spared. Few Zanu (PF) members were exposed to any violence.

The following report will go into great detail about the nature of violence and intimidation that characterised the run up to elections in Mberengwa (both East and West constituencies). This report contains observations and factual material on the violence and intimidation extracted from first hand reports of the victims of political violence in Mberengwa.

The data from the report is based on an epidemiological approach, and a household survey was conducted throughout the constituency in nearly every ward. By the end of the election the Human Rights Forum had received only 22 cases from Mberengwa East, whilst over 300 cases emerged from the community survey. It is thus clear that there are significant differences between the “passive” capture of data from persons seeking help and the “active” capture of cases from a community survey. The difference between “passive” and “active” is roughly 1:30, and this needs to be appreciated when assessing the scale of the election violence nationally.

A small team of researchers were trained in interviewing techniques, and all interviewers used a standard human rights reporting form developed by the Human Rights Forum. Although many individuals did not wish to be interviewed, a large number did, and more data continues to come in. The large number of arrests of perpetrators of violence in the pre-election period following the elections helped considerably in allaying peoples' fears and facilitated this research. However, the Amnesty recently granted to most of these perpetrators will clearly re-create a climate of fear and will make future data capture very much more difficult.

Population background for the area

Situated in the province of Midlands in southern Zimbabwe. The total population of Mberengwa is 182 527 with the breakdown of gender for males and females being 85 996 and 96 531 respectively. Population density is 26.5 pers/sq km in this densely populated area where the average size of a household is 5.6 persons.

Voter Turnout

The election in Mberengwa East attracted strong interest from both local and international observers, especially because of the frequent reports of extreme violence being perpetrated on the supporters of Ms Sekai Holland, the MDC candidate for the constituency.

Total Eligible Voters	89 433
Total Voter Turnout	50 551
Total who did not vote	38 882
Percentage Of Voter Turnout	57%

As can be seen from the table above, 43% of the eligible voters in Mberengwa were unable to or chose not to exercise their right to vote.

Summary of information on Mberengwa Database

All the data received was compiled on a computer database so that both qualitative and quantitative analysis could take place.

Nature of Incidents

The total number of victims of political unrest in Mberengwa recorded on the database is 335. The incidents are categorised in the following categories: Death, torture, ill treatment, arrest, detention, property damage, intimidation or threats and other.

Some victims may have experienced incidents that may be placed in two or more of the categories above. For example a person may have been intimidated and detained as the victim describes in Case 3.

Case 1

At around 8pm on mid May, Patrick Masunda and David Matsheza approached the complainant's homestead demanding MDC membership cards. They hit the complainant on the head with a stool and also harassed his mother before leaving. As they threatened to come back the following day the complainant fled to Gwanda until elections had passed.

Case 2

I was threatened because I was seen socialising with MDC supporters. I was told to surrender all my cards. Zanu (PF) supporters went door to door demanding MDC cards. I tried to avoid being beaten by keeping on the run until elections had passed.

Case 3:

All my clothes were destroyed. I was detained for 3 days by Zanu (PF) youths during which time I was starved. I did not sleep instead I was constantly intimidated and threatened with death. The Zanu (PF) youths also made me their cook.

Ages of victims

The ages of affected victims ranges from 10 to 87 thus showing the indiscriminate nature of the violence inflicted on victims.

Case 4:

(Victims aged 10)

He was beaten up because his family are MDC supporters. Zanu (PF) youths approached his family on several occasions. His family was threatened into surrendering all MDC material. Pepukai was one of the chief culprits involved in many of the incidents. The victim's schooling was interrupted due

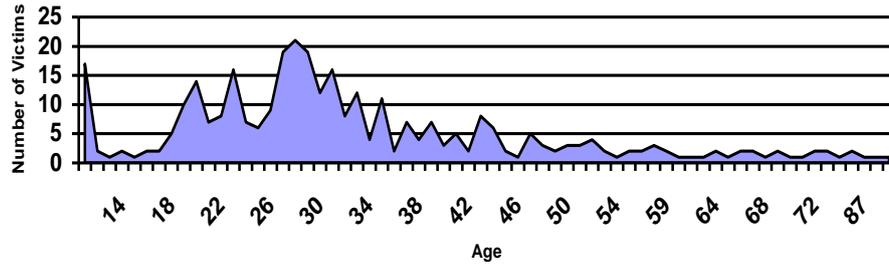
to political disturbances. The threats he received forced him to cut his schooling short for the time being.

