

**National youth service training -**  
***“ shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner”***

[COVER PICTURE]

**An overview of youth militia training and activities in Zimbabwe,  
October 2000 – August 2003**

***THE SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST***

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***The Solidarity Peace Trust*** has a Board consisting of church leaders of Southern Africa and is dedicated to promoting the rights of victims of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The Trust was founded in 2003. The Chairperson is Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo, and the Vice Chairperson is Anglican Bishop Rubin Phillip of Kwazulu Natal.

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**“Those who seek unity must not be our enemies. No, we say no to them, they must first repent.... They must first be together with us, speak the same language with us, act like us, walk alike and dream alike.”**

**President Robert Mugabe**

**[Heroes’ Day, 11 August 2003: referring to the MDC and the possibility of dialogue between MDC and ZANU-PF] <sup>1</sup>**

**“...the mistake that the ruling party made was to allow colleges and universities to be turned into anti-Government mentality factories.”**

**Sikhumbuzo Ndiweni**

**[ZANU-PF Information and Publicity Secretary for Bulawayo]<sup>2</sup>**

**“[National service is] shaping youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner”**

**Vice President Joseph Msika**

**[July 2002, speech at graduation of 1,063 militia in Mt Darwin]<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 12 August 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 26 April 2001

<sup>3</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 26 July 2002

*Comments from youth militia themselves about their activities:*<sup>4</sup>

**“It was about vandalism... We were used to do the things the State does not want to do themselves. Then they can just say it was just the youths, not us”.**

**“We are Zanu-PF’s “B” team. The army is the “A” team and we do the things the government does not want the “A” team to do.**

**“I had to beat them because they were selling their carvings by the roadside. They were attracting whites by doing this. As a result, they need to be beaten up so that they stop that. It was said that such people that have links with whites are MDC supporters. So they needed a beating so they could be stopped once and for all.”**

**“We got a lot of power. Our source of power was this encouragement we were getting, particularly from the police and others.... it was instilled in us that whenever we go out, we are free to do whatever we want and nobody was going to question that.”**

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<sup>4</sup> Interviews with youth militia in Zimbabwe and South Africa by authors in August 2003.

## ***Appeal from church leaders of Southern Africa***

*It takes great wickedness for those in power to be prepared to sacrifice a whole generation, the youth of the nation, in order to maintain their own hold on power. But that is precisely the wickedness revealed in this report. The youth of Zimbabwe are being used, and abused, in a most cynical and calculating way by the very people entrusted with responsibility for their welfare.*

*Behind the mask of a programme bearing the innocuous title “national youth service training” lurks a pernicious evil that threatens not only to destroy the nation’s youth but also to subvert many of the core Christian values upon which the nation was built. It is the great merit of this report that it tears off this mask and exposes to full view the inner workings of this scheme. With the publication of this report no longer will there be any possible justification for the old excuse “I didn’t know”, whether coming from a Zimbabwean or the international community.*

*The national youth service training programme masquerades as a youth training scheme that imparts useful skills and patriotic values. As this well-documented report makes clear, nothing could be farther from the truth. The reality is a paramilitary training programme for Zimbabwe’s youth with the clear aim of inculcating blatantly antidemocratic, racist and xenophobic attitudes. The youth militias so created are used as instruments of the ruling party, to maintain their hold on power by whatever means necessary, including torture, rape, murder and arson. Having been thoroughly brain-washed, the youth militias are deployed to carry out whatever instructions they receive from their political commissars, on the understanding that they will never be called to account by this regime for any of their deeds. The report details the use of the militias by those who control them to carry forward the ZANU-PF political agenda in everything from manipulating election results to controlling the food distribution process to the party’s advantage.*

*While the militias are trained and incited to commit grievous violent crimes against their fellow citizens, it is also a fact that many of them have become victims of human rights’ abuses themselves in the course of training. The most conspicuous example of this abuse is the rape, and multiple rape, of young girls by the boys undergoing training with them, and by their military instructors. The resulting pregnancies and infections with sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV, not only devastate the lives of the youth concerned but are creating a terrible legacy for the nation.*

*Those responsible for instigating this vile system have introduced into the body politic, a cancer, which now spreads through the nation unchecked and leaves destruction in its wake. The nation’s youth are being deliberately corrupted and brutalized, and then deployed to wreak havoc among the people, for no other purpose but to carry forward ZANU- PF’s political agenda. The moral, spiritual and physical well-being of a whole generation of Zimbabweans is being sacrificed for the short-term political advantage of those in power, with incalculable long-term effects upon the very fabric of the nation. How, we ask, will it ever be possible to reintegrate these young people into the communities that they have terrorized?*

*In our view this is an outrage against which every single peace-loving Zimbabwean, together with the whole international community, should rise up in angry protest. Every youth whose future is thus threatened, every parent, every grand-parent, every brother and sister – indeed every responsible citizen with a care for the well-being of the nation – should stand, shoulder-to-shoulder, and say “No!” to this evil scheme.*

*As Church leaders, to those who are responsible, we reiterate the words of the prophet Jeremiah: “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord’ (Jeremiah 23/1) And we remind those who deliberately corrupt the nation’s youth of our Lord’s most severe warning: “If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matthew 18/6)*

*In the final analysis there is no impunity for those who break God’s law, and especially terrible is the judgment of those who deliberately lead others into sin.*

*The appalling danger posed by the youth militia training must be faced with the utmost urgency. It requires a united response across the nation. Our particular constituency is the Church, and therefore our call for an urgent and united response is first directed to the Church, which nominally accounts for some 70 per cent of the population. But the call is wider and should embrace all men and women of good will who desire peace and harmony for the nation.*

*We appeal to all Zimbabweans to join us in addressing the following urgent demands to those who exercise power in our nation today:*

- 1. The immediate cessation of the national youth service training programme*
- 2. The closing of all training camps across the country*
- 3. The surrender to lawful authority of all weapons now in the hands of the youth militias*
- 4. The thorough investigation of all crimes committed by the youth militia and prosecution of those responsible for murder, rape, torture and arson, with priority being given to bringing to justice those responsible for inciting and encouraging these brutal crimes*
- 5. The setting up of a truly national forum of civic and church leaders to determine a comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former members of the youth militias into society.*

*We appeal to our colleagues in the SADC region to speak out and condemn the Zimbabwean Government for promoting the militarization of youth in Zimbabwe. We appeal to Commonwealth countries to maintain and intensify the isolation of the Zimbabwean government and to make disbandment of the youth militia one of the conditions that must be met before our nation can be readmitted into the international community.*

*Signed: Zimbabwe National Pastors Conference  
Ecumenical Support Services, Zimbabwe  
Harare Ecumenical Working Group  
Christians Together for Justice and Peace, Bulawayo  
Archbishop Pius Ncube, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
Bishop Rubin Phillip, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa  
Bishop Kevin Dowling, Rustenburg, South Africa*

JOHANNESBURG, 5 September 2003

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Information, Harare, 2001: "Inside the Third Chimurenga" by Robert G Mugabe.

<sup>6</sup> From *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 7 December 2001.



## *Summary and conclusion*

## *Summary*<sup>7</sup>

In the last two years, Zimbabwe has seen a new national youth service training programme moving rapidly from a supposedly voluntary, small scale training that allegedly aimed at skills enhancement, patriotism and moral education, to what is now intended to be a compulsory, large scale, paramilitary training.

The need for national service has to date never been formally debated in Parliament and there is no legislation controlling its implementation. Yet the youth militia training is now referred to by government as compulsory. Furthermore, the government is already implementing a policy that denies school leavers access to tertiary training facilities and civil service posts, including teaching and nursing, without proof of having completed the national service training.

This report reviews information on youth militia policies and activities from their conception in 2000, to their deployment in December 2001, and up to the present. Sources include both state controlled and independent media reports, training material from the camps, interviews with those tortured by the militia, and interviews with militia themselves. Further sources include human rights reports by Amnesty International, London, Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, and Zimbabwean human rights organisations.

Early government policy documents focussed on the need to provide the nation's youth, referred to as those aged between 10 and 30 years of age, with a sense of national pride and history, as well as skills suitable for employment. However, contrary to early claims that the youth militia training would not be politically partisan, there is overwhelming evidence that the youth militia camps are aimed at forcing on all school leavers a ZANU-PF view of Zimbabwean history and the present. All training materials in the camps have, from inception, consisted exclusively of ZANU-PF campaign materials and political speeches. This material is crudely racist and vilifies the major opposition party in the country, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Furthermore, in contradiction of claims that the training would not aim at imparting military skills, military drills including weapons training are shown to have been major elements of youth training since the first youth intakes during 2001. The government itself has finally in July 2003, acknowledged its hitherto denied policy of weapons training for all trainees in the compulsory service, with the national army announcing itself as a concerned party in the training. The Minister of Defence has announced that youth service should be compulsory, should involve weapons training, and that all youth should form a reserve force to defend their nation, falling under military command.

Government rhetoric states that the youth militia must defend the nation against imperialists and neo-colonialists. Combined with government rhetoric that we have enemies within, including the neo-colonialist and imperialist opposition party, the MDC, it would appear that the youth militia are intended to "defend" the nation against a legal and widely supported political opposition. Certainly, those believed to be MDC supporters, have been the most common targets of youth militia attacks.

The youth militia have, since January 2002, become one of the most commonly reported violators of human rights, with accusations against them including murder, torture, rape and destruction of property. They have been blatantly used by ZANU-PF as a campaign tool, being given impunity and

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<sup>7</sup> All claims in this summary are supported in the report following and are therefore not footnoted here.

implicit powers to mount roadblocks, disrupt MDC rallies, and intimidate voters. This role of the youth militia has been documented in relation to the Presidential Election, the Rural District Council Elections, parliamentary by-elections, and most recently in the Urban Council Elections.

Other activities documented in this report, include the role played at times by youth militia in politicisation of government food distribution through the control of Grain Marketing Board (GMB) sales. Youth militia have also been implicated in denial of access to health care on politically partisan grounds, and in destruction of independent newspapers. Accounts of youth militia being implicated in theft, vandalism and usurping the powers of law enforcing agencies are multiple.

The militia have an ambivalent relationship with law enforcing agencies including the army and police. On the whole, the youth militia have impunity, often working under the direction of war veterans and alongside government agencies in their illegal activities. They are seldom arrested or prevented from breaking the law. However, there are a few cases on record of the youth militia attacking police or army, and being attacked or arrested in return. The courts have also at times condemned their activities and passed judgement against them.

Apart from having committed crimes against their fellow Zimbabweans, including family and neighbours, the youth militia have themselves become victims of human rights abuses in the course of their training. In terms of international law, to train anyone militarily under the age of 18 years, is to create a child soldier. Government policy has on several occasions indicated the catchment for militia training as being those between 10 and 30 years old. While an overall record of the numbers and ages of youth trained is not publicly available, *ad hoc* information confirms that children as young as 11 years of age have been through the militia training.

Conditions in the training camps are confirmed to be severe; particularly in the first year of implementation, rampant sexual activity among youth militia themselves was widely reported. Female youth militia have reported rape on a systematic basis in some camps, involving girls as young as 11 years of age. Youth militia pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections including HIV, have been reported as resulting from youth militia training experiences from a variety of sources in the last two years. Camp instructors are commonly implicated as among the rapists.

While some youth who have been through the militia training are reported to be well satisfied with their experiences, others have fled the camps and even the nation in order to escape. Some youth militia show signs of severe depression and guilt as a result of what they have seen and done.

## ***Conclusion***

The implications of the current youth militia training for Zimbabwe are serious indeed. The legitimacy of providing politically partisan and military training to tens of thousands of youths every year must be questioned. Against which enemy is this enormous “reserve force” of teenagers to be deployed? To date their targets have been their fellow Zimbabwean citizens, particularly those perceived to support the MDC. The social fabric has been deliberately destroyed through encouraging part of the nation’s youth to commit terrible crimes against their fellow citizens with impunity. Even if youth militia training were to stop tomorrow, it would leave Zimbabwe with a tough legacy. Our youths have been turned into vandals and have become a lost generation in the process. The task of reintegrating youth militia into the very communities they have victimised is as necessary as it is daunting.

***Government policy statements***

***2000-2003***

***First training sessions***

## A. Early official policy statements

### October 2000 policy statement on youth training

The creation of the Zimbabwean “National Youth Service” training programme is credited to Border Gezi, who was appointed Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation after the 2000 Parliamentary elections. He proposed the introduction of youth training within months of his appointment to the ministry. A document entitled “National Youth Policy of Zimbabwe”, was released by Gezi in early October 2000.<sup>8</sup> On the face of it, the proposal was a straightforward one, with the training allegedly intended to instil a “sense of responsible citizenship among the youth” and to prepare them for “the world and for work in their country”.<sup>9</sup>

The youth service would “contribute towards the eradication of poverty” and would “promote healthy life styles and personal well being of the youths, with particular emphasis on prevention of HIV/Aids”. The proposal laments “the impact of international media, the introduction of foreign cultures and the increasing urbanisation” which has “led to a diminished sense of national pride” in the nation’s youth. The age group to be included is all those between “10 and 30 years of age”.<sup>10</sup>

The proposal goes on to promote what appears to be a constructive syllabus for the training, including such objectives as to:

- Integrate youth issues into all government policies
- Provide opportunities for youth employment and participation in development
- Develop vocational skills
- Reduce teenage pregnancies
- Reduce spread of HIV/Aids
- Reduce alcohol and substance abuse<sup>11</sup>
- Promote gender equality and equity
- Promote environmental education

The proposal claims to be the product of “intensive consultations and discussions with stakeholders and opinion leaders from Government, non-governmental organisations, traditional leaders, youth, religious and women’s groups at national and district levels”.<sup>12</sup>

It is noteworthy that there is no clear indication in this early policy document of the intention to include, much less prioritise, military training as part of the youth service programme. Throughout the

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<sup>8</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 13 October 2000: “National service for all youths proposed”. This state controlled newspaper reviews the proposal at length.

<sup>9</sup> *The Herald*, *ibid*; all information in paragraph following is from this *Herald* article.

<sup>10</sup> The vast majority of those trained have effectively been teenagers, including those as young as 11 years.

<sup>11</sup> On the issues of pregnancies, HIV, and substance abuse, the reality in the camps has tragically become the total inverse of the supposed aim of the training – see further ahead in this report.

<sup>12</sup> A document on national service was produced by Brigadier Agrippa Mutambara of the then Ministry of Political Affairs in 1992 which is not dissimilar to Gezi’s document: ZANU-PF has always been favourably disposed towards “youth training”, and created ZANU-PF youth brigades in the 1980s who campaigned violently on their behalf in the election of 1985. See *Breaking the Silence, building True Peace: a report on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988, CCJP and LRF, 1997*, for details on the 1980s youth brigades.

ensuing two years, ZANU reiterated that the training is not primarily a military one, in spite of overwhelming hard evidence to the contrary.<sup>13</sup>

### **Further proposals six months later**

In a full page article published in the State-controlled *Chronicle* newspaper on 26 April 2001, Border Gezi expounded once more the benefits of “national service” for youth.<sup>14</sup> The following information was given by him about the intended training:

- Those to be included were “unemployed youths, orphans, single mothers and street kids”.
- Trainees would be aged between 10 and 30 years.
- The programme was to be voluntary in its pilot form and then to become compulsory.
- The intention was described as to instil a “sense of nationalism and patriotism”, to make youths proud of “their culture, their history and their country”.
- The training would include “skills training”, also training in “survival skills” and “military training”.

Emphasised right from the onset was that those completing the training would thereafter get “an advantage, should they decide to join public institutions”. Also, there is clear mention here that the training should include a “military” component. The youth of Zimbabwe were referred to by Gezi as “restless” and in need of having their “energy harnessed”.

The national youth service is a budgetary item in both the November 2001 and 2002 budgets presented to parliament, but there seems to have been little or no debate around the need for this activity. Again, this could well be linked to the rather small budget lines given to the youth service compared to overall budget commitments. It is clear in retrospect that budget lines were grossly exceeded in order to implement the programme on the scale on which it finally took place.

