Soldiers bludgeon children at orphanage

BULAWAYO – A dozen gun-toting soldiers last week ransacked and beat up children at an orphanage in Trennance, Bulawayo, ostensibly on the proof for MDC supporters who live in the area.

The principal officer for Thuthuka Orphange, Charles Ncube told The Changing Times the soldiers, who were driving in an army truck and wielding AK-47 rifles, forcefully entered the premises and threatened the authorities, accusing of harboring MDC members at the centre.

“Seven children have injuries on their faces, ankles, thighs and backs as a result of baton and weapon battering,” a shaken Ncube told The Changing Times.

“We managed to take them to Mpilo General Hospital for them to seek medical attention but they were referred to Galen House, a private clinic.

“However our worry is we are failing to foot the bill for the X-rays and medical tests,” added Ncube.

The centre houses children from the age of two months to 18 years. No one was spared the senseless violence.

The leader of the goon squad has been identified as Sergeant Tshabalala, who is stationed at the Bulawayo State House. After battering children at the orphanage, The Changing Times heard that the soldiers ran amok at the Trennance shopping centre, clothoring mid-afternoon shoppers.

Brian Dube, a Trennance resident told The Changing Times the soldiers were accuing everyone of being MDC supporters.

The militarization of the country is one issue that has featured prominently on the catalogue of outstanding issues, and is on the agenda of issues that are being tackled by regional leaders currently seeking a solution to Zimbabwe’s long-running power-sharing crisis.

The MDC has also expressed concern at the ominious presence of soldiers in the countryside, deployed last year after President Mugabe and Zanu PF’s devastating electoral loss to the MDC in the March 29, 2008 harmonised polls. The troops unleashed unprecedented violence that left over 500 MDC supporters dead and another 200,000 internally displaced.

HARARE – The Finance Minister is moving to clip the wings of central bank governor Gideon Gono, with the proposed Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Amendment Bill tabled in Parliament Wednesday.

MDC secretary-general and Finance Minister, Hon. Tendai Biti has described the RBZ Amendment Bill, which seeks to limit the functions of the central bank, and bring the powers of the governor under a board, as a “fire fighting Bill”.

The RBZ Amendment Bill, originated by Hon. Biti, has been okayed by the drafting section of the Attorney General’s Office, has been unanimously given the green light in Cabinet and was given a non-adverse report by Parliament’s Legal Committee.

It was then moved to Parliament on Wednesday, where it is expected sail through, ending forever the omnipotent role played by Gono in the national economy.

Speaking during the second reading of the Bill, Hon. Biti said the proposed legislation was a transitional regulation meant to rationalise operations at the RBZ, which has bastardised the economy through so-called quasi-fiscal activities.

He said there was no attempt to curtail the independence of the RBZ, and said after the situation normalise, members of the public will be consulted on a central bank they envisage through the Constitution-making process.

Hon. Biti, who is also the Harare East MP, said the Bill, whose debate was deferred to next week Tuesday, had gone through extensive interrogation in Cabinet, adding that the proposed law was motivated by national interest.

The Bill got cross-cutting party support in Cabinet.

“The amendments are consistent with the best practices in other countries like Uganda, Georgia and South Africa,” Hon. Biti said. “At the core of the proposed amendment is the restoration of confidence in the central bank, which confidence is non-existent at the moment.

“The central bank of any country or a developing state must be dependable and people should have confidence in it. People’s confidence will be eroded when they fear that their money will be stolen,” he said.

He said the Bill sought to ensure that the central bank remained focused on its core business, which is monetary policy formulation, stabilising the local currency and supervision of financial institutions.

Minister Biti said due to the quasi-fiscal activities of the central bank, the RBZ had accrued staggering debts of US$1.5 billion in three years yet the country had only accrued debt of only US$4 billion in 28 years.

This debt profile had to be probed, he said.

“The RBZ was never created to contract loans; the contraction of loans was not because of the absence of the law, but disregard of the law,” he said.

