

The Daily Catalyst

Crisis in Zimbabwe
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THEY HELD US IN PITS, SAYS EX-DETAINEE, (*The Herald*, 30 January 1980)

By Political Reporter



ZANU PF rebels, who were detained in Mozambique, yesterday described how they were held for months in undergrounds prisons before they were handed over to Frelimo authorities. They said they were imprisoned in pits 20 metres long, six metres wide and between three and four metres deep. The pits were covered by logs and a small hole was left through which prisoners climbed down by ladder.

After the prisoners went in, the ladders were removed, said Mr. Rugare Gumbo, the group's spokesperson. He said the detainees including himself, were in these pits prisons when Rhodesian security forces attacked a base camp on 3 July 1978. "Fortunately, they hit a different part of the camp and so we survived," Mr Gumbo said. Some of the rebels said they encountered worse conditions in Mozambican jails and had sometimes to depend for clothing on other prisoners who left clothes behind when they were released. Mr. Gumbo said at one time they shared a cell with four Rhodesian whites. They lost contact after the ZANU PF rebels were handed over to Mozambican authorities.

He could not say what had happened to these prisoners. "We are still seriously concerned about the safety and the state of some of our detained colleagues who remained in the underground prisons," he added. The men said they were supplied with clothing they had only hours before they were brought to Rhodesia, and they did not know who had donated it. They said they would describe more fully their living conditions when they settled down. Yesterday they were still going through immigration formalities. Several men from the group visited the United African National Congress (UANC) accompanied by Mr. Michael Mawema.

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