Case 5:

(Victim aged 78)

Zanu (PF) supporters approached his home at about 1.00 am while he was asleep and broke into his house and beat him up. They did the same to his wife. They broke his sewing machines and door paddocks and stole \$5 000.

Age profile of victims



Gender distribution

There are a greater number of females than males in the Mberengwa area. However composition of victims by gender shows that more males were attacked than females. It is therefore possible to conclude that males were targeted to a greater extent than females. The ratio of male to female victims being 3:2.

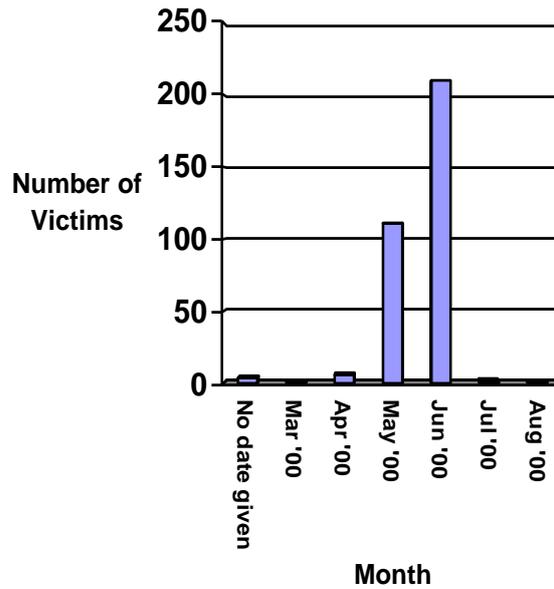
Gender profile of victims



Dates of incidents

Incidents of political violence were relatively low throughout the months of March and April with one and six cases recorded respectively [see table below]. A sharp rise in the number of incidents of politically incited violence, intimidation, threats, and property damage occurred in the period closer to elections. Perpetrators perhaps believed that with these incidents fresh in the mind of the victims at the time of going to the polls, the votes they cast would be in favour of the ruling party. One hundred and eleven incidents were reported for the month of May. Pre-election political unrest peaked in the month of June, when elections were held, with two hundred and ten cases reported. This shows the mood and atmosphere in which the elections in Mberengwa were held.

As can also be seen there is a significant decline in the violence after the election. It is difficult to assess whether this was wholly due to the fact that Zanu (PF) won all the seats, or that more than 200 individuals were arrested during the next two months. It is important to note here that the electoral result has been challenged in the courts, and, if successful, will result in by-elections being run in the constituencies in this area. With the release of virtually all the perpetrators under the general amnesty promulgated by President Mugabe, it is possible that extreme violence could return to Mberengwa in the very near future.



	No date given	Mar '00	Apr '00	May '00	Jun '00	Jul '00	Aug '00
Number of Victims	4	1	6	111	210	2	1

Perpetrators

The perpetrators of the violence in the recorded cases are all from or affiliated with the ruling party, Zanu (PF). Some victims identified their perpetrators as belonging to a particular group, for example Zanu (PF) youths or War Veterans but were unable to name an individual amongst those who terrorised them. Cases may exist in which the perpetrators are from the opposition parties and who behaved violently towards members of the ruling party. However, as these were not recorded or reported, it is impossible for any data to be compiled regarding them. Only one case has been reported involving a fight between an MDC member and a member of Zanu (PF) which resulted in the death of the Zanu (PF) member.

Others knew some of their victimisers by name and gave such names. There was a group of well known perpetrators named by several victims, namely, Langton Mangema, Festos Jamela and Clifford Donsa led by Wilson Kufa Chitoro commonly known as 'Biggie' Chitoro. He and six other war veterans have since been remanded in custody and charged with the murder of an MDC activist who died in Mberengwa on 9 June. By the end of September more than 200 persons had been arrested and charged with crimes relating to the election period. As can be seen from the table [see section on amnesty below], 96 perpetrators were identified, which means that 31% of the Mberengwa sample knew their persecutors.

Re-education exercises

The members of Zanu (PF) and the war vets who unleashed their reign of terror in Mberengwa undertook what they called 're-education camps' where the victims were forced by being assaulted, or with the threat of impending violence, or through intimidation to sing pro-Zanu (PF) songs and slogans. They were also made to march and denounce their membership to opposition parties.