The Minister said quasi-fiscal activities were illegal, and Gono’s arguments that he was working under instructions from the government of the day were inadmissible. He said quasi-fiscal activities could only be undertaken with express Treasury authority granted by Parliament.

“Nobody is compelled to comply with an unlawful instruction. An unlawful instruction is entitled to be ignored,” he said.

Gono has for the past five years abused his power as governor, dishing out freebies from the fiscus to Zanu PF. This plunder has continued to this day, with Gono recently siphoning US$45 million between December last year and August.

This latest theft is unprecedented as the pillered cash was a statutory reserve meant to provide cover to distressed banks.

Gono, who the MDC wants fired and replaced by a consensus candidate agreed by all three principals in the inclusive government, has killed Zimbabwe’s national currency through reckless minting of cash that spawned record-breaking hyperinflation.

The country has been forced to adopt use of a basket of foreign currencies as a result, after the death of the Zimbabwe dollar.

Gono was also directly involved in the terror campaign that followed Zanu PF’s electoral loss last year, providing Mahindra and CAM vehicles used by hit-squads that abducted and killed over 500 MDC supporters last year. Gono also bankrolled the running expenses for these hit-squads, including the regime’s internationally condemned Operation Marambatsvina that displaced 700,000 people.

The MDC has given Mugabe 30-days to get Gono fired and replaced.
The slow recognition of President Tsvangirai's new official role by security chiefs who still attach and mentally mouthed attention and no sanction from expected quarters when convention and the Constitution are normally unkink to such foul public manners.

Commander-in-chief Robert Mugabe, who presided over the ceremony, seemed undue to notice the absence of his top military brass. To Zimbabweans that meant little compared to a record-breaking climb-down and a rare act of capitulation by one of Africa's remaining strongmen and a former liberation war idol. The people urged Tsvangirai on; reflecting a national sentiment that inked a trembling few. Since then, state-sanctioned and celebrated abuse on our President has never ceased.

Given the depth of the malodour, perhaps President Tsvangirai erred in assuming unfettered political goodwill and an affirmative institutional hug to see through a process that mirrored the changing milieu. But eight months into a union, he remains officially homeless together with Speaker Lovemore Moyo and all his off- Harare ministers and officials. Suggestions for executive appointments in his Union have to be vetted and approved; and so far only four of the proposed 11 have passed. We are told, ad nauseam, and even by Mugabe himself that he runs a parallel state administration with only four civil servants officially accepted into his office thus far, in a country that employs more than a quarter of a public servants.

Mugabe insists he must first clear President Tsvangirai's travel plans. But Mugabe never returns the favour, nor consults him on his numerous foreign forays. Mubanga determines the weekly Cabinet agenda, as all requests for public debate; policy clarity and national issues for inspection have to pass through the President's office.

Ceaseless abuse of our President: a major outstanding issue

Unilateral Zanu PF decisions; sweeping policy shifts, positions and statements; dubious state-sanctioned actions and arrests of political activists; and partisan directives are often dumped on President Tsvangirai's desk devoid of courtesy or prior consultation. Government institutions are forced to mask a unique Zanu PF concern; symbols of change are either downplayed or simply put off; routine state business is either privatised or coated with Zanu PF paint; board and staff appointments at public companies are re-furrowed to an old boys’ network; and policy generation and execution is still largely an exclusive Zanu PF affair.

A traditional Zanu PF bureaucratic still rules the roost, even though a ministerial portfolio may officially be under an MDC politician. Even at local government level, all the top executives are either Zanu PF activists or they sympathise with that party. They determine the agenda for action and implement decisions at a pace and under a strict direction of Minister Ignatious Chombo and Zanu PF because of deliberate legislative distortions. Propaganda frames and blame abound - all directed at Tsvangirai – and, specifically to show all that nothing of significance in the area of governance has changed. Despite his commitment to work, a deceptive, over-boiled line that kept Zanu PF together about President Tsvangirai's past is often abused and repeated, to thread a restless and confused Zanu PF constituency together. New poisoned arrows point at his legitimacy and credibility daily, ready to wreak havoc on his executive authority.