### **The youth training programme and the National Budget, November 2001<sup>15</sup>**

The national youth service is in the budget referred to as a priority. The training had not taken off as quickly as anticipated during 2001 because of budgetary constraints, but *money had been taken from other budget lines* to get the programme initiated (author’s emphasis of the finance minister’s admission). According to the National Budget as presented in parliament, the militia training programme takes 120 days and trains 1000 youths at a time per centre. The intention for 2002 is to expand the programme to ten provinces. It is clear from the budget speech, that ambitions for the training are likely to outstrip the budget during 2002. Only 24 million Z\$ is given to expanding the number of camps, and another 400 million is given to provisions for the camps such as water, fuel and equipment. This amount does not include salaries and allowances.

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<sup>13</sup> The myth that the training was not military was eventually dropped: in July 2003, the Minister of Defence openly advocated weapons training for the militia. In fact, weapons training has been taking place since inception.

<sup>14</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 26 April 2001: “National service to instil patriotism among youths”. All information in paragraph following is from this *Chronicle* article. Also on p. 4 leader column entitled “Programme a bold step”. Border Gezi died in a road traffic accident two days after this article.

<sup>15</sup> The information following was given by Dr. Simba Makoni in his budget speech, as quoted in *Parliamentary Debates*, 29<sup>th</sup> November 2001, cols 2572–2577.

## **The youth training programme and the National Budget, November 2002<sup>16</sup>**

The Ministry of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation's allocation for 2003 of 1,6 billion Z\$ has no clear indication of how much of this was meant for the youth militia exercise in total. In the text for this budget, a paragraph entitled "national youth services" refers to the renovation of 7 youth camps and the training of a further 20,000 youth in 2003, and to "marketing" of the national youth training, but there are no corresponding sub-headings in the budget breakdown for the Ministry. There is a budget line for Training Centres, which is explained separately, with a target of building 15 new centres (as opposed to renovation of the 7 mentioned elsewhere).

However, it seems that for this ministry, money being there or not, has been no impediment to spending it.<sup>17</sup> In December 2002, Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation, Elliot Manyika, announced that "at least half the ministry's budget [now referred to as Z\$ 4 billion] will go towards setting up of national youth training centres throughout the country".<sup>18</sup> This sum of Z\$ 2 billion is more than the ministry's total budgetary allocation before parliament a month earlier. Manyika adds: "Even if you people criticise the programme, we will go ahead with it and come January everything will be in place".<sup>19</sup>

**Supplementary budget August 2003:** in late August 2003, parliament was presented with the government's deficit budget – which includes a sum of Z\$ 1,2 billion to offset money spent on youth militia training during 2003. In effect, around Z\$2 billion was spent on youth training this year.

### **B. August 2001: youth militia training begins**

"[Youth training will] prevent the youth from becoming certified slaves of Western neo-colonialism. ... [It] will address the effects of the cultural nuclear bomb of imperialism that has deluded our youth of direction."

Lovemore Mataire, journalist<sup>20</sup>

In the first week of August 2001, the national youth training was launched in Mount Darwin, a rural ZANU-PF stronghold, with 1000 recruits.<sup>21</sup> The former 2 Brigade army barracks was used as the training venue. War veterans, Zimbabwe Republic Police and Zimbabwe National Army "would be invited to drill the youth", according to Dr. Thompson Tsodzo, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation. *The Zimbabwe Independent* quotes unspecified sources as saying that war veterans' focus would be "to drum into the youth ZANU-PF's political agenda ... and would seek to indoctrinate trainees with a history of the liberation war – as seen from ZANU-PF's side – and the need to revere the current crop of national leaders".

The syllabus is referred to by Tsodzo as having 4 parts:

- orientation, which is patriotism;
- skills training, which includes carpentry and agriculture;

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<sup>16</sup> See *Parliamentary Debates*, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2002, cols 1713-1719 (budget debate).

<sup>17</sup> The Government's total budget deficit for 2003 is a remarkable \$672 billion: *The Daily News*, Harare, 23 August 2003.

<sup>18</sup> *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 20 December 2002: "\$2 billion set aside for militia centres".

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 10 July 2002: "National service capable of curbing youth delinquency".

<sup>21</sup> *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 2 August 2001: "War veterans to take charge of national youth training", is the source of information in this sub-section.

- disaster management, which includes reactions to cyclones;
- vigilance, which is moral education.

“The youth will undergo basic military training so that they are able to defend their country if the need arises”, Tsodzo states. He further confirms Gezi’s earlier statement about the target age: “The focus will be from Grade 7 right up to 30 years”.<sup>22</sup> Once again, the preference that will be given to those completing the training is emphasised: “We intend to make [the national youth training] compulsory for all who intend to work in the government or intend to attend government colleges and universities.”

*The Zimbabwe Independent* sought comment from the MDC national youth Chairperson Nelson Chamisa who expressed the opinion that “[what] prompted the government to pursue this policy of militarising the youth is its realisation that it has lost its support amongst the youth. It reminds one of the despotic and desperate regimes such as that of Kamuzu Banda and Adolf Hitler. It is an exercise in political dishonesty.”

Training in Mount Darwin was a “training of trainers” programme. The intake dispersed quickly across the country, in a cascade system, and set up further training camps in rural locations in provinces countrywide. Already in April, it had been indicated that training centres across the country would in due course include:

21 barracks in Mashonaland Central

Mhangura Mine in Mashonaland West

Dadaya Barracks in the Midlands

Guyu in Matabeleland South

Kamativi Mine in Matabeleland North

Inyati Mine in the Midlands.<sup>23</sup>

During the last few months of 2001, youth militia training intensified throughout the nation, and was by January 2002 widespread in all provinces. By the end of 2002, it is estimated that around 9,000 boys and girls had passed through formal militia training in the five main camps, with an unclear further number, possibly 10-20,000, trained in less formal, often very primitive camps at district level. Before election 2002, militia had been deployed to 146 camps around the country, in close proximity to, or in some cases even sharing, venues for voting.<sup>24</sup>

The “training of trainers” exercise continued to take place at the Mount Darwin centre, which was formally renamed the “Border Gezi Training Centre” in November 2001. Youths were brought in from all over the country to be trained, and then joined war veterans and army personnel at district and province level to undertake training of other youths. This latter training appears to have been erratic in terms of “quality” and access to resources. Some accounts by defected youth militia at provincial and district level indicate gross cruelty towards recruits during the training, and a lack of resources which even meant the camps had no food; some recruits in training at village level, were given an hour in the evening to go to their homes and get an evening meal after which they had to return to the training camp to sleep.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A Grade 7 pupil is typically 12 years old in Zimbabwe.

<sup>23</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 26 April 2001: “National service to instil patriotism among youths”.

<sup>24</sup> Estimates of those trained vary. Government budget comments in 2002 indicate the intention to train 20,000 per annum (*Parliamentary Debates*, 28 November 2002, columns 1713-1719). On 1 June 2003, *The Sunday News*, p. 6, quotes Minister Elliot Manyika referring to the capacity to train 7500 youth at any time, with each intake lasting 3 months. Three intakes per year would make the target of training 20,000 credible.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily News*, 12 December 2002, “State evacuates youths from Kamativi camp”; Interviews, Amani Trust, February 2002.



*Photo 2: Graduates of the National Service training in Mount Darwin disembark from a train in Bulawayo*<sup>26</sup>

### **C. National service: instilling skills and national pride?**

“...absolutely nothing to do with party politics”

Prof Sam Moyo, University of Zimbabwe<sup>27</sup>

“...indoctrination centres” where “young children will have ZANU-PF garbage forced down their throats”.

Prof Welshman Ncube, Sec General, MDC<sup>28</sup>

In early policy statements on the youth training, Border Gezi specifically “denied claims that Government wanted to mould pro-ZANU-PF youths, saying that the youth training programme would be “non partisan”<sup>29</sup>.

University of Zimbabwe professor Sam Moyo is quoted as stating that “national youth service was national in character, and thus above party politics: ... It has absolutely nothing to do with party politics.”<sup>30</sup> He continues that “there is nothing sinister about it”, and that the government is being misinterpreted by those who anticipate that the national service will be “partisan or ZANU-PF”. Prof. Moyo is quoted as drawing a parallel between the 2001 national service and the youth brigades of the

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<sup>26</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 7 December 2001

<sup>27</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 26 April 2001: “National service to instil patriotism among youths”.

<sup>28</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 3 July 2002: “National service plans slammed”.

<sup>29</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 26 April 2001: “National service to instil patriotism among youths”.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

'80s. This is an interesting comparison, considering that the then ZANU-PF youth brigades were responsible for torture, murder and destruction of property particularly around the 1985 election.<sup>31</sup>

Further commentary on the intentions behind the training is given in *The Chronicle* in December 2001. Dan Moyo, Regional Director of Education for Matabeleland North, greets 200 Matabeleland youth returning from Mount Darwin where training has “equipped them with the knowledge of the country’s history, war of liberation, the significance of the national anthem, survival skills and the land question.”<sup>32</sup>

He mentions a major challenge the youth militia must deal with: “defending the country against neo-colonial and imperialist forces which are threatening our independence”. This last comment is a loaded one: the MDC is commonly referred to by ZANU-PF as neo-colonial in outlook. So are the youth militia to defend the nation against a legitimate opposition? It is interesting to note that Moyo is *not* quoted referring to self-employment skills, once touted as a major benefit of youth training.

Throughout the last few years, the articulated policy of government with regard to the youth militia has, in the state run media at least, altered somewhat in emphasis. While early press reports gave most space to the importance of skills training, more recent press reports have emphasised the programme as a “mainstay of the struggle for national sovereignty” and as a “tool for restoring dignity to black Zimbabweans”. An article in *The Chronicle* in February 2003 is typical of recent policy articles on the militia. The article summarises a speech made by Vice President Simon Muzenda at the graduation of over 2,000 youth at Dadaya training centre in the Midlands.<sup>33</sup>

“The national youth service training programme is a Government nation-building programme that has been designed to correctly inform our youths of their history and more importantly to equip them with skills that enable them to survive the socio-economic challenges facing Zimbabwe as a previously colonised developing nation. It is Government’s commitment to ensure that the programme is morally and financially supported since its benefit to the nation far outweighs any cost one would think of.

“The modules delivered to youths during the training demystify what many of our youths have been misled to believe, that Africans and their culture are inferior to other inhabitants of this earth, more so to Europeans.

“The programme impresses in the minds of our young Zimbabwean citizens the basic human and democratic principles of equality, equity and individual freedom.

“It is geared towards boosting the self-worth image of the youth as an independent and self-reliant generation that is knowledgeable of its own roots, patriotic, and ready to defend its right to existence on planet earth....”

State controlled newspapers at times unashamedly quote government officials reinforcing anti-white and anti-MDC positions when discussing the type of training and education that takes place in the national service. A notable example is the article in the *Chronicle* on 27 August 2001, entitled “Party

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<sup>31</sup> *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace; a Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980 – 1988*, LRF and CCJP, 1997, Harare. See pp. 62-66 for details on ZANU-PF youth brigades. Border Gezi himself allegedly made good use of youth gangs in his own parliamentary election campaign during early 2000: *ZHRNGO Forum*, July 2001: “Who was responsible?” lists perpetrators of violence during the 2000 election campaign. Gezi is implicated as perpetrator in 5 violent incidents. One detailed incident on page 17 refers to 1000 youths hired in his constituency to attack MDC supporters and prevent their rallies.

<sup>32</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 7 December 2001: “Youths complete national service”.

<sup>33</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 23 February, 2003: “Government committed to national youth service”.

woos back youths”<sup>34</sup> It gives an insight into what it is that ZANU-PF believes Zimbabwe’s youths need to be taught.

Absalom Sikhosana, Secretary for Youth in the Politburo, is quoted with the following statement: “Youths have discovered the opposition for what it is; that it has nothing to offer a black person. ... white men are deceitful. ... We have managed to expose all the trickery of the white man.”<sup>35</sup> Elliot Manyika, ZANU-PF Mashonaland Central Province chairman, and then soon-to-be Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation, is quoted in the same article as saying the government-proposed youth training is “telling our youths that they must change their mind set ... and not aspire to be a servant of the white man. Whites are going where they came from”.

Sikhumbuzo Ndiweni, the ZANU-PF Information and Publicity Secretary for Bulawayo further explains: “The white man, through his propaganda, has managed to separate the black youth’s body from his mind. However, that is changing and must change.” David Ndlovu, a ZANU-PF Central Committee member and Bulawayo’s acting executive mayor at that time stresses the need to educate youths about the liberation struggle and how “present racial disparities were created and how they were being maintained.”

The last word in this article is given to an unnamed university student: “The revolutionary spirit must be maintained until the white men and our black brothers he has deceived realise that blacks are also human beings. We also need land so that we can be rich like them.”

Befitting such statements, the propaganda in the training camps appears to be crude in the extreme. One defected youth reported how war veterans told trainees that if anyone voted for MDC, then the whites would take over the country again. They were also told that the whites used to kill black people in the 1970s by pouring boiling beer onto them, and this would happen again if MDC won the election.<sup>36</sup>

A youth militia history manual called “*Inside the Third Chimurenga*”<sup>37</sup> gives an idea of the type of “patriotism” that is instilled in the camps. The manual is historically simplistic and racist, and glorifies recent ZANU-PF National Heroes, along with the land resettlement programme. It consists entirely of speeches made by President Robert Mugabe since 2000, among them his addresses to ZANU-PF party congresses, his speech after the 2000 election result, and funeral orations for deceased ZANU-PF heroes, including Border Gezi, Chenjerai Hitler Hunzvi and Moven Mahachi, all of whom died in 2001.

The opposition MDC is repeatedly vilified in this compilation, and referred to as imperialist and neo-colonialist. Supporters of the opposition are described as “rough and violent high-density lumpen elements”, as well as “disgruntled Former Rhodesians”, and the “Zimbabwean contagion”. The MDC is said to be driven by “the repulsive ideology of return to white settler rule”. Foreign governments and

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<sup>34</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 27 August 2001.

<sup>35</sup> The racist nature of these comments is not coincidental: ZANU-PF’s propaganda of the last 3 years has systematically sought to link the MDC to “whites” and “the British”, and to portray MDC as having an anti-land redistribution stand, which is in fact incorrect in all respects.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews conducted by a human rights organisation during early 2002. Youth militia from a variety of camps had similar anecdotal accounts; one reported being told to beat women in miniskirts or with short-sleeved blouses on, but was unable to give any rationale for why such women should be beaten.

<sup>37</sup> *Inside the Third Chimurenga*, by President Robert G. Mugabe, Department of Information and Publicity, Harare, December 2001 (see cover on front of this report)

the opposition are conflated as “enemies and their local lackeys”. The speech from which the above references are taken ends with: “Long live the Central Committee! Long live ZANU-PF! Long live the War Veterans! Long live our Revolution!”<sup>38</sup>

The manual is obviously hurriedly put together, with changes of font and format. According to youths trained in the camps, apart from ZANU-PF campaign pamphlets, this was the sole source of written information on Zimbabwean history used in the training process during 2002. While any politician or political party is entitled to represent the history of the nation as they wish, serious questions have to be raised about the views of only one political party being used in this partisan way, as the sole history text in a supposedly national and impartial programme, in a country with at least one other widely supported political party.

#### **D. July 2002: Compulsory national service announced -**

##### **Implications for all tertiary training**

“...the mistake that the ruling party made was to allow colleges and universities to be turned into anti-Government mentality factories.”

Sikhumbuzo Ndiweni, ZANU-PF Information and Publicity  
Secretary for Bulawayo<sup>39</sup>

In July 2002, it was announced that national service would be compulsory for all school leavers from January 2003. The Minister of Higher Education and Technology, Samuel Mumbengegwi further announced that no students leaving high school would be given their “A” level or “O” level certificates until they had completed six months of national service.<sup>40</sup> In November 2002, circulars were sent to all tertiary institutions informing them that admission preference has to be given to youth militia, and that no letters of admission to ordinary applicants should be sent until each institution had been sent a list from “head office” of militia who had to be given first priority in courses.<sup>41</sup> Those already completing tertiary training in government tertiary institutions would have to do the national service afterwards, before being considered qualified. Mumbengegwi elaborated: “...youths with the prerequisite qualifications [such as “O” or “A” levels]... will not be admitted into institutes of higher learning unless they undergo national service. ... *This means that a lot of places may remain unfilled as more students go through the national service before being enrolled in tertiary institutions.*”<sup>42</sup> (author’s emphasis).