Case 6:

Letter Mapiye and company met me at Mataga Growth Point and accused me of supporting MDC They forced me to become a Zanu (PF) member and I underwent what they called a 're-education exercise'. They forced me to lie on my stomach and beat me with sticks. They forced me to join their operation and promised to burn my home if I absconded.

Case 7:

I was forced to linger around the village during the night, singing for the Zanu (PF) youths.

Case 8:

I was forced to cook for Zanu (PF) youths. I was also made to run the whole night from Musume to Mataga being made to sing.

Unwilling tools of intimidation

Supporters of the opposition became tools used by the ruling party to terrorise other opposition members. Unable to find voluntary recruits to assist them in their barbaric exercise, Zanu (PF) members and war vets began to forcefully recruit members of the opposition party. They were made to intimidate and beat up other members of their own party and were at times used as a decoy when trying to gain entry to the homes of supporters of the opposition movement. Unsuspecting victims would open their doors to those they thought were fellow party members whereupon the Zanu (PF) members would take over and either steal or damage property. They would also beat up their victims, beatings in which the unwilling recruits were made to take part.

Case 9:

I was at home in Masaga Village when a group of people came saying, "Let's go to a Zanu (PF) rally". When we got there we were forced to sing Zanu (PF) and Chimurenga songs. We were ordered to go to Mataga and beat MDC supporters. If we failed to do so we were told we would be beaten.

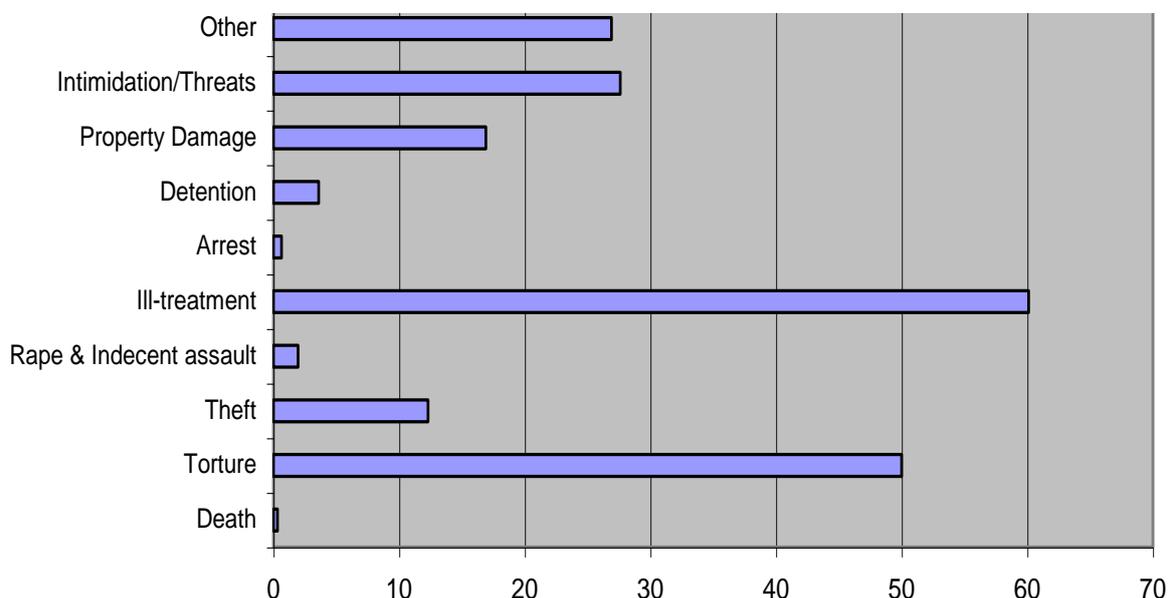
Case 10:

We were forced to attend Zanu (PF) rallies at night. We were used as tools to intimidate people to vote for Zanu (PF).

Nature of human rights violations

These are described under the various headings indicated earlier. The table below shows the frequency of the various types of human rights violations reported. As can be seen, torture, ill-treatment and property damage are the most frequent violations reported. Rape and indecent assault are not reported with any frequency, but it should be remembered that these violations are generally under-reported and more so in civil conflicts.

Frequency of human rights violations in Mberengwa East



Torture

Zanu (PF) members and war veterans established a base for torture and assault at Texas Ranch Farm in Mberengwa. Several persons took part in the torture that included burning and cutting members of or suspected members of the opposition. Torture and assault at the base was led by a man known as 'Biggie' Chitoro whose name is actually Wilson Kufa Chitoro.