The Council of Ministers (CoM) and the National Security Council (NSC) are the two power centres and institutions set up under the GPA. Tsvangirai is supposed to chair the CoM and (on paper) is an indispensable player in the NSC. I shall leave discussion on the two to another date; suffice to say the old Joint Operations Command (JOC) is still very alive. The CoM has yet to cut its teeth into the political fray. The other important institution is JOMIC. With all due respect, it is pointless to bring this body into this debate.

President Tsvangirai faces an enormous character test to survive the vicious temper of a raging current as he swims against a well-honed and tested dose of political wickedness, insincerity and executive abuse. Zimbabwe is in danger as the terrain the country’s Prime Minister is up against presents a fresh, irregular dilemma at every turn. When a spouse packs a few bags and leaves a matrimonial home, the decision to marry another, even if the first one is guilty, is the basis of the marriage. It is a public choice.

If the people who are supposed to be protecting us are the ones victimising us then who do we turn to? As a Zimbabwean, I feel betrayed by Zanu PF. We all know that such thuggery can only emanate from Zanu PF.

We want real change, real freedom and real security. I put my hopes on MDC to deliver such and I urge real Zimbabweans to do so too without fear for God is on our side and democracy is in our hands.

Thomas Toda
Harare

Dear Editor
I want to extend my condolences to the Nyamande family, the people of Makoni Central, the MDC family and everyone who has been affected by the death of Manicaland. He was a fighter, a humble man who put the people first in all his dealings. His service to the party will forever be cherished. He was a good man, a hard working educator, business man, father and brother. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Mbuya Myambo
Makoni

Dear Editor
I want to thank you for The Changing Times you are giving us free of charge. I am a Zimbabwean who was detained and beaten up in a dark room in Matuka village as it has become our own source of news. Keep it up. This paper is even allowing village leaders to sit down and discuss issues affecting our areas and how we can help develop our country from an informed position.

Rangarirai Tsvhanda
Bikita

Dear Editor
I want to express my gratitude to you for a very informative piece you put on the political situation of Zimbabwe. It has become our own source of news. Keep it up. This paper is even allowing village leaders to sit down and discuss issues affecting our areas and how we can help develop our country from an informed position.

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Rangarirai Tsvhanda
Bikita
MDC supporters denied aid in Goromonzi

GOROMONZI - Renowned Zanu PF members and AREX officials in Goromonzi West constituency, Masvingo and Mashonaland East Province are distributing aid along partisan lines, denying known MDC supporters food aid and agricultural inputs. MDC supporters in Ward 4, have been denied agricultural inputs and food aid, while ward 3 and 5, which are close to the farms and perceived to have a significant representation of Zanu PF members, received the aid.

The Farmers Communal Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ) is distributing maize, fertilizer, 10kgs of sugarbeans, and two bags of top dressing to 3000 households in each rural constituency in a humanitarian intervention. AREX, which is responsible for submitting names of those that are supposed to benefit, has been tinkering with the lists, disenfranchising known MDC supporters from the scheme.

FTCZ national coordinator, Abraham Makoni, said AREX officials were deliberately excluding some well known MDC members in that area.

“I only received names from wards 3 and 5 from Mr. Matipano, the Goromonzi Arex coordinator and we gave the aid to the names that were submitted to us,” Makoni said.

The aid, which was meant to be given to female headed families and orphans, has been subjected to partisan distribution, with Zanu PF claiming credit for sourcing the aid.

Asked if there was anything that could be done to rectify this, Makoni said: “It is unfortunate that this year, our aid is finished. If there are any alterations and amendments, it will be for next year. We were not told why ward 4 was left out or why the aid was given in wards instead of picking 3000 underprivileged families from the whole rural constituency,” he said.