In a country with 300,000 school leavers a year and approximately 20 to 30,000 tertiary training opportunities nationally, it is an astonishing statement from the minister that tertiary places will remain unfilled until militia can fill them. The minister, apparently unaware of the irony, goes on to claim that the brain drain from Zimbabwe was the result of a lack of patriotism in Zimbabwe’s youth and

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<sup>38</sup> Quotations taken from a few pages by way of example: Chapter 10, pp. 86-91, *ZANU-PF the Winning Party* (speech given after the 2000 parliamentary election results)

<sup>39</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 26 April 2001

<sup>40</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 2 July 2002: “National service to be compulsory”.

<sup>41</sup> *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 29 November 2002; “Government to introduce a patriotism course”.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

therefore the national service was needed. In the end, this policy of empty places was not enforced in 2003, although preference was given by directive to those who had done the youth training.<sup>43</sup>

In a response, the secretary general of the MDC, Welshman Ncube, blamed the collapsed economy in Zimbabwe for forcing children to leave loving families and go abroad, rather than any lack of patriotism.<sup>44</sup>

There is an obvious practical gap between government claims that the national service must be “compulsory” and their own capacity to train: they are currently able to train around 20,000 youths a year, by their own estimate. Yet there are 300,000 school leavers. The question must be raised as to the future prospects of these other 280,000, by this policy denied access to tertiary opportunities and jobs in the civil service, virtually the only remaining large source of formal employment in the country. The youth training is clearly designed to favour those prepared to go through a ZANU-PF indoctrination process, and to exclude from the outset children from non-ZANU-PF families from all chances of progressing to tertiary training.

Three weeks after Mumbengegwi’s statement, at the graduation of 1,068 youths from the Border Gezi Training Centre, the Vice President Joseph Msika, referred to the militia training as necessary to “reverse self-hate, rejection” that Zimbabwean youths suffer because of colonialism and immoral western values. He again emphasised that without the training, no youth will enter tertiary training or the civil service in future. He claimed that the training is not a “political gimmick” but had allowed government to “shape youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner”.<sup>45</sup>

## **E. The legality of the “compulsory” national service**

Apart from the scanty budgetary mentions in 2001 and 2002, youth militia training seems to have arrived with little comment from our legislators: the issue of whether national youth service should be introduced has to date (August 2003) never been formally debated in parliament.

In April 2001 Border Gezi is quoted in an article in the *Chronicle*, as stating that “Cabinet had already approved the national youth policy, and there is no need for Government to seek parliamentary approval before implementing the programme.”<sup>46</sup> It is remarkable in retrospect how little attention was paid during early 2001 by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and by civil society in Zimbabwe, to the looming prospect of youth militia training. However, this is probably owing to the seemingly innocuous syllabus presented, the small budget formally proposed which suggested the training would be on a similarly small scale, and the enormous number of other problems the nation had to face, including looming mass starvation, relentless attacks on civil society, MDC supporters and the independent media.

Despite Gezi’s claims in his October 2000 National Youth Policy document, at no point since the June 2000 election was the issue of introducing national youth service ever publicly debated in a meaningful

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix 2 for further background on government’s broader education policy as linked to national service training.

<sup>44</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 3 July 2002: “National service plans slammed”.

<sup>45</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 26 July 2002: “Reverse self-hate, rejection”.

<sup>46</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 26 April 2001: “National service to instil patriotism among youths”.

forum by civil society, existing educational institutions, or the churches.<sup>47</sup> Once the system was in place and the general public became aware of the real nature of the training and to feel the impact of the youth brigades in December 2001, protests began, but by then the system was operational.

In the early stages, when the programme was being presented as “voluntary”, there was no need for legislation regarding participation. However, in July 2002, it was announced that the youth service would be “compulsory”. There has been talk of a Bill to be presented to parliament for debate by Elliot Manyika, since August 2002,<sup>48</sup> but so far this has not in fact occurred. The compulsory nature of the national youth service is therefore legally dubious.<sup>49</sup> This notwithstanding, the Government is already enforcing its proclaimed policy that those who do not have a national service training certificate will be denied access to employment in the civil service, and to all post school training facilities funded by government, including vocational training, universities and colleges. Since the beginning of 2003, qualified candidates have had the experience of being initially accepted to nurse training or teacher training, only to be asked for their youth training certificates on arrival at the relevant institution. Failure to produce these has meant dismissal from training.<sup>50</sup>

## **F. July 2003: weapons training advocated in camps**

Early policy statements from government officials had consistently played down the militarisation aspect of the youth training, concentrating on its skill building potential and its patriotic elements. In January 2002, Elliot Manyika publicly denied that there was any military aspect to their training, and this position was publicly maintained throughout 2002, in spite of clear and mounting evidence to the contrary.<sup>51</sup>

As early as January 2002, army sources confirmed that while the director of the National Youth Service, David Munyoro, was a civilian, the unit was at that time run by a military man, retired Brigadier Boniface Hurungudu. At the same time, the Border Gezi Training Centre was run by colonel Josphat Shumba of the Zimbabwean army, who is a former director of Military Intelligence; out of the 30 instructors heading the youth militia training, 15 were either serving or retired army officials while others were war veterans.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> A University of Zimbabwe lecturer, Dr Solomon Nkiwane is quoted in the *Chronicle* 26 April article as “urging Government to consult extensively with stakeholders in education before implementing the programme”, noting that at that stage this had not occurred. Earlier in the 90s such discussions may have taken place, but in the very different political climate of a one party state.

<sup>48</sup> *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 23 August 2002: “Manyika to table controversial bill in Parly”.

<sup>49</sup> One assumes that the National Service Act of 1976, which forced white school leavers to join the Rhodesian army, is not relevant, particularly considering the youth of the current trainees.

<sup>50</sup> Interviews by authors with affected school leavers in Midlands. This new requirement has given rise to a new black market product – forged national youth service certificates, for those families who do not want their children to do the training but want them to have the chance of tertiary training! The other option of avoiding youth training is to have highly placed parents. One nurse training hospital has reported that they received a directive in January 2003, that out of 24 training placements, 12 had to be reserved for youth militia, who would be referred by head office directly, and 12 places could be chosen through normal selection procedure. In fact, out of the 12 militia placements, 3 were militia and the other 9 were allegedly relatives of influential people. Of the 3 militia, one has already dropped out of the training, as she had not wanted to be a nurse in the first place.

<sup>51</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 8 January 2002: “Youth training is not military training”.

<sup>52</sup> *Daily News*, Harare, 30 January 2002: “Army behind youth training”.

Photographs appeared in local media showing youth marching military style, albeit often with broomsticks instead of guns. Reports from defected militia suggested that there was no useful skills training in the camps; trainees were rather taught how to set up road blocks and how to harass civilians.

Once the cascade training spread to Matabeleland in early 2002, it was confirmed that ex-dissidents from the 1980s era, who included notorious killers amnestied in 1988, had been enlisted to train youth militia in Nkayi.<sup>53</sup> This is a clear indication of the type of skills to be imparted in the camps.

Finally, in July 2003, the Minister of Defence, Sidney Sekeramayi, announced the intention to train the youth militia in weaponry.<sup>54</sup> He referred to the youth militia as a “lucrative recruitment ground for the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA)”. One thousand militia had already been recruited into the ZNA, reported the Minister. Sekeramayi also spoke of plans to introduce a formal module of “weaponry training” into youth service, so that the youth could “create a reserve security force for the nation”. He called the ZNA a “major stakeholder” in the youth training programme.

Sekeramayi allayed fears at the prospect of tens of thousands of militarised, weapon-trained youth militia. He stated that the Government had looked into the national security concerns of giving such a large number of youth basic training in weaponry, and would come up with legislation to see to it that there were regular follow ups on them, so that they could be kept under control. “Such a system would pool the graduates living within a specific area into reservists under the control of our existing national security structures.”

In other words, the outcome of such a policy as part of a compulsory national service, would be to put every school leaver in the country under the direct supervision of government security agents and structures.

The minister attacked the negative portrayal of the youth militia in the independent media, saying the media was “bent on misinforming the Zimbabwean public about the programme for its self-centred political interests”. It was indicated during the minister’s speech, which was delivered at the third graduation of more than a thousand students from Guyu training centre in Matabeleland South, that there would be 20,000 formal graduates of the youth militia training programme by the end of the year.

By announcing an “intention” to train youth in weaponry, the minister had finally owned up to a ‘de facto’ government policy. It is now beyond doubt that the youth militia training is in fact paramilitary training under the guise of a national youth service. According to defected militia, it is often brutal and brutalising.<sup>55</sup> The secretary general of the MDC, Welshman Ncube, has accused the training of having “...transformed the youth of Zimbabwe into bandits that have been used to maim and rape innocent citizens, including their own parents.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 1 February 2002: “Former dissidents part of youth training team”. This is confirmed through interviews with torture victims, by human rights organisations.

<sup>54</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 17 July 2003: “Youths to be trained in weaponry”. Information and all quotations in paragraphs following are from this *Chronicle* article.

<sup>55</sup> See interviews reported in more detail in final section of this report.

<sup>56</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 3 July 2002: “National service plans slammed”.

*Youth militia:*

*Deployment and activities*

*2001-2003*



## A. Early indications of torture and murder

“The youths have been doing various community service duties including cleaning up the streets ...”

Minister Elliot Manyika, 8 January 2002<sup>57</sup>

“In only the past few weeks Amnesty International has received reports of at least seven people killed in violent repression by state-sponsored militias ...”

Amnesty International memo, 10 January 2002<sup>58</sup>

Within weeks of their graduation in November 2001, human rights organisations and the independent media began to report acts of violence and brutality by the youth militia.<sup>59</sup> Over the ensuing three months until the Presidential election on 9 to 11 March 2002, the youth militia, who quickly became known as “*the ZANU-PF militia*”, the “*Border Gezis*”, the “*Green bombers*” and the “*Taliban*”<sup>60</sup>, were among the greatest perpetrators of human rights violations recorded by local human rights groups.

These violations have allegedly included murder, torture, arson, mounting of illegal roadblocks to punish those with no ZANU-PF party cards, disruption of MDC rallies, and displacement of opposition supporters from the constituencies in which they were registered to vote. As the youth have not so far been issued with weapons, their instruments of torture have been ordinary objects available to anyone, such as sticks, batons, axes, barbed wire, iron bars, chains, sjamboks, knives and screwdrivers.<sup>61</sup>

It is of significance that

- victims report youth militia attacks as being mostly party political in motive, routinely targeting those who support the Movement for Democratic Change.<sup>62</sup>
- there are regular reports of police collusion with the youth militia; police are reported as frequently outright refusing to respond to calls for help. At times they take part in the same illegal behaviour, at other times they rescue victims from militia but fail to press charges against perpetrators. The proximity of youth torture camps to police stations reduces the inclination of victims to report cases, as they assume collaboration and cannot enter the police station without being observed by their perpetrators.<sup>63</sup>
- the youth militia are in many reports said to have been accompanying war veterans and working in collaboration with them.

The following is an abridged chronicle of youth militia activities in their first weeks of deployment.

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<sup>57</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 8 January 2002: “National service is not military training”.

<sup>58</sup> Amnesty International, January 2002: *Memorandum to SADC on the deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* See also Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum monthly violence reports, December 2001 – May 2002. Related AI urgent actions were launched on 7 February, 15 February, 1 March.

<sup>60</sup> “Green bombers” refers to the plain green uniform worn by the youth militia: the other epithets are self-explanatory.

<sup>61</sup> *Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum*, December 2002: “Are They Accountable?”, pp. 77-82, for accounts of torture and assaults by youth militia. Also Physicians for Human Rights -Denmark, Amnesty International – see further sections in this report.

<sup>62</sup> At other times attacks appear to be random, in areas generally acknowledged to be MDC strongholds, or involve sheer thuggery and theft. There are even a few reports (see following) of youth militia attacking police and army.

<sup>63</sup> *Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum*, December 2002: “Are they accountable?”, makes similar observations about police-war vet-militia collaboration and impunity.

## **Seven murders of MDC members in ten days attributed to youth militia**

In a memorandum to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in advance of their meeting of 13 to 15 January 2002, Amnesty International produced a substantial report listing major incidences of violence known at that stage to have involved the youth militia. It includes a list of 7 MDC members brutally killed between 20 December 2001 and 1 January 2002.<sup>64</sup>

In all cases the murders involved gangs of militia, often accompanied or led by war veterans. The murdered and their causes of death are listed by Amnesty International as follows:

- Milton Chambati, aged 45: stabbed to death and head partially severed, 20 December 2001. No police arrest or investigation.
- Titus Nheya, aged 56: stabbed to death in Karoi on 21 December 2001. Chief perpetrator arrested and then released without charge.
- Rambisai Nyika: killed in Gokwe on 24 December 2001. Apparently no police investigation.
- Laban Chiweta: died of burns and head injuries after attack near Bindura on 26 December. Police officers allegedly witnessed the assaults and did not intervene or arrest anyone.
- Mr Jena, a school teacher, was on New Year's Eve stabbed to death by a group of 200 youth militia in Shamva district. Houses were burnt and people assaulted by the militia. Police did not intervene and no arrests were made.
- Trymore Midzi, aged 24: stabbed, died 24 December 2001. His parents' home was later taken over by militia and war veterans in Bindura.
- Moffat Chivaura, Trymore Midzi's uncle, aged in his 50s: kidnapped on 29 December 2001, while the family were visiting Trymore's grave to conduct rituals. His corpse was found some months later on the farm of a senior ZANU-PF official.

*Photo 3: Trymore Midzi: murdered December 2001, allegedly by youth militia*

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<sup>64</sup> Amnesty International, January 2002: *Memorandum to SADC on the deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe.*

## Accounts of torture, theft and arson

Other sources, including Zimbabwean human rights groups and independent media, corroborate the list from Amnesty International.<sup>65</sup> Amnesty International, the Human Rights NGO Forum, Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, and local media continued to report torture, murder and arson by youth militia among others, throughout the ensuing weeks. A few examples are listed below.

- On 30 December 2001, in the Harare area, five busses were allegedly hired by ZANU-PF to bus youth militia into Kuwadzana extension. They were escorted into the area by war veterans. Kuwadzana, like most Harare urban constituencies, is generally considered an MDC supporting area. For more than two hours the militia assaulted civilians, destroyed windows in 70 houses and looted clothing. The police failed to respond to numerous phone calls for help. Police eventually attended the scene when residents began to counter attack the militia.<sup>66</sup>
- On 1 January 2002, youth militia overran a small rural business centre, Chinhoyi. They looted shops, including major retail stores such as OK Bazaars and TM Supermarket, allegedly selling off some of the goods.<sup>67</sup>
- On 2 January, youth militia went on the rampage in Ruwa, a rural business centre not far from Harare. They assaulted numerous residents including a pregnant woman. One badly assaulted man had to be taken to hospital for treatment. Wedding guests at the local community hall were also assaulted after the youth were refused free beer.<sup>68</sup>
- On 3 January, the youth militia, now referred to in the press as the “ZANU-PF militia”, attacked the house of a senior MDC official in the Harare suburb of Glen Norah. Derrick Mzira, who had run unsuccessfully against ZANU-PF in a rural constituency in 2000, lost property worth Z\$500,000 in the attack. He reported the attack, but police officers refused to respond.<sup>69</sup>

Press and human rights reports in the ensuing weeks alleged further brutal attacks on people and property by youth militia in Chitungwiza, Warren Park, Kuwadazana, Highfields, Hatfield, Mabvuko, (all in Harare area), in Bulawayo and in rural centres of Ruwa, Murombedzi, Chimanimani, Mberengwa East, Kwekwe, Silobela, Zaka, Nkayi, and Binga – in short, across the length and breadth of the nation.<sup>70</sup> These attacks frequently targeted senior members of the MDC, including MDC members of parliament, in person or in property. Scores of MDC supporters were hospitalised as a result of these attacks, and various districts became “no go zones” for anyone who was not a ZANU-PF supporter.

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<sup>65</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 1 January 2002: “Harare terrorised”; *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 4 January 2002: “Violence spreads to Ruwa, Chinhoyi”. see also “Pre poll 2002: Fighting for rights” – video funded by Danida, 2002 and ZHRNGO Forum violence report for January 2002.

<sup>66</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 1 January 2002: “Harare terrorised”.

