

POLITICIANS ABUSING THE DISEMPOWERED YOUNG

YOUTH FORUM

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The recent unsolicited violence that has rocked Harare this past week shows how much the big politicians in power will never work towards empowering the disenfranchised young generation as they want to take advantage of their economic demise to use, abuse and then refuse them. When violence is allowed to go unabated at the August House, the house where our Members of Parliament meet to come up with legislation for the country, with youths from different political parties clashing, it shows there is a hidden hand from the big men and women in politics. The violence that rocked Highfield's Machipisa Shopping Centre can only be initiated and sanctioned by senior and older politicians.

The fact that the so-called senior politicians have called for peace publicly does not necessarily mean they are not the ones who are paying the same youths to use violence against their rivals. WikiLeaks has helped us realize how many of these top government and ZANU (PF) officials utter different statements in public before exhibiting their true colors when they meet privately. It has now become a public secret that many senior ZANU PF officials have been meeting US and British Embassy officials in a bid to find ways of making the President of the republic to leave power but when they talk in public they say the President is indispensable to the political party and the country at large.

It is in the same vein that we have these imprudent senior politicians from both ends condemning violence publicly but privately using us the marginalized and disempowered youths to engage in violent activities. It is inconceivable to conclude that such acts of violence as depicted during one of the most important events in the country, the opening of the Parliament, can be instigated and conducted by the youths without the involvement and even funding from these senior guys who have the money. That

there are still politicians who believe that violence will save them confirms that the current crop of leaders is not what's ideal for the country, when the elections come, these people will be up for a rude awakening. The youths have promised to go and vote in their numbers and do away with these politicians who use them for violence.

The Machipisa violence has more to it than meets the eye. These thugs are the youths who would have been used by politicians for violence and are now demanding their compensation, and how are they paid? 'Engage in more violence against your fellow youths from rival political parties and against innocent vendors and take whatever you like' is the message. These thugs did not just want the market stalls, they are plain thieves as they went on to demand 'protection fees' outside what the council is getting, they looted wares from vendors and even went on to steal cellphones from vendors and passers-by.

In Chitungwiza we find more youths attacking the Chitungwiza Town Council for exercising its duties. For anyone to conclude that all these events of violence are organized by the youths without the help of senior politicians requires one to be out of touch with the way politics is run in the country. It is quite disturbing to note that in all these events, the youths are identified, even by the ever-partisan state media as youths from the former ruling party ZANU (PF).

Of particular interest is the role of the police in all the Harare skirmishes; no arrests have been made. What this means is that the police are informed of these skirmishes well before they happen and are also instructed not to arrest anyone. This behavior will only leave the residents of the country with little, if any, confidence in the country's police force leading to even further clashes as evidenced by the death of Inspector Petros Mutedza in Glen View in late May. When citizens are attacked by thugs, regardless of

political affiliation, residents should have confidence that the police will act against such criminals. Failure to instill such simple confidence in the country's citizenry will mean the populace becomes skeptical of the law enforcement agents and will believe the police are also enemies working together with the hoodlums. The situation is even exacerbated by the fact that our police are more notorious for being corrupt and demanding bribes from the same vendors and other citizens. It has become an ugly reality that being ZANU PF is a ticket to impunity when you commit crimes collectively in the name of the party.

What is happening in the country is very dangerous as these politicians and police are only turning the country into a perilous battlefield as at the end the citizens will no longer tolerate being abused by thugs and having no protection from the police and will start retaliating. This is exactly what happened in Machipisa where the vendors fought back the thugs

after realizing that police were only looking at them being chased away from their sources of livelihood.

The **Youth Forum** urges the police to start executing their duties in a non-partisan manner as this will make them friends of the people they are supposed to protect and not enemies, which results in uncalled for deaths of both policemen and citizens.

The **Youth Forum** also urges all politicians to desist from using youths for violence as the young people have promised to come in their numbers and vote out all such elements from the country's political scene. The youths have said this during meeting held by the **Youth Forum** in its 'Youth Go Register and Vote' Campaign that it has been running and is aimed at ejecting one million new young voters into the voter's roll before the next election. It is important for the politicians to recognize that such promises from the young people will definitely bear fruit as the youths constitute more than 60% of all potential youths.

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