Councillor for ward 4 in Goromonzi West, Martha Nhamburo said the discrimination along party lines was unfortunate and unfair as this will cause more difficulty on the people of her ward.

“It is going to be very difficult for us to explain this to the people since everyone is eager to get the inputs following the previous year’s drought.”

Speaking to The Changing Times on condition of anonymity, one AREX official said that they were given instruction to skip ward 4 as it is home to the MDC Minister for Public Works and Social Amenities. Hon. Theresa Makone, and her husband, Mr. Ian Makone, the permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Chinyika Village in ward 16, Goromonzi North, which is a stronghold of the MDC, was also left out in the inputs distribution scheme.

Reports suggest the practice is also rife in Masvingo province, where AREX officials are reported to be gathering names from Zanu PF sympathizers for the distribution of farm inputs leaving out MDC supporters.

### MDC Ministers’ Forum

**HARARE** - The co-Home Affairs Minister, Hon. Giles Mutsekwa, says a number of sáching residual elements in the State security service are scuttling the work of the inclusive government by resisting the new political dispensation.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with The Changing Times in Harare on Tuesday, Hon. Mutsekwa said nine months after the formation of the inclusive government, he found it strange that State security agents continued to abduct, torture and arrest innocent MDC and human rights defenders across the country.

“There are so many arresting authorities in the country who are violating the Constitution by abducting and torturing people unlawfully. We have the police, the army and the Central Intelligence Organisation,” he said.

“Those three State security organs are involved in the abduction of innocent people who they pick-up, detain for torture then surrender them to a police station for them to be brought to court.

“That is why you find that most cases involving abductions and torture that are brought before the courts are thrown out due to lack of evidence,” he said.

Minister Mutsekwa said torture of any kind was unforgivable.

“I know how painful and evil it is as I have in the past gone through that. It is deplorable and it should never happen” he said.

However, Hon. Mutsekwa said he was pushing for national reforms in the country and soon the National Security Council, which held its first and only meeting four months ago, would now meet every month as mandated in the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

“But what we really need to do is to come up with a new Constitution. We have three centres of power that govern the operations of the police. President Robert Mugabe and the Attorney-General can order police officers to effect an investigation and arrest without the co-ministers of Home Affairs knowing,” he said.

Minister Mutsekwa is a co-Minister with Zanu PF’s. Kembo Mohadi.

He said when an MDC guest house in Chiispite, Harare, was raided on spurious grounds by over 50 armed police who had no search warrant last month, he only got to know about the raid after it had occurred.

“In any democracy, the minister of Home Affairs is the one who should give a directive for a raid. But in Zimbabwe we have an anomaly. That is why you find the police using live bullets against defenceless people after being given unprofessional orders,” he said referring to the recent shooting of striking Shabane Mine workers in Zvishavane by the police.

Touching on the performance of his ministry since he took over as Home Affairs Minister, Hon. Mutsekwa said the period had been “some experience.”

“The Home Affairs ministry was one of the ministries that brought arguments and contention during the distribution of key ministries and it is the only one of the ministries that is shared between the MDC and Zanu PF. That alone tells you it is not an ordinary ministry,” he said.

Other departments that are under the Home Affairs ministry are; the Registrar-General’s Office, the Immigration Department and the Department of Museums and National Monuments.

“The entire civil service including the police had been purged when I got into office and those who were perceived to have MDC links were dismissed and this created problems when I got into office.

“However, this has changed as I have managed to fit in fairly well in the ministry. The majority of the civil servants now know that it is important to nurture the inclusive government because it is the only way that can bring real change to the country,” he said.

Among his major achievements since getting into office has been the reduction of passports from an astronomical US$650.00 to US$160.00 and Minister Mutsekwa has promised further reduction before the end of the year.

Minister Mutsekwa said he had also managed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with his South African counterpart to regularise the stay of millions of Zimbabweans who had fled the country due to political persecution at the hands of the Zanu PF regime and the crumbling economy.