<sup>67</sup> *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 4 January 2002: “Violence spreads to Ruwa, Chinhoyi”.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Financial Gazette*, Harare, January 4-9 2002: “ZANU-PF militia attack MDC official’s house”.

<sup>70</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 28 January 2002: “MPs flee militia”; *The Financial Gazette*, Harare, 16 January 2002: “Green bombers run amok”; *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 31 January 2002: “Militia impose curfew in Kuwadzana”, are a few examples of such reports.

## B. Government response to rising alarm over militias

On 8 January 2002, by which time the youth militia were already implicated in 7 murders, scores of assaults and multiple reports of property destruction and theft, Elliot Manyika, the minister responsible for their training, accused the private press of “trying to demonise the youth training programme”. He said the youth had “been doing various community service duties including cleaning up the streets.” He mentioned the gratitude of residents of Chitungwiza to the youths for their street cleaning initiative. According to the minister, they had maintained a flowerbed near Chikwana shopping complex. He said the government would not stop at anything in order to establish training centres in every province.<sup>71</sup>

On 11 January 2002, Munacho Mutezo, the ZANU-PF secretary for administration in Mutare, was quoted in the press defending the youth militia, and denying that they were beating people. He denied that the militia training was partisan and accused the “local and foreign media in their quest to control the economy and politics of Zimbabwe” as having “politicised the National Youth Training Programme”.<sup>72</sup>

On 21 January 2002, *The Herald* ran a full page article entitled “National Youth Service ... Instilling sense of patriotism, belonging”.<sup>73</sup> This lengthy piece begins by describing the forced conscription of white youths into the Rhodesian army and their brain washing to reinforce their racism and sense of colonial supremacy during training. The article goes on, without any irony at all, to laud the current youth militia training in Zimbabwe. It claims that the youth training “enables youths to promote unity across the country through shared experiences ... and to develop leadership qualities among them.” The training is once more claimed to impart a “variety of skills”. An unnamed commentator is quoted as saying of today’s youth: “They are a confused and lost generation ... this is why they do not even understand why there is a Third Chimurenga to repossess the land”. The need for people to know the nation’s history and national anthem is emphasised. The article concludes that “it is generally myopic to dismiss national service as a plot by one political party to lure some votes”.

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<sup>71</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 8 January 2002: “National service is not military training”.

<sup>72</sup> *The Eastern Star*, Mutare, 11 January 2002: “Mutezo defends youth brigade training”.

<sup>73</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 21 January 2002: “National Youth Service ... Instilling sense of patriotism, belonging”.

## C. The role of the “Green bombers” around elections

### The Presidential election campaign

“These youths were not at any point trained to be part of the Presidential campaign ... [They] are not getting military training and therefore cannot be used to terrorise anyone.”

Elliot Manyika, Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation<sup>74</sup>

“... bands of brutes being trained as the willing instruments of ZANU-PF in its terror campaign against the opposition.”

Vincent Kahiya, commentator, independent media<sup>75</sup>

It soon became clear that the creation of the youth militia months before the Presidential election of March 2002 was more than a coincidence. The youth militia played a crucial role in campaigning for ZANU-PF, not only in the Presidential poll, but also in every election since their inauguration to date. This includes parliamentary by-elections and the Rural District Council elections.

The pattern of torture of opposition members already alluded to in the previous section intensified in the run up to the Presidential election and in the retribution that marked the aftermath. In one province alone, Manicaland, the MDC logged 6,085 assaults on its members with a further 7,728 supporters being displaced from their homes. Attacks were widespread throughout the country.

Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, produced 3 major reports on torture in Zimbabwe during 2002.<sup>76</sup> Many of the cases PHR-DK document involve civilians tortured in militia camps. Two detailed case histories of youth militia torture victims are appended to this report.

Some general comments were made by PHR-DK about the “green bombers” and their activities:

- The youth militia act with impunity: they are seldom if ever apprehended for their crimes against fellow Zimbabweans.
- The youth militia often act in conjunction with other ruling party official or paramilitary groups, such as war veterans or police.
- The youth militia were among the biggest groups of perpetrators linked to human rights violations in the first six months of 2002.
- The above factors lead one to conclude that the torture of others by youth militia is acceptable to the authorities, and in accordance with official government policy.

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<sup>74</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 8 January 2002: “National service is not military training”.

<sup>75</sup> *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 1 February 2002: “National service: community work or electoral weapon?”

<sup>76</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Zimbabwe 2002. The Presidential Election: 44 days to go*, Johannesburg, 24 January 2002; Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Zimbabwe: Post Presidential Election – March to May 2002. “We’ll make them run”*, Copenhagen, 21 May 2002; Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Vote ZANU-PF or starve: Zimbabwe August to October 2002*, Johannesburg, 20 November 2002.

Information on following three pages adapted from these reports; photographs 6, 8 and 9, previously documented by Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, in their 21 May report.

*Photo 4: homestead burnt and vandalised by youth militia in suburb of Bulawayo*

This violence has had a severe impact on human lives, leaving permanent disablement and deep trauma in victims. Furthermore, it has served the purpose of sending a more general, intimidatory message to MDC supporters in the communities of the victims.

While it is not possible to accurately estimate exact numbers of such offences, or the real material consequences for victims in terms of permanent disability, for example, there are obviously profound health consequences for victims, and for the health delivery services, that are being pointed to, but not elaborated on, in this report.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from murder, torture and destruction of property, which included the burning down and/or vandalising of homesteads in various parts of the country, the youth militia were also involved in other activities clearly both illegal and party political in nature.

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<sup>77</sup> *PHR-DK* May 2002 report (ibid) on post election atrocities found that militia were perpetrators in 6 out of 13 cases, the most likely group to be involved in violence. *ZHRNGO Forum*, December 2002: "Are they accountable?" which examines perpetrators of violence linked to election 2002, attributes around 10% of all serious violations to youth militia. These include murder and torture. However, this report takes into account offences from June 01 to June 02 and the militia was only deployed six months into this period, so statistically, their proportion of offences is more likely in excess of 20%.

*Photo 5: Interviewee reports assault with sticks and sjamboks in youth militia camp in Bulawayo, February 2002. Clinical findings of multiple linear lesions all over torso, arms and head, place claims of torture beyond reasonable doubt.*

*Photo 6 (taken two months after initial injury): Peri-election torture of supposed MDC supporter in March 2002, causing severe disability. Burning logs were held against both feet. Skull fractured and cigarette burns on arms. This incident took place in youth militia camp in Bulawayo; the victim subsequently died in the first week of February 2003. To date there has been no prosecution of his perpetrators, in spite of a signed confession by one of them.*



## **Road blocks and theft of ID cards**

One militia activity that became widely reported, was the setting up of road blocks in rural areas. The youth militia then insisted that people produced ZANU-PF cards on demand. If they failed to do so, not only were people subjected to severe beatings, but they also had their ID cards stolen by the militia. In Zimbabwe, an ID card, which has to be carried at all times by law, is almost invariably the only source of personal identity people possess. To have your card stolen is to have your vote stolen, as without personal proof of identity you cannot vote. This practice was widely reported by human rights organisations, official election observer groups and the press.<sup>78</sup> By polling, 1300 stolen ID cards had been reported to human rights organisations. As there are no active human rights groups to whom victims can report offences, in the vast majority of small urban centres, these and other statistics of HR abuses may safely be assumed to represent but a fraction of the actual number of offences.

The youth militia are also reported to have patrolled trains in search of people without ZANU-PF cards, who were then thrown off the trains by the police.<sup>79</sup>

## **Forced purchasing of ZANU-PF cards**

In Bindura, in early January, youth militia sealed off the town by mounting illegal roadblocks on all roads in and out, and demanded from both those who lived there and those passing through, to purchase ZANU-PF cards.<sup>80</sup> This practice, which was reported countrywide, proved lucrative to ZANU-PF as hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans purchased the cards in order to stay out of trouble at road blocks, regardless of their political allegiance. ZANU-PF themselves announced that they had raised Z\$ 500 million from card sales, largely at the hands of youth militia.<sup>81</sup>

## **Disruption of activities of senior MDC officials and rallies**

On 6 February, youth militia together with a contingent of the Zimbabwe National Army were involved in the ambushing of a convoy of cars taking 3 MDC MPs to undertake constituency activities in Nkayi, Matabeleland. The 3 MPs were Gertrude Mtombeni, Abednico Bhebhe and Peter Nyoni. They and 30 others were severely assaulted, after their convoy stopped on discovering boulders in the road. The MPs were imprisoned under appalling conditions at Nkayi police station, and later released and charged with the crimes that had been perpetrated against them, including assaults with axe-handles.<sup>82</sup>

The youth militia routinely disrupted MDC rallies by intercepting and assaulting those trying to attend. On several occasions, youth militia invaded rally venues the day before the MDC rally was scheduled. MDC officials would arrive to find threatening youth militia ensconced on the pitch with the police

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<sup>78</sup> SADC Parliamentary Forum Report on Presidential election March 2002; Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum Research Unit: "Briefing Paper No. 1: Pre-Election Danger Signals of Large-Scale Disenfranchisement", p. 2. *Human rights and Zimbabwe's Presidential election* (ZHRNGO Forum election report): March 2002, Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, May 2002, p. 52; *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 24 January 2002: "Militia turns party cards into passports for travellers".

<sup>79</sup> ZHRNGO Forum election report, *ibid*, p 68

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>82</sup> Amnesty International, Urgent Actions on 8 and 15 February 2002.

refusing to remove them. This resulted in cancellation of rallies, or in violence disrupting rallies. A notable example was at the White City Stadium in January in Bulawayo, when the disruption of a rally by militia resulted in violence and the death of an MDC supporter.<sup>83</sup> Vehicles trying to approach or leave rallies were stoned or torched by youth militia. At an MDC rally in Chinoyi shortly before the election, official election observer vehicles were among those stoned after the rally.<sup>84</sup> On two occasions, the convoy of the MDC Presidential candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai, was ambushed by youths wearing ZANU-PF t-shirts, in the company of war veterans. When police refused to provide an escort to further rallies, some were cancelled out of concern for Tsvangirai's safety.<sup>85</sup>

### **Destruction of MDC property**

Youth militia were involved in the burning of the MDC offices in Kwekwe in January 2002, and the vandalising of MDC offices in Bulawayo, Harare and Chinoyi.<sup>86</sup> Other MDC property including motor vehicles belonging either to MDC or to MDC MPs, was also vandalised or destroyed by the youth militia. Shortly before the election, a South African observer team was actually inside the MDC offices in Kwekwe when it was attacked by youth militia, who stoned and mobbed the building for some time, trapping observers and MDC officials inside.

### **Dispersal of militia into rural areas and placement of militia camps adjacent to polling stations**

On 1 March, MDC exposed the location of 146 militia bases around the entire country. Some commentators estimated the presence of around 20,000 to 50,000 youths in these camps.<sup>87</sup> They further reported that youths were imposing unofficial curfews in the areas around their bases, and had forced the closure of local schools in some areas. Schools are typically voting centres in elections. In Masvingo, 70 teachers were reported to have fled their schools. Ten other teachers were reported as having been kidnapped by militia and their whereabouts were not known. In other areas teachers were reported to have been severely beaten and one headmaster had his house looted.<sup>88</sup>

By the time of voting, it was obvious that militia camps had been sited extremely close to many rural voting stations. *In some cases, voting actually occurred in militia camps.* In Marondera, this was the case in 12 out of 43 fixed polling stations. Close assessment of a few districts in Mashonaland by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, noted a further 42 polling stations located at or near militia bases. As the MDC election report points out, considering the scale of torture by militia in the previous 3 months, "the association of these venues with ruling party violence meant they were not neutral."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum election report, *ibid.*, p. 23; *Daily News*, Harare, 21 January 2002, 1 February 2002. Also in Bulawayo, militia camped next to community halls in high density suburbs, such as Sizinda and Nketa, making campaign meetings impossible.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* See also "Fighting for rights" *ibid.* which captures this latter incident on film. Youth militia can be clearly seen behaving in an intimidatory manner, and those attending the rally show their assault wounds to the camera.

<sup>85</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum election report, *ibid.*

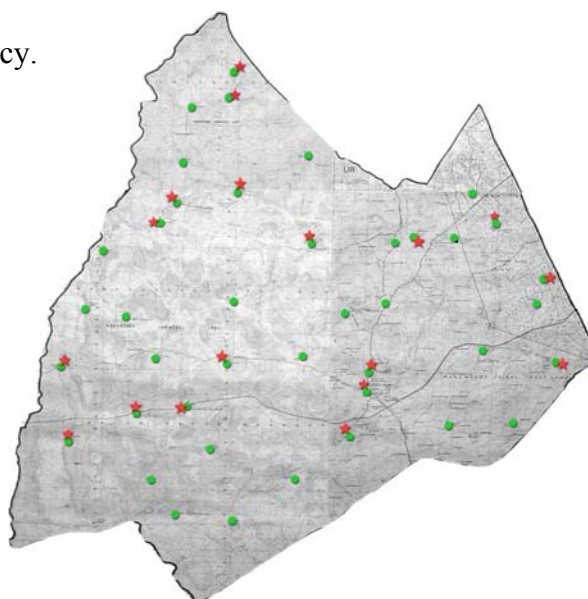
<sup>86</sup> PHR-DK report: "Presidential election: 44 days to go", January 2002.

<sup>87</sup> *Daily Telegraph (UK)*, March 4, 2002: "'Terror Teens' Intimidate Zimbabwe Voters".

<sup>88</sup> *Daily Telegraph (UK)*, *ibid.* *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 1 March 2002: "Government sets up 146 militia bases".

<sup>89</sup> MDC, Zimbabwe, Preliminary Report : Second Working Draft - Presidential Elections of Zimbabwe 9-11 March 2002.

**Figure 1:** Map showing polling stations and militia camps in Murehwa constituency. Red dots = militia camps; green dots = polling stations.<sup>90</sup>



## Polling days

The youth militia are reported to have assaulted MDC polling agents, and to have taken part in kidnapping of polling agents; they played a key role in ensuring that in more than 50% of polling stations, MDC was unable to provide a chain of custody of the ballot boxes, or to continuously monitor the voting process.<sup>91</sup> The Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum and MDC reports on the elections both refer to the assault of MDC polling agents at 18 polling stations, abduction of 71 polling agents from their posts, and arrest of many hundreds (possibly as many as 2,000) of agents on their way to either polling or counting stations.<sup>92</sup>

Amnesty International reported the setting up of roadblocks by youth militia, to prevent the MDC from deploying its polling agents “in what appeared to be an orchestrated campaign directed by the government”. They also report abductions of polling agents and their torture by militia during the days of voting.<sup>93</sup>

The militia reportedly intimidated voters, insisting that rural voters cast their votes as illiterates, or risk being denied food aid after the elections.<sup>94</sup> Amnesty International also reports serious assaults by militia on people trying to reach polling stations to vote. Two men were beaten for over an hour in Karoi by militia for arriving at a polling station in the company of white men.

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<sup>90</sup> MDC, Zimbabwe, Preliminary Report : Second Working Draft - Presidential Elections of Zimbabwe 9-11 March 2002

<sup>91</sup> ZHRNGO Forum report, *ibid*, AI, *ibid*, MDC, *ibid*.

<sup>92</sup> see above note: *ibid*. See photo 7 for example of one injured polling agent.

<sup>93</sup> Amnesty International press release, 12 March 2002: “Zimbabwe: Hundreds detained in politically-motivated crackdown”.

<sup>94</sup> Illiterates have to inform the voting officer whom they want to vote for, so that he can place the “x” for them. In a polling station overrun with ZANU-PF officials and paramilitaries, this removes the secrecy of the ballot. This practice was widely reported to human rights organisations: people who had never voted as illiterates before, found themselves doing so in 2002.

The militia at times impersonated policemen, wearing police uniforms and patrolling voting queues without displaying ZRP numbers. MDC officially complained about this in Mazowe East, where nine militia, who were recognised as they had previously “caused mayhem” in adjacent areas, appeared dressed as police at the polling station.<sup>95</sup>

*Photo 7: Shamva District: one of 40 polling agents in the process of being deployed by an MDC truck on Friday 8 March 2002, who were ambushed and severely assaulted by youth militia: the attack meant that voting started on 9 March entirely in the absence of MDC polling agents in this district.*

## **Post election: youth militia and retribution against MDC**

In the weeks immediately following the Presidential election, there was widespread retribution against those perceived to have voted for the MDC. Among those most at risk were MDC officials who had acted as polling agents. As part of the conditions of the poll, their full names and addresses had to be published in the papers prior to the polling. They were therefore easy to identify.