Case 11:

I am an MDC member from Buhera. I was one of those who went to Mberengwa to escort the MDC candidate for Mberengwa East, Mrs Holland for nominations. On 3 June we went back to Mataga growth point so we could make signatures on the nomination form. We did this successfully. On our way back, the truck in which five of us were travelling broke down about 10 kms outside Mberengwa. We left it there overnight and we got a lift to Zvishavane. We thought it was a problem of fuel so the next day we went back with 40 litres of fuel. We found the car and filled it up, but when we tried to start it the truck would not start. So we found we had another problem. It was around 4:00 pm. I was looking at the engine, when suddenly I saw a crowd of people coming from nowhere, there were plus or minus 60 of them. They were carrying weapons, sjamboks etc. There were only four of us so we just had to surrender. I don't know how they identified us as MDC. We were even wearing Zanu (PF) T-shirts for disguise purposes. They suspect anyone they don't know. If you are a stranger it is a no-go area. They made us lie down. They took ropes and tied our hands and legs and they started assaulting us. They were beating us with sjamboks. While this was happening, a police defender reached the scene. The driver was a sergeant. They had someone inside they were taking to hospital I think. Then he drove away saying he would come back, but he didn't. Around 7:00 pm, they took us to their base at Texas farm. Most of them were of school-going age. They are staying there and killing the cattle from the farms to eat. They made a fire and they began assaulting us using fire. First it was my friend Matika. They tied plastic round his hands and legs and then lit it. He is now being treated in Zvishavane. Next it was my turn. They beat me first. Then they used all the same tactics, wrapping my legs, hands and private parts and lighting the plastics. They also lit some plastic and then dropped it on us as it melted. They were taking hot ashes and spreading them on my body. My hands and legs were tied. [The victim has visible, severe burns all over his back, arms and chest consistent with this description, he was on his way for further treatment at the hospital at the time of the interview].

The main reason I was tortured so badly was because I am from Buhera and that is where our president [Morgan Tsvangirai] is also from. There was one guy among the attackers who is from the same rural home as me and recognised me so I couldn't deny it. After they had finished with me, it must have been around 3:00 am, they began on the third guy, Masumba. But he became possessed and was speaking in tongues. This saved him because they were scared of that and they stopped. He was only beaten and not burnt. The fourth guy who was with us had escaped at the scene. We were then told that the boss, Biggie Chitoro, would come back in the morning and his mission was to take off one of our eyes. I anticipated greater danger and I planned to escape. I told them I had diarrhoea and I was taken to the bush and back very often, every five minutes. It was not true, I just aiming for them to give me an old man to escort me who could not catch me. Fortunately, around 4:00 am, they gave me an old man who was even afraid to go in the bush. I was making sounds as if I had diarrhoea, but I was removing the rope around my legs. When I got it off, I ran away. I only heard the old man shouting to the gang that I had escaped. They left four people guarding my colleagues and they started pursuing me. I managed by all means not to be captured. I went onto the mountain. I was there from about 6:00 am. I spent the whole day there and found nothing to eat. I was hungry and my legs had thorns in them. I was completely naked. Around 4:00 pm I decided to get onto the road and stop a vehicle. I did so but with difficulties. I had made crutches out of sticks. A car stopped and picked me up and took me to Mberengwa. He refused to take me to the police for fear of victimisation. But when we were a short distance from the police I saw my friends and stopped to pick them up. They had been released because of that boy who was possessed. When we got to the police we filled in

all the forms and then were taken to hospital in Zvishavane. I was given a bed and was receiving all treatments. The CIOs were coming day and night to our house. The doctor knew the CIOs and the following evening they came again and he threatened to fight them if they persisted. He called for police assistance. The police spent the night and arrived at the hospital gate to prevent the CIOs from coming. One of the CIOs was brought in a wheelchair to put in the bed next to mine. The doctor realised and was furious. Then yesterday my colleagues came to see me and the doctor told them that I had to disappear. So I was taken out and brought to Harare. I have burns all over my back, front, buttocks, private parts, thighs and legs. I was taken to the theatre to remove the thorns in my feet.

Case 12:

I was beaten while at home by about 20 men. They then kidnapped me and detained me for 4 days, took away my ID and only let me go on the 5th day. I was assaulted with sticks, chains and stabbed with knives. They told me not to move away from my home but I ran away to Gweru.

