



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice
Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE35940 — MDC members
5 January 2010

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- 6 **To what extent do MDC members or supporters continue to be targeted in Zimbabwe?**

On 11 February 2009 Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change was sworn in as Prime Minister of a unity government made up of MDC and ZANU-PF party members. On 7 March 2009, Susan Tsvangirai, wife of the new Prime Minister, was killed in a head-on collision with a truck while travelling with Mr Tsvangirai. According to a source in a UK Home Office report on Zimbabwe dated 20 July 2009, “senior members of the MDC continued to express grave concerns that the crash was not an accident. Coming so soon after the inauguration of the new unity government, led many MDC activists to believe that the crash was planned by a clique within Zimbabwe’s security forces.” The UK Home Office also reports that MDC members and supporters at all levels continued to be targeted by ZANU-PF supporters in the year to July 2009.¹

In October 2009 Amnesty International released a statement saying that “Zimbabwe is on the brink of sliding back into the post-election violence that marred the country last year, risking undermining the stability brought about by the creation of the unity government in February.” Amnesty International adds that “[i]n recent weeks, there have been several arrests of civil society leaders and reports of harassment and intimidation of political opponents by ZANU-PF supporters in rural areas. In particular, Amnesty International has received reports of increased threats of violence in Mashonaland East and Central provinces against known supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formation led by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. Erwin van der Borgh, the Director of Amnesty International’s Africa Programme, is quoted in the press release stating:

Dozens of human rights and MDC activists are on trial for simply exercising their internationally recognized rights, including the rights to freedom of association, peaceful

¹ UK Home Office 2009, *Country of Origin Information Report: Zimbabwe*, 20 July, Section 6 – Attachment 7

assembly and expression. Some of these people were victims of enforced disappearance in 2008.²

In October 2009 *The Zimbabwe Telegraph* reported that the MDC's security administrator was the victim of failed abduction attempt in Harare when her car was blocked by a vehicle. *The Zimbabwe Telegraph* also states in the report that "Zimbabwe's unity government is on the verge of disintegration after Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai pulled his ministers out of cabinet meetings."³

In December 2009 *SW Radio Africa* reported that a truck carrying MDC supporters "was attacked by stone throwing ZANU PF militias", en route to a rally in Uzumba, Mashonaland East province. According to *SW Africa Radio*, victims were refused treatment at a nearby clinic because the nursing staff feared punishment by ZANU-PF militia:

Several MDC supporters were injured in the skirmish and one of them, Daniel Makaranga, had to be rushed to hospital for treatment following the unprovoked attack. At least two people were arrested.

The weekly MDC newsletter, *The Changing Times*, said their supporters were travelling in an open truck when it was ambushed at Katiyo shopping centre.

'The mob pelted the T-35 truck with stones, injuring the passengers who were on their way to Nhakiwa Business Centre where they were going to an MDC rally,' the newsletter said.

It said Makaranga was rushed to Nhakiwa clinic where he was denied assistance because the nurses feared victimisation by the ZANU PF militia who work hand in hand with the police there.⁴

In June 2009 *BBC News* quotes a Amnesty International report, stating that failure to reform the police and army in Zimbabwe since the formation of the unity government has meant that "Zimbabwe is still suffering 'persistent and serious' human rights violations". Irene Khan, General Secretary of Amnesty International, is quoted as saying that "[t]he failure to introduce reforms of the police, army and security forces, or address impunity, and the lack of clear commitment of some parts of government are real obstacles that need to be confronted by the top leadership of Zimbabwe."⁵

In October 2009 *The New York Times* reported that Morgan Tsvangirai had announced that his party would "boycott cabinet meetings and withdraw from dealing with Mr. Mugabe's party". Mr Tsvangirai is quoted by the paper as stating that "[i]t is our right to disengage from a dishonest and unreliable partner". The decision to boycott was reportedly prompted by the gaoling of Roy Bennett, the agriculture minister-designate and "a white farmer who is scheduled to stand trial Monday on three-year-old terrorism charges that his party, the

² Amnesty International 2009, *African Governments Must Pressure Zimbabwe On Human Rights*, AI website, 28 October <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/african-governments-must-pressure-zimbabwe-human-rights-20091028> – Accessed 4 January 2010 – Attachment 8

³ Gumede, G. 2009, 'Gang tries to abduct MDC official', *Zimbabwe Telegraph*, 27 October <http://www.zimtelegraph.com/?p=3913> – Accessed 4 January 2010 – Attachment 9

⁴ Sibanda, T. 2009, 'Zimbabwe: MDC Supporters Attacked by Zanu PF Militia in Uzumba', *All Africa Global Media*, source: *SW Radio Africa*, 8 December <http://allafrica.com/stories/200912080979.html> – Accessed 4 January 2010 – Attachment 10

⁵ 'Rights in Zimbabwe 'precarious'' 2009, *BBC News*, 18 June <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8106735.stm> – Accessed 24 December 2009 – Attachment 11

Movement for Democratic Change, says are fabricated.” *The New York Times* states that Mr. Bennett was granted bail, however MDC officials maintain the decision to disengage.⁶

In November 2009 Morgan Tsvangirai ended the MDC boycott of joint cabinet meetings and communication with ZANU-PF members of the unity government. However, *BBC News* reports that the MDC continues to accuse “Mr Mugabe's Zanu-PF of continuing to harass its activists and acting in ‘bad faith’”, adding that “[t]he MDC also said there had been ‘increased violent’ attacks on party members by militants from President Mugabe's Zanu-PF, as well as renewed invasions of white-owned farms.”⁷

In December 2009 *BBC News* reported that President Robert Mugabe told a rally in Harare that ZANU-PF and the MDC were “ideologically incompatible” and that the unity government has a “short life-span”. The *BBC News* article quotes Mr Mugabe as stating that the party “must not be defeated” like they were in 2008. “We must win resoundingly and regain the constituents we lost.”⁸

List of Sources Consulted

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US Department of State <http://www.state.gov>

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Non-Government Organisations

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International Crisis Group <http://www.icg.org/>

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Topic Specific

Movement for Democratic Change <http://www.mdc.co.zw>

Change Zimbabwe <http://changezimbabwe.com>

International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims <http://www.ircrt.org>

⁶ Dugger, C.W. & Chimhete, C. 2009, ‘Zimbabwe Opposition Boycotts Unity Government’, *The New York Times*, 16 October 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/17/world/africa/17zimbabwe.html> – Accessed 4 January 2010 – Attachment 12

⁷ ‘Zimbabwe’s MDC calls off boycott’ 2009, *BBC News*, 6 November <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8345732.stm> – Accessed 6 January 2010 – Attachment 13

⁸ ‘Robert Mugabe rallies Zanu-PF party in Zimbabwe’ 2009, *BBC News*, 13 December <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8410357.stm> – Accessed 24 December 2009 – Attachment 14

Online Subscription Services

Stratfor website <http://www.stratfor.com>

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