### **Attacks on polling agents and MDC supporters**

Within weeks, six polling agents had been murdered and a conservatively estimated 18,000 MDC supporters had been displaced from their rural homes.<sup>96</sup> Militia reportedly played a major role in the hunting down and punishment of polling officers.<sup>97</sup>

On 18 March, days after the election, the youth militia are referred to by Amnesty International as having begun “a coordinated effort to track down, attack and abduct members of the opposition –

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<sup>95</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum report, *ibid* p. 76

<sup>96</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum report, *ibid*, p. 93

<sup>97</sup> Interviews with victims, Amani Trust and Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum reports.

many of whom acted as polling agents”. The murder of a farm security guard, 22 torture victims and 100 others detained in youth militia camps are listed.<sup>98</sup> Amnesty expresses particular concern over the impunity with which the youth militia act: police seem unable or unwilling to take steps to curb their excesses. The six murdered polling agents are named as Ernest Gatsi (Guruve North), Tafireyinyika (Mutoko North), Petros Jeka (Masvingo North), Donald Jeranyama (Mutasa), Edwin Romio (Mutoko) and Fanuel White (Guruve North).

In April 2002, an Amnesty International press release again expresses dismay and outrage at the violent activities of militia and the apparent impunity with which they operate: “We are alarmed at reports that reprisal attacks and abductions by militia members are continuing in rural communities of Zimbabwe suspected of voting for the opposition in the recent presidential elections ... The Zimbabwe government has an absolute obligation, in accordance with international human rights standards, to protect all its citizens from human rights violations. Instead the government’s condoning of militia revenge serves a political purpose: destroying an opposition party and taking revenge on Zimbabweans who may still support the MDC.”<sup>99</sup> Militia attacks on polling agents, the burning down of six polling agents’ houses in Gokwe, and destruction of property and assaults in Bulawayo are among violations listed in this report.

*Photos 8 and 9: According to the interviewee, the numerous long linear lesions spread all over the body were caused on 1 April 2002, by beatings by youth militias and war veterans, with sjamboks and a chain; fractured fibula caused by blunt trauma with iron bar. Findings in complete agreement with the history.*

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<sup>98</sup> Amnesty International press release, 18 March 2002: “Zimbabwe: Citizens’ rights not politics, must set the agenda”.

<sup>99</sup> Amnesty International press release, 5 April 2002, : “Zimbabwe: Assault and sexual violence by militia”.

In May 2002, Amnesty International released an Urgent Action, condemning post election retribution in Chimanimani against human rights defenders, lawyers, teachers and others. Amnesty documents assaults and torture both by the police and by youth militia.<sup>100</sup>

### **Sexual abuse as a political tool**

The April AI press release<sup>101</sup> further documents reports of sexual abuse on a large scale. Amnesty International officials interviewed militia rape victims themselves, and also received documentation of rape and sexual abuse from human rights organisations, including Amani Trust and the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association. The latter claimed that around 1,000 women were believed to be held in militia camps, for sexual purposes. In Masvingo, reports were received of farm workers being raped by militia while their husbands were forced to look on. In some instances, men were forced by militia to sodomise each other.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Amnesty International, UA 158/02, 29 May 2002: "Zimbabwe: Fear for safety".

<sup>101</sup> Amnesty International press release, 5 April 2002: "Zimbabwe: Assault and sexual violence by militia".

<sup>102</sup> AI, *ibid*; see also sections in this report on "Youth militia and the health of the nation", and section G.

## Youth Militia and Rural District Council Elections

In Matabeleland, even as the first group of militia was being forced out of sight by government, without gratuities or jobs, a new intake of youth was being trained in the major training base north of Bulawayo. These youth were then deployed to rural business centres ahead of the Rural District Council elections on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Supervisory Network (ZESN) has underlined the significance of these elections: “To ZANU-PF the election was conceded to be a battle for supremacy and political space. As a ruling party, its aim was to consolidate power at all levels of governance starting from central to local governance using any means at their disposal.”<sup>103</sup>

It has become apparent to those documenting human rights abuses, that the rural areas remain most vulnerable to political intimidation. Throughout 2002, systematic attacks by war veterans and youth militia occurred particularly in rural ZANU-PF stronghold areas such as Mashonaland and parts of the Midlands. Nkayi, Hwange and Binga in Matabeleland are also well documented for high levels of state organised violence.<sup>104</sup>

### Youth militia and the RDC election campaign

The Rural District Council elections set for September 2002 were considered key by ZANU-PF, who needed to hold these areas to compensate for the erosion of their control in urban areas. The desperate food situation and the need to control food distribution through control of rural district councils gave these elections added importance.<sup>105</sup> The Zimbabwe Electoral Supervisory Network commented that “[t]he land issue, the drought and the accompanying food crisis has provided an excellent opportunity for the ruling party to exploit the rural masses and manipulate voters into voting them back into power.”<sup>106</sup> It described the RDC elections as dominated by “fear of hunger and fear of assault”<sup>107</sup>

Youth militia once more played a crucial role in the intimidation of both MDC candidates and their supporters before, during and after the RDC elections.<sup>108</sup> Their activities included:

- Attacks on life and property of prospective candidates, resulting in the withdrawal of the vast majority of MDC candidates from the election before the vote. In Manicaland alone, 100 candidates withdrew their candidature after attacks and threats, including by youth militia.<sup>109</sup>
- Camping at the entrance to polling stations, monitoring those entering, and telling them who to vote for. The militia also wrote down number plates of vehicles, particularly of observers.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Zimbabwe Electoral Supervisory Network (ZESN), “Report on Local Authority Election 28-29 September 2002”, pg 4.

<sup>104</sup> Amnesty International press release, 8 August 2002: “Zimbabwe: political violence intensifies ahead of September local elections”. See also PHR-DK reports and Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum reports.

<sup>105</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Vote ZANU-PF or starve: Zimbabwe August to October 2002*, Johannesburg, 20 November 2002.

<sup>106</sup> ZESN, *ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>107</sup> ZESN, *ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>108</sup> ZESN, *ibid.* pp. 7, 8, 10, 11, 16; Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Vote ZANU-PF or starve: Zimbabwe August to October 2002*, Johannesburg, 20 November 2002, pp. 12-16, 49-50.

<sup>109</sup> ZESN, *ibid.* p. 8. Out of 1397 seats countrywide, MDC in the end contested only 646, giving ZANU-PF a clear majority before a single vote was cast. Not only youth militia, but also war veterans, women’s league and others took part in the attacks.

<sup>110</sup> ZESN, *ibid.* p. 10

- Intimidation around voting days. This was so intense that in some wards voting went ahead in the absence of the MDC candidates who were too afraid to appear.
- Open food handouts to those who opted to vote as illiterates, after they had voted for ZANU-PF. Casting a vote for ZANU-PF became a way to alleviate starvation for one day.
- Youth militia and government officials campaigned using the threat of no food aid for wards that ended up with MDC councillors.
- In Masvingo, 4 polling officers were severely assaulted, including by youth militia.

### **Post election retribution**

The November 2002 Physicians for Human Rights report lists some of the acts of retribution against MDC supporters and candidates. Among those worst affected were winning MDC candidates, of which there were very few, and supporters in their areas. In Binga, where 16 out of 25 wards were won by MDC, retribution was profound. Again, youth militia are reported to have played role in many of these acts of retribution.<sup>111</sup>

- In Mutasa district, “celebrating” youth militia destroyed five homesteads all belonging to MDC supporters (victims’ names available).
- In Binga, the government suspended all donor food to starving school children. Officials were quoted as saying this was to punish the region for its strong MDC vote. The Catholic Church was ordered to stop its feeding, as were “Save the Children” and “Oxfam Great Britain”.
- The Catholic Bishop of Hwange was successfully pressured to close the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace offices in Binga: the organisation was accused by government of having campaigned for the opposition.
- Three MDC families, two of whom had fielded candidates in the Binga elections, had their properties burnt down
- In Kamativi ward in Hwange, ZANU-PF supporters severely assaulted a winning MDC candidate and his wife after the election outcome. Youth militia played a leading role in these assaults.
- In Bulilimangwe District, Ward 12, ZANU-PF supporters including youth militia threatened a violent backlash after MDC won the seat there. Villagers were warned that there would be no food from government to the ward because they had voted MDC.
- Reports of similar retribution were also received from Lupane and Masvingo.

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<sup>111</sup> PHR-DK,20 November, *ibid*, page 13; ZESN, *ibid*, page 16.



## **Parliamentary by-elections: Insiza, October 2002; Kuwadzana and Highfields, March 2003**

In October 2002 in the rural district of Insiza, and in March 2003 in two suburbs of Harare, parliamentary by-elections took place, predictably accompanied by violence. Once again, the youth militia were among the main instigators of violence against the opposition MDC.

In Insiza, the election campaign took place in the context of the backlash after the RDC elections. Three MDC candidates had won RDC seats in this district and a spokesperson for MDC, Albert Mnkandla, stated that militia were terrorising MDC supporters in the district.<sup>112</sup> Youth militia had been deployed from Hwange and Lupane in the wake of the RDC elections. He further stated that the MDC winning candidates in Insiza had been told by youth militia that they were not eligible for government seed packs being distributed ahead of the next rainy season. Reports of militia intimidating Insiza, and also interfering with distribution of food, continued throughout October.<sup>113</sup> It was close to impossible for MDC to hold rallies ahead of the by-election, and in one incident, the ZANU-PF candidate for parliament shot a senior MDC official in a police station in front of police.<sup>114</sup> The election went ahead at the end of October and was won by ZANU-PF.

Kuwadzana and Highfields by-elections were held in March 2002. Violence started well in advance, from January onwards. Youth militia were deployed there from the beginning of the year, and imposed an unofficial curfew, assaulting any resident who moved after dark.<sup>115</sup> The youth launched violent attacks nightly. The MDC Mayor of Harare reported that youth militia had illegally taken over council property, including the community hall and library, and that police had refused to evict them when asked to do so. Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust issued a statement condemning the youth militia activities and that “freedoms of expression, movement and association were being stolen from the people of Kuwadzana”<sup>116</sup> ahead of the by-election. Angry MDC city councillors referred to them as “ZANU-PF’s bussed in mercenaries”, and alleged that council property was turned into torture chambers by the militia.<sup>117</sup> Apart from assaulting and torturing, they were alleged to be stealing food from tuck shops.

As the election campaign reached its climax, violence peaked in the affected constituencies, with the local clinics and hospitals being overrun with more than 200 serious assault victims. Youth militia and army soldiers are alleged to have taken part in these attacks. Journalists and diplomats interviewed the injured and expressed shock at the brutality suffered by citizens.<sup>118</sup>

In spite of the widespread violence against their supporters, MDC won both these seats.

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<sup>112</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 14 October 2002: “Militia terror grips Insiza”.

<sup>113</sup> Client interviews, Amani Trust, October 2002.

<sup>114</sup> See Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Vote ZANU/PF or starve: Zimbabwe August to October 2002*, Johannesburg, 20 November 2002, for full details of the Insiza by-election.

<sup>115</sup> *The Standard*, Harare, 19 January 2003: “Bombers set up camp in Kuwadzana”; *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 31 January 2003: “Militia impose curfew in Kuwadzana”.

<sup>116</sup> *Zimbabwe Independent*, 31 January 2003, *ibid*.

<sup>117</sup> *The Standard*, Harare, 19 January 2003: “Bombers set up camp in Kuwadzana”

<sup>118</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum violence reports, February and March; also documentation by Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) and interviews with diplomats.

## Urban Council Elections: 30-31 August 2003

Days ahead of the release of this report, further key elections will have taken place in Zimbabwe. All major urban centres will have faced council, and in some cases mayoral, elections that are likely to be hotly contested. The MDC has proved to have strong urban-based support, and ZANU-PF have already expressed their determination to regain urban losses in these elections.<sup>119</sup>

Centres facing both mayoral and council elections are: Bindura, Gwanda, Gweru, Kariba, Kwekwe, Mutare, Redcliff and Victoria Falls. Those with council or ward elections only include: Bulawayo, Chegutu, Chitungwiza, Hwange, Kadoma, Karoi, Marondera, Masvingo, Norton, Rusape, Ruwa, Shurugwi and Zvishavane.

The major cities of Bulawayo and Harare have MDC mayors and predominantly MDC councils. The MDC mayor of Harare has been under continuous attack by government since he assumed office last year, and was suspended by the Minister of Local Government and Housing, Ignatius Chombo, earlier this year, allegedly for failing to meet his mandate for the city. This is ironic considering that the courts eventually dismissed the previous ZANU-PF city council for gross mismanagement of the city's resources, placing the city into the custody of a commission from 1999 to 2002. Mayor Mudzuri had barely been in office when ministerial harassment began.

One of the earliest comments on the forthcoming campaign has come from Elliot Manyika, Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation, who effectively controls the youth militia. He states that it is important for ZANU-PF to win the elections, in order to fully implement its policy: "At the end of the day those who win will have to implement our [ZANU-PF Government] policies effectively. If the opposition wins then they might choose to sabotage our policies like what Mudzuri is doing in Harare".<sup>120</sup>

The minister refers to "campaign teams" being already on the ground. At the same time, the number of human rights violations being perpetrated by youth militia has escalated again since the middle of July. In parts of Mashonaland and in Matabeleland North, reports have been received of an increase in assaults and evictions of MDC supporters by youth militia. The government media also reported an increase in clashes between MDC youth and militia, placing the blame on MDC.<sup>121</sup>

In mid-July, the MDC MP for Hwange was evicted from his home by youth militia based at Kamativi Training Centre, for the second time in a year, and 200 families were reported to have been displaced by militia on the rampage in this area.<sup>122</sup>

By the end of nomination day for these elections on 21 July 2003, three MDC candidates were in hospital, and a number of others were in hiding and recovering from assaults, as a result of attacks by groups of youth militia. 44 MDC candidates and an unspecified number of independent candidates

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<sup>119</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 15 July 2003: "Major parties prepare for council elections". Elections are scheduled for 30-31 August 2003.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 17 July 2003: "National service youth disappears".

<sup>122</sup> Short Wave Radio Africa interviews, week of 20 July 2003.

failed to place their nomination papers before their local court authorities, as a result of militia attacks and rampant mobbing of the courts in smaller urban centres.<sup>123</sup>

The towns of Bindura, Chegutu, Rusape, Karoi and Marondera were among the worst affected by the youth militia violence. *In these centres, MDC failed to register a single urban council candidate, as a direct result of youth militia violence.* Several of the prospective candidates in these towns had their houses vandalised and fled into hiding after youth militia descended on them. In Chegutu, one MDC candidate was in hospital with serious head and neck injuries after assaults by youth militia, and in Karoi two MDC candidates were rushed to hospital after similar attacks. ZANU-PF had already by 22 July proclaimed the incoming council in Chegutu as entirely ZANU-PF, meaning there will be no election here.

ZTV news coverage of the nomination day focused on Chegutu and made no mention whatsoever of the youth militia violence. It portrayed court officials sitting patiently all day waiting, while the MDC mysteriously failed to nominate anyone. The cameras showed the town mobbed by shouting and dancing youths, but without comment.<sup>124</sup>

In view of the pattern of all elections in the recent past, and taking events of mid-July into account, it seems certain that the next few weeks will be marred by a violent urban campaign, and also that the youth militia will once more play a pivotal role as perpetrators of such violence.

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<sup>123</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 22 July 2003: “Violence breaks out during nominations”; interviews aired on Short Wave Radio Africa on 21 and 22 July 2003 corroborate the information given in this section.

<sup>124</sup> Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation TV News Bulletin, 8 pm on 22 July 2003.

## **D Other “activities” of youth militia and their implications during 2000-2003**

### **Youth militia and politicisation of food**

#### **The militia and Grain Marketing Board sales**

The youth militia played a pivotal role in denying MDC supporters access to food during 2002. Zimbabwe currently faces a food crisis, with approximately half the population surviving on donor food from the World Food Programme. During 2002, the government also imported maize, as the sole licensed importer, and sold this at a controlled price through the parastatal Grain Marketing Board (GMB). The youth militia were frequently given responsibility for the sale of GMB maize.