Case 13:

I am an ordinary MDC member based in Mberengwa. On 10 June 2000 I repaired two punctured tyres for an MDC official who had come for a rally in Mberengwa. 5 Zanu (PF) supporters came to my house, but they could not locate me. Three people came back on 24 May 2000 and they accused me of being a sell-out. The people were Chitova, Svinurai and another whose name I have forgotten. They ordered me to lock my doors and follow them. I asked them our destination, but they refused to tell me. One of them entered my room and grabbed me by the hand, and I pushed him away. He signalled for his other colleagues to come, and they surrounded my place (there were about thirty of them). They started assaulting me with booted feet and open hands. They tied my hands and ordered me to go to Texas Farm, which is about thirty kilometres away. I was being forced to dive into the water whenever we came across a pond or river, and was assaulted all the way to the farm. At the farm I was assaulted by yet another group of people, who were singing Chimurenga songs. Two other people who had been abducted were also brought. They started assaulting all of us with sticks. We were forced to go to the cattle dip and made to swim. We were not allowed to come out of the tank, even when we began to tire. They had surrounded the tank, and they assaulted any one of us trying to come out of the tank. After that we were ordered to come out and wriggle on the ground like snakes for a distance of about 20 to 30 metres, but we could not. They then continued assaulting us, but saw that we couldn't take much more. We were then told to jump like frogs, but we couldn't. They allowed us to walk to their base. Some of them told us to climb into a trench then jump out of it headlong, but we refused. The assault then continued. They took some hot ashes and poured them down the trousers of the other two people. Then one of their commanders (Makoni) arrived and told them to stop. We then warmed ourselves by the fire, and we slept there. The following day we could not walk, so we put up there for another night. They then escorted us back to our villages. We were told not to report to the police or to seek medication, but I had to. I went to Munene Hospital and received some treatment. They could not take an X-ray because there was a power cut, and I did not go back when they asked me to, for fear of another abduction.

Murder [Extra-judicial killings]

Case 14:

An MDC activist, Fainos Kufazvinei Zhou (23) died on 9 June 2000. He had been abducted together with his brother from a Growth Point in Mberengwa by a mob of Zanu (PF) supporters. They took the brothers to nearby Texas Ranch farm that was being used as a base by the war veterans. They were held and tortured for five days. Over that period they were interrogated and viciously beaten up. Fainos was injured so badly he died shortly after they were released. His brother had to be rushed to hospital for treatment for serious injuries including a broken leg.

Case 15:

Also on 9 June 2000 in Mberengwa a Zanu (PF) supporter died after being stabbed by an MDC member. The police say that the Zanu (PF) man was drinking beer at a business centre when a suspected MDC supporter ordered him to take off his Zanu (PF) T-shirt, saying it was out of place, This resulted in an altercation between the two. It is alleged that the MDC supporter pulled out a knife and stabbed the Zanu (PF) supporter in the chest and the victim died before he could be taken to hospital.

This latter case is not an extra-judicial killing in the strict sense, emerging as it does from an altercation.

Property damage/Arson

Homes and food stores were deliberately and callously razed to the ground leaving the victims homeless and without food. Food stores in granaries are used to feed families throughout the year and carry them over to the next harvesting season. Therefore the victims concerned will be unable to feed themselves for the next year even if they are able to rebuild their homes or to construct some sort of temporary accommodation.

Case 16:

I was detained for 4 days and no food was supplied to me. All my MDC campaign materials were taken and my house was burnt together with my granary and everything belonging to me.

Case 17:

Some Zanu (PF) members came at night and set my home on fire. When I came out to investigate I was hit on the chin before I ran away to report the matter to the police.

Case 18:

I was beaten on my chest with logs and my home was burnt to ashes. Everything in my granary was destroyed.

Case 19:

I was made to sing and chant Zanu (PF) slogans and move I was beaten on my chest with logs and my home was burnt to ashes. Everything in my granary was destroyed. The attackers remained around the village all night.

Case 20:

Zanu (PF) youths approached me at about 11:25 pm and asked me to produce my Zanu (PF) card. Seeing that I had failed to produce it they began to beat me. They went on to set my homestead alight.

Intimidation and threats

People were commonly intimidated and threatened in order to get them to support the ruling party Zanu (PF). They were forced to buy Zanu (PF) membership cards even though they had no wish to be members of the party. It was also common practice to force people to attend Zanu (PF) rallies in order to make it appear that support for the ruling party was widespread. Supporters or suspected supporters of the opposition were threatened with beatings if they continued to support the opposition movement.