He also said there was an urgent need to update the national voters’ roll as it was chaotic and in shambles.

“If you look at the current voters’ roll, it is in shambles and Zanu PF was using it as the main rigging centre. There are lots of ghost voters, people who died a long time ago are still on the voters’ roll and the Registrar-General’s Office has not taken any effort to rectify that.”

The minister also said the recent specification of the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange-listed Kingdom Meikles Limited group was very unfortunate and projected a bad picture to investors.

“The specification was against the government’s policy of investment promotion. No country can survive without investors,” he said.

“Anywhere else in the world will not tolerate this law as it is not compatible with the modern world,” he said.

Minister Mutsekwa also blasted the state media especially The Herald for telling lies that he had addressed the General Police of Interpol in Singapore and had said that sanctions were hurting the country especially the police.

“That story was purely a lie as I never said anything like that. Zanu PF is thirsty to have someone from the MDC to speak against sanctions. The issue of sanctions was a Zanu PF issue and I don’t see them as sanctions but restrictive measures against senior Zanu PF officials,” he said.

Turning to his relationship with his co-ministers, Minister Mutsekwa said it was not a good working relationship contrary to state media reports as they shared different views.
HARARE - A Harare magistrate will on Monday deliver judgement on an application for refusal of further remand for Pascal Gwezere, the MDC transport manager facing trumped-up charges of conducting firearms and undergoing military training in Uganda 10 years ago.

Gwezere, is facing charges of stealing arms of war from Pomona Army Barracks in Borrowdale and undergoing military training at Soroti Training Camp in Uganda in 1999, allegedly to destabilize the country.

The evidence that was given by the complainant was not credible, the magistrate ruled, as the 14-year-old girl claimed that she was a virgin when she was raped, contradicting a medical report by a doctor that showed that she had been sexually active.

The magistrate also said the delay in the minor in reporting the rape charge had complicated the case and made it impossible to prove her case.

There was no evidence that the alleged rape took place.

Hon. Chebundo is acquitted

RUSAPE - Thousands of MDC supporters who included President Morgan Tsvangirai, yesterday thronged Central when he rammed into the back – Mutare Highway.

Hon. Nyamande was born on 10 February, 1947, in Makoni Central, Manicaland province to pay their last respects to Makoni Central MP, Hon. Jolin Nyamande.

He was on his way from Makoni Central when he rammed into the back of a stationary Mazda T535 at the 25km peg in Ruvu.

Speaker after speaker described Hon. Nyamande as a fearless fighter for democracy.

President Tsvangirai described how he was accompanied by his deputy, Hon. Thokozani Khupe, secretary-general, Hon. Tendai Biti and deputy national organiser, Senator Morgan Komuntale.

Also present at the funeral were, among others, Nelson Chamisa, several Cabinet ministers, MPs, MDC supporters, friends and relatives.

Hon. Nyamande was born on 10 September 1952. He joined the MDC in 1999 but left the country in 2000, where he continued serving the party as party spokesperson, Hon. Nelson Chamisa, several Cabinet ministers, MPs, MDC supporters, friends and relatives.

He was later elected to the position of MDC deputy leader for the combined UK and Ireland branches.

Funny Nyamande was survived by his wife, five children and several grandchildren.

Gwezere's left leg was becoming septic because of the infections.

The umbrella global labour body reminded Mugabe about his commitment to human rights reform because of the infections.

Meanwhile international trade union bodies, rounded condemned the arrest, with the International Trade Union Congress, ITUC, his arrest as "unwarranted." The umbrella global labour body reminded Mugabe about his commitment to human rights reform because of the infections.

The prison officials also refused to remove leg irons on Gwezere despite an appeal by Muchadehama and the consent by the State and magistrate to have the leg irons removed while in court.

The umbrella global labour body reminded Mugabe about his commitment to human rights reform because of the infections.