There were reports from throughout the country of political discrimination in who was allowed to buy this maize. On 18 March, Amnesty International expressed deep concern about the political abuse of maize by youth militia; it stated that “ruling party affiliated militia have taken over food aid distribution in the province of Masvingo”.<sup>125</sup> On 5 April, Amnesty dealt in more detail with militia and abuse of access to food: “ZANU-PF affiliated youth militia stationed outside long queues to buy grain are reported to be targeting MDC supporters for assaults and intimidation to prevent them from getting food.” Groups of “war-veteran led militia control the GMB facilities in the Matabeleland North Province. They demand a ZANU-PF card before allowing people to buy maize meal.” Amnesty goes on to state “similar acts of discrimination in the towns of Masvingo and Gutu”, and that “militia control food distribution in Kwekwe, Norton, Plumtree, Beitbridge, Victoria Falls, Chipinge, Kariba and Tsholotsho”.<sup>126</sup>

In July 2002, there were further reports of abuse of GMB maize sales in Masvingo by the “terror militia”.<sup>127</sup> In November 2002, Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, produced a report entitled “Vote ZANU-PF or starve”, which details several examples of political abuse of access to food, including, but not only by youth militia.<sup>128</sup> The report indicates that at times international donors have been persuaded unwittingly to place their feeding schemes adjacent to the very militia camps where MDC supporters were tortured during the election campaign. This makes even the process of trying to access donor food difficult for militia torture victims.

In early 2003, reports of militia abuse of grain once more arose in Victoria Falls, where youth militia hijacked a truck of maize and insisted it was for ZANU-PF supporters only. Residents complained that they were forced to buy ZANU-PF cards as the “internal passport” to get maize.<sup>129</sup> In Gwanda, there was public outrage at the youth militia being in control of food distribution.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Amnesty International press release, 18 March 2002

<sup>126</sup> Amnesty International press release, 5 April 2002

<sup>127</sup> *The Standard*, Harare, 21 July 2002: “Masvingo GMB offers jobs to terror militia”.

<sup>128</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Vote ZANU-PF or starve: Zimbabwe August to October 2002*, Johannesburg, 20 November 2002, pp. 18ff.

<sup>129</sup> *The Financial Gazette*, Harare, 7 February 2003: “ZANU-PF militia hijacks maize”.

<sup>130</sup> *The Mirror*, Harare, 21 January 2003: “Public says youth service trainees lack control”.

There were further reports of youth militia physically assaulting police and the public in Chitungwiza, a suburb of Harare, when thousands of hungry people were about to purchase GMB maize. The youths allegedly felt it was their role to control and sift purchasers, and not the police's. The police arrested those involved but later released them.<sup>131</sup> Several other reputable international commentators have noted the political abuse of food in Zimbabwe, including the International Crisis Group<sup>132</sup>.

### **Militia, food and elections**

During all election campaigns in 2002, the threat of not receiving donor food and/or GMB food was used as a weapon to force people to vote for ZANU-PF. This has been reported by Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, and also by the Zimbabwe Electoral Supervisory Network (ZESN) in relation to the Rural District Council elections in particular. ZESN notes: "Reports abound of voters who were told that they would only receive food aid if they voted ZANU-PF into power".<sup>133</sup>

Observers and media reports have also noted that at some polling stations and in the minds of some voters, the relation between voting itself, voting for ZANU-PF and receiving food aid was clearly established.<sup>134</sup> The youth at some stations would take down the names of those that had voted and promise them food aid. The private press also reported that some voters were seen receiving food aid after coming out of the polling stations and that some food distribution points were located conveniently close to the polling station.

ZESN further notes: "At some stations the monitoring continued after voters had left the polling station with some voters reporting that their names were taken down in order to facilitate easier access to food aid. So for some voting was a way of trying to ease hunger rather than exercising a political right."<sup>135</sup>

### **Some starve while others profiteer**

Interviews with members of the public in Midlands province have explained how political discrimination in access to food not only serves the purpose of forcing people to support ZANU-PF or starve, but also how it enriches the youth militia and others in control of sales. By taking the MDC families off the GMB lists, those selling it are left with a surplus once the ZANU-PF families have bought maize.<sup>136</sup> This surplus can then be sold on the black market for exorbitant amounts, at up to ten times the government controlled price. The youth militia allegedly pocket the difference. Evidence of the sudden wealth of these very young men and women is their ability, in communities that are generally faced with massive poverty, to build shops and buy vehicles. For people in their early twenties, such wealth is unprecedented in a rural Zimbabwean district.

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<sup>131</sup> *Daily News*, Harare, 21 January 2003: "Green bomber terror must be confronted" and "Gezi youths 'not the police'".

<sup>132</sup> *International Crisis Group*, Harare and Brussels, 17 October 2002: "Zimbabwe: the politics of national liberation and internal division".

<sup>133</sup> Zimbabwe Electoral Supervisory Network, *ibid*, p. 7

<sup>134</sup> See *Daily News*, Harare, 3 October 2002: ...

<sup>135</sup> Zimbabwe Electoral Supervisory Network, *ibid*, p. 11 and 10 respectively.

<sup>136</sup> Interviews, February 2003: human rights informant. Names of militia on record.

## **Militia and “enforcement” of food price controls**

During 2002 and 2003, there have been regular reports to human rights organisations and in the media, documenting attacks on ordinary civilians and on retailers by militia, as they take the role of enforcing government price controls on food items.<sup>137</sup> This “enforcement” reportedly involves youth militia apprehending anyone they see in possession of scarce commodities, assaulting that person and confiscating the goods. It further involves vandalising tuck shops and retail stores found to be selling goods at above the government controlled price. They are accused of looting such food and then selling it themselves at exorbitant prices. Such raids frequently occur in full view of the police, who do nothing to prevent this.<sup>138</sup> In one instance, youth militia attacked Zambian traders in Victoria Falls, accusing them of fuelling shortages to make ZANU-PF look bad.<sup>139</sup>

## **Youth militia and the health of the nation**

### **Physical attacks on health staff, and denial of access to health care**

Youth militia, within days of training and deployment in December 2001, attacked a doctor and a therapist at Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre, after a Christmas party for patients to which the militia were not invited.<sup>140</sup> A group of about 60 youth militia waylaid Dr. Madzima as he left the hospital. They accused him of being an MDC supporter and assaulted, kicked and beat him and a colleague. They only left when the doctor pretended to be dead. The police refused to comment.

Serious allegations were made to human rights organisations during 2002, that youth militia were patrolling rural clinics and hospital queues, ensuring that families known to be MDC supporters were denied access to health care. In March 2002, a group called Concerned Health Professionals sounded the alarm in respect of politicisation of health facilities.<sup>141</sup> Reports in May and November by Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, voiced a similar concern about access to clinics being denied on political grounds. “[V]ictims of violence are being prevented from accessing health facilities in their localities ... sometimes the violence or threat of violence is directed at health professionals. This is intended to prevent them from caring for victims of political violence out of fear for their personal safety. Health workers who work at night feel especially fearful for their safety.”<sup>142</sup>

Two affidavits are included as appendix 3 in this report, which detail cases in which youth militia intentionally denied access to health care in rural clinics on political grounds. In both these cases, as in many others, while it is the adult who is turned away, it is effectively a child who is denied access to health care. In both cases, youth militia were allegedly responsible.

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<sup>137</sup> The policy of government price controls is highly contentious and will not be dealt with here; suffice it to say that the policy has effectively forced all price-controlled items off the market and into the black market.

<sup>138</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 9 December 2002: “Border Gezi youths severely assault Chitungwiza man”; *Financial Gazette*, Harare, 16 January 2003: “Green bombers run amok”; *The Daily Mirror*, Harare, 20 and 21 January 2003: “Public says youth service trainees lack control”, and “Mixed reaction to national youth service”; *Daily News*, Harare, 21 January 2003: “Green bomber terror must be confronted”, and “Gezi youths ‘not the police’”; *The Financial Gazette*, Harare, 7 February 2003: “ZANU-PF militia hijacks maize”.

<sup>139</sup> *Financial Gazette*, *ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 27 December 2001: “Youth Brigade on rampage”.

<sup>141</sup> *Daily News*, Harare, 6 March 2002, refers to this statement.

<sup>142</sup> *Daily News*, 6 March, *ibid.*

## Rape in and out of the camps<sup>143</sup>

The high prevalence of rape by militia of their victims has already been raised earlier in this report. Amnesty International produced a press release highlighting this issue in particular, entitled “Zimbabwe: Assault and sexual violence by militia”, which refers to rape of victims including forced sodomy of male victims.<sup>144</sup>

However, sexual activity within the camps has also been widespread. A nurse at Masvingo General Hospital is cited in the media in July 2002, saying that the militia camps should be closed because the youth are being abused by ZANU-PF. She refers to the training camps as “breeding grounds for sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/Aids.” She is quoted as saying: “We treat most of them for STIs (sexually transmitted infections) every day and that is unhealthy for our youths.”<sup>145</sup>

Also in 2002, interviews with a doctor in a rural hospital in Matabeleland North indicated problems with both teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases emanating from youth militia camps in the area. Nurses in hospitals elsewhere in the same province have in 2003 indicated that statistically STIs have dramatically increased since the opening of the Kamativi National Service Training Centre<sup>146</sup> The Daily News leader column on 8 January 2003 refers to reports of youth militia “raping women old enough to be their mothers” and of “rampant sexually transmitted diseases spreading in some of the camps”.<sup>147</sup> Other media reports during 2002 and 2003 refer to widespread sexual abuse in the militia camps.<sup>148</sup> The South African Carte Blanche news documentary television programme has on several occasions aired detailed interviews with female militia from Zimbabwe talking about such experiences of sexual abuse in the militia camps during their own training.<sup>149</sup> And in April 2003, human rights researchers from Zimbabwe premiered a video called “In a Dark Time” in South Africa; this is a series of interviews with women raped in youth militia camps in Zimbabwe.<sup>150</sup>

On 31 August 2002, a press release on National Service by the Zimbabwe Liberators Platform states: “The establishment of the partisan youth training programme last year has exposed the youth and the public to the HIV/AIDS menace through sexual orgies and rape. At the rate the pandemic is spreading, the ZANU-PF leadership is condemning the nation’s youth to death.”<sup>151</sup>

Even while flatly denying sexual abuse in the camps, the government has implicitly, rather than explicitly, acknowledged the problem by creating its first girls-only militia training centre in Manicaland during June 2003.<sup>152</sup> However, unless the instructors are also all female, concern must still

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<sup>143</sup> This current section details media and other reports and indications of rape: in Section G youth militia themselves comment on the issue.

<sup>144</sup> Amnesty International press release, 5 April 2002

<sup>145</sup> *Daily News*, Harare, July 2002: “No to national service”.

<sup>146</sup> Personal interviews with health professionals, July – September 2002, and in August 2003.

<sup>147</sup> *Daily News*, Harare, 8 January 2003: “‘Green bomber’ terror must be confronted”

<sup>148</sup> *Daily News*, Harare, 28 August 2003; “Rape of the innocents”; *ibid*, 5 December 2002: “Women protest against abuse in ZANU-PF camps”; *ibid*, 1 March 2003, “Gang rape rampant at youth training centres”; *Zimbabwe Independent*, 7 March 2003, “ZANU-PF officials accused of raping militia trainees”; *Daily News*, 12 March 2003, “Green Bombers flee to SA”.

<sup>149</sup> *Carte Blanche*, Mnet, Johannesburg; programmes in July 2002 and May 2003.

<sup>150</sup> *London Telegraph*, 15 April 2003; “Mugabe’s recruits flee brutal Zimbabwean past”. This article gives details of the video.

<sup>151</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 31 August 2002: “Zimbabwe Liberators Platform: on National Service” (Advert)

<sup>152</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 17 June 2003, “New national youth training centre established”. See appendix 4, interviews with two militia for detailed cases on sexual abuse in camps.

be expressed as to the safety of these girls from sexual predation, bearing in mind repeated reports that it is the trainers in the camps who frequently abuse the female militia.<sup>153</sup>

## **Youth militia and freedom of expression**

There were reports during 2002 and 2003 of youth militia seizing copies of independent papers on the streets, and of destroying or confiscating them. This occurred after newspapers published stories that were critical of the Zimbabwean government.<sup>154</sup> While ZANU-PF officials condemned the behaviour, the police refused to intervene even after repeated complaints from vendors.

Concern has been expressed from various quarters about the government's directive that youth militia be given preference in all tertiary institutions, including the school of journalism at the Harare Polytechnic.<sup>155</sup> When the November 2002 directive was sent by the Minister of Higher Education to all colleges stating preference had to be given to graduates of Border Gezi training in allocation of places, the Division of Mass Communication was informed that there was a particular interest in placing youth militia in their training.

The secretary-general of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) commented that "the move could signal the end of professional products from the Harare Poly school of journalism."<sup>156</sup> He observed that it would make more sense to introduce journalism as part of the Border Gezi training, if the government desired to produce partisan journalists, but concluded that the placing of militia in the existing training institutions was a way of "infiltrating the media, for these militia might be coming from Hardwicke House [where the CIO are housed]." He referred to journalism as being "colonised before our eyes" by government hard liners.

## **Youth militia and educational institutions**

Educational institutions and personnel have been among those most under attack by ZANU-PF over the last three years. In their report "Teaching them a lesson", the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum summarises some of the attacks on school buildings, teachers and pupils. Teachers are generally regarded as being progressive and teaching alternative points of view. They have been accused of "preaching opposition politics" in their classrooms. Particularly in rural schools, teaching has become a risky profession, with a high incidence of violence and intimidation, resulting in teachers fleeing their areas and scores of schools being closed as a result. Since their inauguration, youth militia have been implicated in school violence and intimidation.<sup>157</sup>

Militia bases and training centres have frequently been located at existing schools, which has meant their closure for normal teaching activities, particularly in the months ahead of elections. There are media and eye-witness accounts of schools being turned into militia barracks.<sup>158</sup> As schools are also

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<sup>153</sup> See appendix 4 interviews 1 and 2 for examples.

<sup>154</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 9 and 12 October 2002: "Gezi youths seize Daily News copies", and "Gezi youths continue blitz on papers".

<sup>155</sup> *The Standard*, Harare, 24 November 2002: "Militia invade journalism school".

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Harare, 2002: "Teaching them a lesson".

<sup>158</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 4 January 2002: "War vets turn schools into training barracks".



commonly used both as voting stations in elections, and as feeding points by donors, it is a matter of major concern that schools are also now often regarded as torture camps, where those who do not support the government are assaulted and abused.

Countrywide, tertiary training facilities have been turned permanently into militia training camps. An example of this is Guyu Training Centre in Matabeleland South. This rural training centre was previously available for hire, for training workshops for health officials and others. This effectively has reduced the access of school leavers and others to alternative forms of skills training. The loss of the use of such centres as a general community resource is immeasurable.

## **Further references to youth militia activities in the independent media**

Other activities attributed to youth militia in the last year are reflected in the following newspaper headlines:

- *“Youth brigade confiscates forex at border post”*<sup>159</sup>: Youth militia were reported to be conducting body searches at the Plumtree border post and stealing money and groceries from Zimbabweans returning from jobs in Botswana and South Africa for Christmas. Neither police nor border officials were prepared to comment.
- *“Border Gezi youths steal cell phones”*<sup>160</sup>: Four Border Gezi youths smashed a display cabinet in a Harare cell phone shop and stole 4 handsets. The police promised to respond.
- *“Youths terrorise bus operators”*<sup>161</sup>: a group of youth militia calling itself “Chipangano” introduced an illegal rank fee for taxi and bus operators. Police refused to comment on the extortion racket
- *“ZANU-PF youths allegedly beat up cop”*<sup>162</sup>: In late August, two youth militia reportedly beat up a police officer in Harare, in order to avoid arrest after stealing sugar from another person.
- *“Gezi youths not the police”*<sup>163</sup>: In January 2003, there were reports of youth militia clashing with, and assaulting, police trying to control a food queue in Harare.

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<sup>159</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 9 December 2002.

<sup>160</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 14 January 2003.

<sup>161</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare 18 January 2003.

<sup>162</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 2 September 2002

<sup>163</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 21 January 2003.