Case 21:

I was forced to buy Zanu (PF) cards and accused of supporting MDC I was also forced to attend a Zanu (PF) meeting at Rwavamutagwi that openly abused teachers who supported MDC I was also forced to contribute money towards feeding Zanu (PF) youths.

Case 22:

Zanu (PF) supporters came demanding MDC membership cards and T-shirts. They threatened that if I did not produce these things they would kill both my husband and myself.

Indiscriminate assaults

The assaults carried out by Zanu (PF) members and war veterans were totally indiscriminate in nature. They ill-treated and assaulted people regardless of their age or disposition. People in their late 70's and pregnant women were assaulted. This resulted in one woman having a miscarriage.

Case 23:

A group of Zanu (PF) youths came to my homestead in search of my husband. I was 7 months pregnant at the time. They demanded my MDC card. They beat me severely on my stomach leading to the death of my unborn baby. They also damaged my radio and stole 3 blankets.

Case 24:

I was taken from home around 12noon and forced to jump the fence surrounding my home and forced to accompany the Zanu (PF) supporters to where my friends were. I had no other clothes. Although I was pregnant I was forced to move very fast and was led to Garinyama School. As a result my baby arrived prematurely on the 27th of July instead of in September. I was forced to sleep outside out of fear.

Targeting teachers

Attacks upon teachers directed mainly at opposition supporters were part of a policy of intimidation against those who had the capacity and influence to inform their communities. Schools in some areas were unable to function as a result. It seems that educated individuals were regarded as a threat because they were capable of exercising their choice at the ballot box and were not influenced by the false story spread by Zanu (PF) in rural communities that Zanu (PF) would know which individuals have voted for the opposition, and would target them after the elections.

In Mberengwa the educational delivery system was highly affected by the unrest. Twenty-five teachers were affected by incidents of political unrest, which undoubtedly impaired their ability to teach their pupils. Seventeen students were either intimidated or beaten up. A ten-year-old student was forced to drop out of school after he was beaten up by Zanu (PF) youths because his family were MDC supporters, while a girl aged 13 was living in the bush for one and a half weeks after being threatened by Zanu (PF) members. She attended school coming from the bush every day for the full week and a half.

Case 25:

I was forced to buy Zanu (PF) cards and accused of supporting MDC. I was forced to attend a Zanu (PF) meeting at Rwavamutagwi which openly abused teachers for supporting MDC I was also forced to contribute money towards feeding Zanu (PF) youths.

Case 26:

I and all the staff at the school were threatened. We were forced to attend a Zanu (PF) meeting at Rwavamutangwi and forced to buy Zanu (PF) cards. We were also forced to donate money to Zanu (PF) youths. They came back on several occasions.

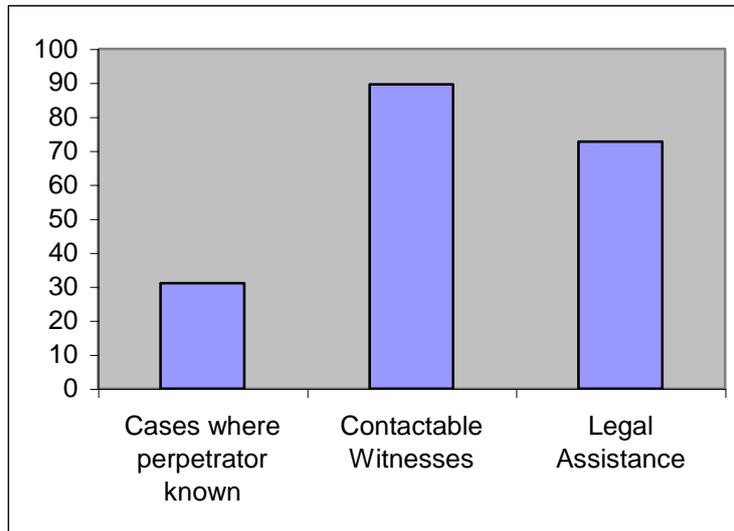
Case 27:

Zanu (PF) youths came to my school and demanded Zanu (PF) cards from all the staff members. They then threatened us and intimidated us and asked us to produce our MDC cards. If we failed to do so they said they would invite other Zanu (PF) members in other places to come and beat us up.