## E. Response of law enforcement agencies to militia activities

The youth militia generally have acted with impunity if not in open collaboration with law enforcement agencies, as already clearly indicated in this report. However, the relationship between the youth militia and other state players has not always been uncontentious. At times the militia have overstepped the mark as far as police, army and courts were concerned, as the following non-exhaustive listing of incidents illustrates.

### Police response to militia usurping their powers

In January 2002, the Minister of Home Affairs, John Nkomo, stated that the only institution in the country that could mount roadblocks was the police. If anyone else was doing so, they were “breaking the law” and would be prosecuted.<sup>164</sup> This was in response to questions in parliament from concerned MDC MPs who asked why youth militia were mounting roadblocks and insisting on ZANU-PF cards. In spite of this position being taken by the minister, it has not been possible to find instances in which militia were arrested and prosecuted for mounting roadblocks, although police seem at times to have dismantled such roadblocks without accompanying arrests.

A year later, in January 2003, police spokesperson Wayne Bvudzijena again stated that the police had no special relationship with the youth militia and that youth militia could not usurp the powers of the police, although they could “effect a citizen’s arrest just like any other person”.<sup>165</sup>

The fact that youth militia routinely mounted roadblocks was not always favourably regarded by the police.<sup>166</sup> However, those police that objected and tried to arrest militia for breaking the law in this or other respects, found themselves being reprimanded by their superior officers.<sup>167</sup>

In late July 2003, there was a major confrontation between youth militia and police in the rural town of Kamativi, Matabeleland North. The largest youth training centre in the country was made fully operational there in June 2003, and there have been many reported incidents of torture, property destruction and illegal road blocks in this greater area.<sup>168</sup>

The conflict with the youth militia began over their roadblocks into the town. For some months, since April 2003, the youth militia operating in the area have enforced a process of “registration” on everyone, whether resident or not, where they have to report all their movements in and out of town to the youth militia. Shoppers have complained of having items stolen by the youth, and reports have also been received of people being severely tortured if they are found in the town without having “registered”.<sup>169</sup> The police in Kamativi dismantled this roadblock in July, only to find that the youth replaced it a few days later.

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<sup>164</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 10 January 2002: “Only police can mount road blocks”.

<sup>165</sup> *The Mirror*, Harare, 7 January 2003; “‘Gezi youths’ not ZRP – Ministry”.

<sup>166</sup> *The Herald*, Harare, 10 January 2002: “Only police can mount road blocks”.

<sup>167</sup> *Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum*; “Human rights and Zimbabwe’s presidential election”, *ibid*, p. 67

<sup>168</sup> *Daily News*, 16 April 2003, “Green Bombers turn Kamativi into garrison town”; *Daily News*, 18 July 2003, “Green Bombers beat up evicted Kamativi residents”.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, also interviews with residents and eye witnesses in the greater area.

Police, including reinforcements from Hwange, came to once more remove the roadblock. In addition, they arrested Black Jesus, one of the youth militia camp commanders, who has a number of outstanding summonses for a multitude of crimes in the area. He was taken into custody, and immediately a group of around 1,000 youth militia besieged the police station for over 4 hours. They attacked passing vehicles, deflated tyres on a police vehicle, smashed a window in a police vehicle and in the police station, and cut the ropes on the police flag poles, causing the flags to fall down.<sup>170</sup> They stoned passers by and blocked the roads. They demanded the release of Black Jesus. The police had to phone for reinforcements from other areas, and riot squad arrived and tear-gassed the youth to disperse them. The youth accused the police of being MDC for arresting Black Jesus. Black Jesus was released, and the following day allegedly met with the governor of Matabeleland North. It remains unclear at this time whether the charges against Black Jesus have been dropped or not.<sup>171</sup>

### Clashes with army

In February 2002, ahead of the Presidential election, army and militia clashed openly in Nkayi district in Matabeleland. Youth militia seriously assaulted a group of off-duty soldiers in a pub in Nkayi, apparently mistaking them for members of the opposition MDC. Several soldiers had to seek medical attention at Nkayi hospital after the incident. The following weekend, soldiers retaliated and “beat up scores of green uniformed ZANU-PF youth”.<sup>172</sup> The MDC MP for the district confirmed the attacks, and expressed relief that the assaults by soldiers had displaced the youth from some of their camps, bringing relief to MDC supporters who were also being routinely assaulted by the youth.

### Court response

It is only in a few cases that police proceeded against youth militia breaking the law, but when they did, it was refreshing to note that in some cases at least, courts were prepared to treat them as any other law breakers. In January 2003, in a rare court appearance by a group of 20 youth militia, Harare Magistrate Caroline-Ann Chigumira castigates the militia who were accused of rampaging through Epworth in Harare, attacking and looting goods from vendors: “Your behaviour is not tolerated. The courts will not allow you to go on like this”. The 20 were remanded on bail, and the magistrate warned them that if convicted, they would face a prison term of “no less than three years”.<sup>173</sup>

It is thus not an unambiguously positive relationship that exists between state representatives and the youth militia. However, as the above incidents portray, the youth militia are most likely to incur the wrath of the state if they directly confront state agencies, through usurping their authority or attacking them. Attacks by the militia on ordinary citizens, on the other hand, are given *de facto* impunity by the police, in the vast majority of cases.

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<sup>170</sup> This is particularly ironic as the youth training is supposed to teach youth to respect national symbols such as the flag.

<sup>171</sup> The appellation “Black Jesus” has chilling precedents in Matabeleland: during the 1980s 5 Brigade massacres, several commanders referred to themselves as “Commander Jesus” because of their enormous powers to decide “who should be saved and who condemned”. See *Breaking the silence*, *ibid* for more details. It is not yet clear whether this “Jesus” is one of these same 5 Brigade commanders, or an emulator.

<sup>172</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, February 2002: “Soldiers beat up ZANU-PF youths”.

<sup>173</sup> *Daily News*, 25 January 2003: “Magistrate raps Border Gezi youths”

## F. State accounts of militia activities

This report has already touched on many occasions on the state-proclaimed *policies* of what the National Youth Service training is aimed at achieving. Coinciding with the Presidential election, there were a couple of articles which are worthy of attention, both for what they say, and for what they do not say, when considered in conjunction with the overwhelming evidence compiled in this report, of *activities* of the militia, from politically motivated arson, torture, and murder, to all sorts of petty criminal acts.

### Soccer balls

On 6 March 2002, there was a militia-related article in the Bulawayo *Chronicle*. A photograph entitled “*Big Boost*” shows 10 soccer balls worth Z\$50,000 being donated to youth militia camps in Bulawayo, which are listed as Pumula East, Bulawayo City Centre, Entumbane, Njube, Nkulumane, Sizinda, Burnside, Nketa, Sauerstown, and the main youth training centre of Ntabazinduna.

The balls are to be used in the Presidential Trophy that the militia will compete for the next week (the week of the Presidential election), announces the article. This portrayal of the youth militia as playing soccer in the very week of the Presidential election is mind-boggling. The picture of smiling ZANU/PF officials handing over soccer balls deserves to be viewed simultaneously with photo 6 in this report: the victim in this picture had his feet severely burnt, his skull fractured and his arms burned with cigarettes, by youth militia in one of the above named camps, a mere two days before the *Chronicle* article was published.

An article was published in *The Chronicle*, on 12<sup>th</sup> March, the day after voting ended in the Presidential election. By this time, an estimated 9,000 youth had completed formal militia training in one form or another. This article is an account of the progress made in employment creation linked to the training. It enumerates 250 youths who will *in the future* benefit from a “paraffin starters enterprise” and another 200 who *are soon to be* empowered by starting a “sewing enterprise”.<sup>175</sup>

An earlier article on 6 March in *The Chronicle* referred to 25 youths in a “paraffin starters enterprise, which was expected to expand in the future. It continued by saying the “remaining group [of militias] will be absorbed into civil service”, including army, air force and police.<sup>176</sup>

The government’s own statistics of 450 jobs *possibly* created (selling paraffin and home sewing) reduce to absurdity all claims of the national youth service as an empowering experience, and of employment creation as the genuine intention of the training. One can speculate that the “vindication” the national youth training has given the government, has nothing to do with a handful of jobs created, but is rather an oblique acknowledgement of the pivotal role the youth militia played in the Presidential election.

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<sup>175</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 12 March 2002: “National youth training vindicates government”.

<sup>176</sup> *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo, 6 March 2002: “Paraffin project launched”.

## G. Youth militia accounts of their own activities

In the course of the last two years, many thousands of youth have passed through formal National Service Training. From among this number, scores of statements have been taken by human rights organisations and journalists as to conditions in the camps and experiences of the youth themselves during training and deployment. So far this report has focused mainly on the youth militia as others see them, but it seems fitting to give them the last word.

More than a score of detailed interviews that the authors have on record from youth militia, together with a review of media coverage on militia experiences, provided resource material for the following general summary of training and activities from the point of view of those in the camps.<sup>177</sup>

Two narratives have been chosen for inclusion as appendices, to give specific insight into how youths themselves are reporting on their experiences. It is hoped that by providing access both to a few individual histories, as well as by summarising general findings from the interviews, the reader can gain a picture of the camps.

### Recruitment

What has become apparent through discussions with those who have completed the training, is that a sizeable number were coerced into the training, and that the training and activities during deployment have deeply traumatised the youth militia themselves.<sup>178</sup>

Others entered the training voluntarily, either because their parents are staunch ZANU-PF supporters who wanted them to do so, or because they believed the rhetoric that promised them skills training and jobs at the end of such training.<sup>179</sup> In a country with little prospects for school leavers, and in a situation where those few prospects are being effectively reduced to nil without the militia training certificate, many may have seen youth training as the only way forward.

While there are doubtless thousands of youth who have enjoyed the enormous power and impunity that comes with their green uniforms, there are others who have fled from the militia camps in a state of horror or shame.<sup>180</sup> The authors interviewed 6 out of one group of 24 defected militia living on the streets of Johannesburg as refugees, who fled Zimbabwe in order to escape their roles as youth militia. These youth, aged between 17 and 22, expressed varying degrees of anger, depression and alienation when reviewing their youth militia experiences. One fled after being forced to take part in the murder of his own uncle, another after taking part in the murder of a local MDC chairperson. In one case, the youth's mother gave him money to flee when they both agreed that he could no longer continue with his militia activities.

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<sup>177</sup> *Daily News*, Harare, 17 April 2003, "Mugabe's recruits flee brutal militia past"; *Daily News*, 12 March 2003, "Green Bombers flee to SA"; *Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 7 March 2003, "Zanu-PF officials accused of raping militia trainees"; *Daily News*, 1 March 2003, "Gang rape rampant at youth training centres"; *Daily News*, 5 December 2002, "Women protest against abuse in Zanu PF camps"; *Daily News*, 28 August 2002, "Rape of the innocents".

<sup>178</sup> See appendix 4, interview 1 for one case example of coercion into training.

<sup>179</sup> See appendix 4, interview 2 for one case example of voluntary training

<sup>180</sup> *ibid*, interview 2 talks of the power and the fact that most militia enjoy it.

## Training

The youths all report being taught to “walk like soldiers” and describe different types of military drills including weapons training. They all refer to forced runs and other survival activities as routine. Some refer to specific skills training in how to set up road blocks. All refer to “history lessons”. In some cases, militia remember “Inside the Third Chimurenga” as a manual; others refer to having seen it in the camp but that they did not read it themselves. History was not usually taught in a situation where all youth had a manual, but rather war veterans or soldiers would instil a simplistic version of Zimbabwe’s history into the youths through lectures and the teaching of slogans and songs. Paperback vernacular pamphlets were also given to students in the camps. One such pamphlet to hand, entitled “The 3rd Chimurenga” shows a voting paper on the cover and has the subtitle “Votela iZanu PF 2002” with a cross opposite the Zanu PF symbols. The 75 page paperback summarises many of the same issues raised in the more formal text, and 25 pages are full or half page adverts exhorting the reader to Vote Zanu-PF.

No youth militia interviewed by the authors had ever received any type of skills training apart from paramilitary skills; on being specifically asked about carpentry, agriculture, welding and some of the other skills that government claimed would be taught in such a programme, all youth militia interviewed by the current authors were adamant: they had never received any such training. One female youth militia was asked about whether youth militia had been given skills in agriculture, as she had been in a camp that was part of a farm. She replied that the male militia had killed and eaten the cows, goats and chickens, and had uprooted rose bushes from flower beds.

One girl interviewed a year after her stint in the national service seems very confused about her experiences. She was kidnapped into the training shortly before the Presidential election, was herself severely assaulted and was given paramilitary training. She then spent some weeks in a remote bush camp overseen by war veterans, where she witnessed the severe torture of MDC activists, and the murder of one, whose corpse was buried in a river bed. Her story has been independently corroborated, including names of the dead, the tortured, and the commanders, by one of the MDC activists tortured in this camp. But she herself is unable to verbalise what was the purpose of it all, and remains full of regret and guilt at having been party to something like this.

When asked what the training was about, one youth summarised it as follows: “it was about vandalism. We were used to do the things the State does not want to do themselves. Then they can just say it was just the youths, not us”.

Another said that “Mugabe is having an argument with the whites. That is what the Third Chimurenga is about. It is a war situation.”

A further youth commented: “we are Zanu-PF’s “B” team. The army is the “A” team and we do the things the government does not want the “A” team to do.

When questioned further, some youth militia expressed the opinion that MDC and the whites are one and the same thing. For example, one interviewee (see Appendix 4), justified why he used to beat up curio sellers: “I had to beat them because they were selling their carvings by the roadside. They were attracting whites by doing this. As a result, they need to be beaten up so that they stop that. It was said that such people that have links with whites are MDC supporters. So they needed a beating so they could be stopped once and for all.”

## Camp conditions and activities

### Food and “packages”

The youths all talk of food shortages and hunger in the camps: at times there was food, and at other times there wasn't. Claims by youth of severe food shortages are backed up by some media reports. At one stage, the Kamativi militia camp had to be closed because there was no food left at all.<sup>181</sup> Several youth militia referred to having been promised “packages” once the Presidential election was over, that then never materialised. One female militia said that after the election, when the issue of “packages” was raised with their camp commander, they were told they could take their uniforms with them when they left the camp, and this was the “package” that had been meant. Others referred to being promised cash gratuities that they never received. In one urban camp, after the Presidential election, food supplies stopped and eventually the youth were literally locked out of the facilities. When some youth whose homes were hundreds of kilometres away asked for bus fare to get home, they were told there was no money. The camp commander offered them work in his gold mine at extortionist rates to earn their bus fares home.

### Sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancies

Defected militia report orgy-like sexual activity among the militia themselves, with female militia being subjected to sex with multiple partners on an almost nightly basis. In one urban militia camp, 35 youth militia who were abandoned by their camp commanders in the wake of the Presidential election, approached a local human rights organisation for help. Six of the female militia interviewed were pregnant, allegedly as a result of almost nightly rape in the camps. The youngest girl subjected to rape in this camp was 11 years old. One female militia who agreed to be tested was found positive for HIV as well as being pregnant. The HIV status of the others remains entirely speculative, but in a nation with 30% of sexually active adults infected, rampant sexual activity can only have accelerated the spread of HIV.<sup>182</sup>

At times, interviewed militia have framed the issue as “young girls were forced to be in love with the instructors.” In such instances, girls would be told by a senior commander to report to his room at a certain time, and they would feel obliged to do so. Coerced sex would follow. The girls trained in the first few months of the programme and particularly during the period of the presidential election, when 146 youth bases were set up around the country, seem to have been the most prone to rape.<sup>183</sup> While the government has never officially admitted to teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases in the camps as a problem, they seem to have made more effort to separate male and female trainees in more recent training.<sup>184</sup> However, while this prevents male and female militia from sexual activity with each other, it does not protect the girls from predatory instructors.

One interviewee gave the following background on sexual activity in the Kamativi youth militia camp during August 2003: “These guys, J and his deputy, M and his other National Youth Service officers, they sleep with any girl that they would like to. Some of the girls are from the National Service and

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<sup>181</sup> *Daily News*, 12 December 2002, “State evacuates youths from Kamativi camp”.

<sup>182</sup> Interviews, human rights organisation: confidential to protect informants.

<sup>183</sup> See appendix 4, interview 1, for a description of routine rape in camps.