Amnesty for human rights violations

The declaration by the President on 6 October 2000 of a formal amnesty for the gross human rights violations clearly has profound implications for these victims. Although the general amnesty will require prosecutions for murder, rape, statutory rape, indecent assault, robbery, and theft, it will excuse torture (assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm and common assault), psychological torture (intimidation, threats, forced attendance at meetings), kidnapping, arson, and property destruction.

The declaration of a general pardon for these very serious human rights violations has rightly been condemned by all responsible organisations and a number of international bodies, including Amnesty International. The declaration of such an amnesty is clearly contrary to the intent behind all international human rights conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Zimbabwe is a signatory. Furthermore, torture is proscribed under our own Constitution.



As can be seen from the table above, 31% of the sample knew their perpetrators, whilst nearly 90% had witnesses to their ordeals. This means that criminal prosecutions could have been pursued in a significant number of cases, and this was clearly the wish of the people in the sample, where over 70% wished to take legal action against their perpetrators. The general amnesty will be a devastating blow for these victims.

It is even more shocking to observe the practical effect of the amnesty. In Mberengwa East a total of 617 allegations of crimes was made by people in the sample group. The amnesty would render 570 cases (92%) ineligible for investigation and prosecution. In addition, it should be borne in mind that, prior to the declaration more than 200 arrests had been made by the Zimbabwe Republic Police. These arrests had considerably restored the increasingly poor reputation of the ZRP amongst the general public. The release of these arrested people will lead to a complete lack of faith y the victims in the criminal justice system.

Clearly, the effect of the amnesty, in Mberengwa East, completely subverts all justice, leaving all these victims with only the option of civil suits for damages. This will be an extremely lengthy, and expensive way for very poor people to obtain justice. In many cases the perpetrators will not have the financial capacity to pay appropriate compensation to the victims.

Conclusions

Politically incited violence and intimidation in Mberengwa during the run up to the June 2000 parliamentary election was clearly meant to have the effect of intimidating people into voting for the ruling party, Zanu (PF). Alternatively, it was meant to instil such fear in the electorate that supporters of the opposition would refrain from voting. It is likely that fear was the reason why 43% of the electorate in Mberengwa abstained from casting their votes.

Gross human rights violations occurred and appeared to be encouraged or at least condoned by Government officials. War veterans, members of Zanu (PF) and its supporters seemed to hold the belief that they had the right to infringe on others people’s rights without being held accountable at law. They attacked defenceless persons, including children, terrorising them, forcing them to leave their homes and

live in the bush. Others were left homeless and hungry when they had their homes and granaries burnt down. Assaults were rampant and victims were picked indiscriminately. The general amnesty can only have confirmed the views of government supporters that their actions were authorised and condoned.

The police took little action to protect persons against the widespread political violence in the area. They failed in their duty to protect defenceless people against their aggressors. In some cases even stood by and watched assaults taking place.

Case 28:

Problems started when I entered Maranda Bottle Store. The Zanu (PF) youths and supporters started to chant slogans. They asked me questions about my involvement in MDC meetings. As I was about to explain they started to beat me with logs and knobkerries. I bled heavily. Only after they had watched for some time did the ZRP intervene to stop the beating.

Subsequent to the election, the ZRP did take strong steps to enforce the law, with over 200 arrests being made. However, this belated attempt to enforce the rule of law was then completely subverted by the general amnesty, and especially the exclusion from prosecution of cases of torture.

Advantage was taken of the high rate of unemployment in Mberengwa. Unemployed youths were given the mandate to use the Zanu (PF) campaign as a source of income, adventure and pleasure. They went about, moving from door to door, village to village, herding hapless peasants and forcing them to attend daily political meetings, intimidating and threatening them. They also carried out severe assaults on members of or suspected members of the opposition. They became known as the Zanu (PF) youths and were named as the perpetrators in many of the incidents. Even worse was the presence of identified torture centres, such as Texas Farm, where many people were brutally tortured.

It was inevitable that this climate of aggression should prevail in various parts of the country after the President and other members of the Government had made threats against the opponents of Zanu (PF). 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."¹ What the President was demanding was that everyone display blind allegiance to the ruling party and this meant that any persons not displaying such allegiance should be attacked. It is therefore not surprising that supporters of the President's party unleashed such a reign of terror. The final support for this violence came in the form of an amnesty. This has given Zanu (PF) supporters a licence to continue a terror campaign against members of the opposition.

¹ *Daily News* 17 March 2000.