<sup>184</sup> Appendix 4 interview 2 describes strict segregation of male and female trainees – but also talks of instructors having their pick of the girls. See also media report: *The Herald*, 17 June 2003: “New national youth training centre established”.

some of the girls are actually school children, like the deputy, he's had an affair with one of the children at the school and the teachers are aware of it. And the mother of this child is also aware of this. And since the National Youth Service came at Kamativi, there has been a very big rise, when you get the statistics from the hospital of STIs. For example there was one of the girls who they were treating for this STI, and they said who is your partner, because you have to be both treated. She said I just have to tell you the truth: my partner is J."

### **Substance abuse by youth militia**

Youth militia who have completed the training, and some of their victims, have referred to the use of alcohol and marijuana as routine during training in camps and during deployment. Even when there was little to eat in the camps, interviewees refer to the availability of drugs and alcohol.<sup>185</sup> Victims and observers have commented that the militia seemed to be high or drunk at times when torturing or destroying property. Several of the youth militia have told of being given mbanje and alcohol specifically before being sent out on violent missions. They were told that being intoxicated would mean that they would not remember what they had done afterwards: unfortunately, they do remember.

### **Life on the run**

Both within and without Zimbabwe, youth who have abandoned their militia camps live in fear of retribution and only speak out reluctantly. Defected militia, who have fled to Johannesburg, live in fear of retribution if they return to Zimbabwe; even in Johannesburg they report that they are not safe from the Zimbabwean CIO, and spend their lives on the run. A very few have official refugee status, but this does not protect them from harassment from the South African Police, who are generally unsympathetic to Zimbabweans.

When asked to summarise the impact of the youth militia training on their lives, their loss of community and family was foremost for them. They are very concerned at how they will ever be reintegrated back into their society in Zimbabwe, where they have committed crimes against their neighbours and relatives. They comment on how tough life is for them in South Africa, and even though they fear retribution, they long to return home.

One youth militia commented: "I have lost everything – my family, my nation, my chance at education, my future. I would never, ever have imagined that such a thing could happen to me. I have become a street kid."

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<sup>185</sup> Interviews by current authors with defected militia, and also with their victims. *Short Wave Radio Africa*, a Zimbabwean radio station broadcasting from London, has aired interviews also making these claims.



## H. Conclusion

The implications of youth militia training are serious indeed for Zimbabwe. A generation of school leavers, some as young as 11, are being trained to violate the democratic and human rights of their fellow citizens. At the same time, their own rights to an unbiased education and a safe childhood free of abuse and militarisation are being violated.

Questions need to be asked. What is the justification for the militarisation and criminalisation of our youth in terms of the compulsory “de facto” policy being implemented by the current government? Who is the enemy that Zimbabweans as a nation apparently need defending against by an enormous “reserve force” of teenagers? What will become of those families that are not prepared to subject their children to this appalling, partisan training – are their children destined to be deprived of all further training and employment opportunities in Zimbabwe? Or are parents supposed to send their teenage daughters to be militarised and raped by camp commanders in remote rural training centres, in order that they can thereafter enter university?

Beyond doubt, young lives are being manipulated and destroyed. Youths are being turned into vandals and are learning to disrespect the law and their fellow citizens. Even if the militia training were to stop tomorrow, Zimbabwe as a nation is faced with the complex task of how to repair the social fabric that has been deliberately destroyed in the last two years, by inciting teenagers to run amok in their own communities with impunity. Is this type of training really what Vice President Msika thought was needed, in order “to shape youths in a truly Zimbabwean manner”?

We end by endorsing the viewpoint of one youth who, in August 2003, spoke about his experiences as a militia.

“When I think of the youth militia now I feel anxious, really, I feel very angry. Even when I am looking at them, I don’t feel well. I don’t see anything that I can envy from the National Youth Service. I don’t see anything good in it at all.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Appendix 4, interview 2, for full transcript.

# **A P P E N D I C E S**

- 1. Selected case histories of torture in militia camps**
- 2. Youth militia in the wider context of ZANU-PF educational policy**
- 3. Two affidavits on the role of militia in denial of access to health care**
- 4. Personal testimony from youth militia**
- 5. Listing of relevant references for background to Zimbabwean human rights situation**

## 1. Selected case histories of torture in militia camps

Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark, produced 3 major reports on torture in Zimbabwe during 2002. Many of the cases PHR-DK document involve civilians tortured in militia camps. Three very detailed case histories of youth militia torture victims is appended to this report. Photographs of victims in this report relate to these three case histories, previously documented by PHR-DK.

Some general comments were made by PHR-DK about the “green bombers” and their activities.

- The youth militia act with impunity: they are seldom if ever apprehended for their crimes against fellow Zimbabweans
- The youth militia often act in conjunction with other ruling party official or paramilitary groups, such as war veterans or police
- The youth militia were among the biggest groups of perpetrators being linked to human rights violations in the first six months of 2002
- The above factors lead one to conclude that the torture of others by youth militia is acceptable to the authorities, and in accordance with official government policy

Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Zimbabwe 2002. The Presidential Election: 44 days to go*, Johannesburg 24 January 2002.

Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Zimbabwe: Post Presidential Election – March to May 2002. “We’ll make them run”*, Copenhagen, 21 May 2002.

Physicians for Human Rights, Denmark: *Vote ZANU-PF or starve: Zimbabwe August to October 2002*; Johannesburg, 20 November 2002.

The following two cases were first documented by PHR-DK in the May 2002 report and are included here because photographs of these victims have been used in this report. In all three cases, militia were among the perpetrators.

*Out of 13 cases in the PHR-DK report, 6 implicated militia, making them the most regularly indicated perpetrators. The PHR-DK conclusions are also appended. The full report and other reports by PHR-DK on Zimbabwe can be found on [www.phrusa.org/healthrights/phr\\_denmark.html](http://www.phrusa.org/healthrights/phr_denmark.html)*

**Case 1:** N, aged 32 years (see photo 5)

**Peri-election torture of a supposed MDC supporter**

Date of incident: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2002

Place: Bulawayo

Date of interview: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2002

**Present violence:**

N was with a friend, next to the Central Police Station at around 4 pm, when a group of men came, seized his resisting friend and then himself, right in front of the police. They recognised their attackers

as ZANU supporters. They were forced into a Toyota vehicle and taken by a circuitous route to the X militia camp in the north of the city. At the camp they were removed from the vehicle and were ordered to remove their shoes, as their kidnappers chanted ZANU slogans.

The militia started to beat him and his friend on the soles of their feet – 5 people beat him and another 5 beat his friend. They handcuffed his hands behind his back. He was beaten all over the body and burnt with cigarettes on both upper arms and on his head. His fingers and head were also badly beaten. *The militia found his passport on him and accused him of being an MDC supporter because he had a visa in his passport and was therefore an international person.* The militia stepped on his abdomen with their heavy police boots.

One person took a flaming log from the fire in the camp. One person sat on his chest and another held his right foot. This foot was forced against the burning log and held there. The pain was so terrible that he fainted momentarily. Other people were beating him as his foot was being burnt. The log was then removed and the militia beat the burnt foot, while somebody else held the burning log to his left foot. They then beat both burnt feet.

He was in agony and begged for water to drink. They offered him urine to drink. Then one of the militia said that he should be given water. He and his friend, who had been given similar treatment, were taken to the toilet and water was poured on to them. This was at around 10 pm – they had been kidnapped at 4 pm, and had been beaten more or less continuously since then. They were then left in the toilet until around 11 pm. At this time civilian police arrived – he does not know how they heard about them – and took them to the X police station to take details of the attack. The police then took them to the hospital.

The interviewee is self employed and now cannot do anything. He wants compensation. He was nearly two months in hospital and had major kidney problems in addition to his severely burnt feet and other assault injuries.

The interviewee has in his possession a signed and witnessed confession from one of those responsible for the abduction and torture, admitting he assaulted and burnt N and his friend, and guaranteeing to pay their medical bills and support the victims' families. However, to date only Z\$4,000 (approx US\$ 13) has been paid by the perpetrator towards medical expenses, which is virtually nothing, and no other costs have been met. The perpetrator did this as a result of pressure from the parents of the victims and with the intention of settling out of court and avoiding prosecution. However the victims are very bitter and wanting justice, especially as they realise the perpetrator will not compensate them after all. The police are fully informed of the case, but it is not clear if any action will be taken by them to prosecute.

#### **Present health and psychological observations:**

The interviewee is depressed and has severe chronic pain in his feet. He is also very angry and anxious about his financial situation and his family's well-being. It is now two months since his assault, and he is still entirely incapacitated and it remains unclear whether he will ever walk again. He also worries that he has medical bills to pay. He reports that he cannot hear properly and that he has headaches. He reports feeling "electric shocks" in the joints of three right fingers on movement, with loss of sensation in these fingertips. He is unable to walk except with the help of a walking frame and then with extreme difficulty and great pain. He uses the toes of his left foot only, to carry his weight.

**Quotation from hospital record cards:**

Date of admission: 4/3/02

Date of discharge: 24/04/02

4/03/02: Patient has abdominal trauma and burns on the soles of the feet.

Extensive swelling of both feet with abrasion on the legs.

Extensive swelling of right hand.

Laceration and deformed right index finger.

Facial swelling with bruises

Cardiovascular and respiratory systems – no abnormalities detected.

Full blood count: \* Haemoglobin –8,5 gm/dl

Bladder grossly distended – there is post micturition urinary retention. Both kidneys: moderate hydronephrosis. Normal spleen, urea/creatinine raised grossly.

20/3/02: 3 units packed blood cells transfused.

Debridement of both palmar surfaces of feet done. Wound dressed with betadine.

16/04/02: silver sulphadiazine cream dressing done. Patient skin grafted but graft did not take well.

Patient has requested to go home.

Discharged on 24/04/02

9/05/02: wound on sole of right foot smelly: 10 cm x 8 cm. Pus swab taken.

Sole of left foot: wound 5 x 4 cm.

Wounds on hand have healed; pigmented lesions on right lower back.

**Clinical findings:**

*Forehead: circular scar 1 cm in diameter.*

*Right and left upper arms: circular scars approx 1 cm in diameter on lateral aspects of forearms, one on each.*

*Right and left hand: similar circular scars on the back of each hand, 1 cm.*

*Right foot: the foot is swollen from the ankle downwards. The sole of the foot has an open wound approx 14 cm by 9 cm that encompasses the entire foot from the upper edge of the heel to midway down the ball of the foot, reaching all the way through the fat layer. The bottom of the wound is covered with inflammatory tissue and anatomical structures cannot be identified. The wound is very smelly and oozes thick dark liquid as soon as the dressing is removed. The toes are swollen and discoloured. Any movement of the leg or foot is painful. Any touch to the sole of the foot is extremely painful.*

*Left foot: rounded wound approx 7cm by 8 cm in centre of sole of foot, with a deeper area in the centre approx 5 cm x 4 cm, with total destruction of fat layer. A tendon is visible at the base of this wound. This foot is also extremely painful, but as the wound is more contained, the toes are able to take some weight.*

**Opinion:**

There is full agreement between the description of mutilating torture, the described symptoms and the clinical findings. The circular scars on his arms and forehead are consistent with cigarette burns. The wounds on the soles of his feet are completely consistent with deep burns inflicted on purpose. Kidney failure diagnosed in hospital could have been caused by rhabdomyolysis (extensive destruction of muscular tissue with muscular substance sedimenting in the kidneys).

*He has beyond any reasonable doubt been tortured as described.*

On the ground of massive destruction of tissue of the sole of the feet, particularly the right one, we find it very unlikely that the wounds will heal, which will leave him with an extremely painful (right) foot vulnerable to serious infections, or he can opt for amputation of the foot. In any case, he will be permanently disabled.

**Case 2: Z, self employed male, aged 28 (see photos 8 and 9)**

**Post election torture of MDC supporter.**

Date of incident: 1 April

Date of interview: 16 April

Place of incident: Midlands

*Present violence:*

Z was a known MDC supporter in his home village and has been frequently threatened over the last two years. On 1 April late at night, a group of **ZANU-PF supporters and youth militia** came to his homestead and yelled that he should come out. He tried to pretend that he was not there, but they threatened to set fire to the house. He therefore decided to open the door. As he opened the door he tried to make a run for it. The group then seized him and he was attacked all over with leather sjamboks. He reports that he was beaten on his legs with an iron bar and with a chain. They knocked him to the ground and beat him for some time. The perpetrators, some of whom are known by the victim, then left him. He was severely injured and unable to walk. The next morning, some of his neighbours took him to the local hospital, where an x-ray confirmed that he had a broken right fibula.

*Clinical findings:*

*Front torso:* more than 20 linear lesions, the longest 35 cm long, the broadest approx 20 mm. Some of the lesions represent partially healed abrasion-like lesions, some being hyper-pigmented, some depigmented. Some lesions appear double stranded.

*Right shoulder and arm:* 22 linear and curved lesions, the longest being 25 cm long, the widest being 7 mm. Irregular 2 x 3 cm partially healed depigmented abrasion on right front shoulder area. On the right hand, 6 small depigmented lesions on the knuckles of fingers 3 to 5.

*Left shoulder and arm:* 11 linear hyper-pigmented lesions, length 15 cm to 2 cm, and a few mm broad. Elbow swollen and painful to touch and on movement.

Left hand; 3 small encrusted lesions on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers.

*Back and proximal posterior aspect of the neck:* 49 linear hyper-pigmented and de-pigmented lesions in all directions, with 8 of these being between 25 and 40 cm long and approx 5 mm broad, the rest varying between 12 and 2 cm long and a few mm broad. Some lesions are partially encrusted at some point in their length. **(see photo 9)**

*Right thigh:* 30 cm long lesion from the groin almost encircling the leg, irregularly curved, one section on back of thigh approx 10 cm long by 1-2 cm broad, de-pigmented and irregularly scarified. Another section 10 cm long x 12 mm broad consists of multiple parallel oblique individual marks approx 2 cm long – “candy stripes” **( see photo 8).**

Furthermore, approx 25 linear hyper-pigmented lesions from 20 cm to 4 cm long, the broadest being 10 mm., going in all directions.

*Right lower leg:* in plaster cast - fibular fracture close to ankle diagnosed in hospital.

*Left buttock, thigh and leg:* 22 linear lesions in all directions, partially hyper-pigmented, partially de-pigmented, 20 cm to 5 cm long up to one cm broad. 8 of these lesions consist of double-stranded lesions. Furthermore, multiple smaller linear marks and lesions.  
On the anterior aspect of the thigh and left knee, 5 circular lesions 1 – 2 cm in size.

**Opinion:**

There is full agreement between the description of torture and the numerous clinical findings. All lesions are compatible with lesions approx two weeks old. The majority of the lesions have clearly been inflicted with straight instruments like sjamboks. The “candy striped” lesion is fully consistent with an injury caused by beating with a chain. The number and appearance of the lesions, all over the body, put his statements about torture beyond any doubt.

### **Conclusion of clinical examinations**

- **Our investigation shows beyond any doubt that politically motivated torture continues to be a problem post election.**
- **Groups affiliated to the government commit torture and ill-treatment, as indicated consistently by all cases examined in our series.**
- **The fact that all were tortured or ill treated for politic motives, and the fact that no prosecutions against perpetrators have been made in any of the cases, points to a deliberate policy by the authorities.**
- **The pattern of impunity is further underlined by the fact that perpetrators do not care whether they torture people who can identify them, or whether their torture or ill treatment leaves marks that can easily be recognised as caused by torture.**
- **Our findings are in complete agreement with the findings of the January 2002 mission, and with the descriptions of recent cases given by other NGOs**

## 2. Youth militia in the wider context of ZANU-PF education policy

The issue of militia training being a prerequisite for tertiary training has been covered in the body of the report. However, compulsory youth training for school leavers is being supplemented by other forms of compulsory “national service” training for other sectors of the population. As the following examples do not fall within the general youth militia training being focused on in this report, they are here as an appendix.

### **For students already enrolled: a patriotism course**

In November 2002, government announced that for those students already enrolled in colleges, from January 2003 there would be a compulsory course entitled “National Strategic Studies”. No student would be awarded a certificate or diploma unless they passed this subject. This applied to part time and evening students as well.<sup>187</sup> The compulsory subject is referred to by a government source as “nothing more than part of the curriculum from the National Youth Training Service”.<sup>188</sup> The subject is said to cover the history of the liberation war and the land resettlement programme.

In March 2003, students at Bulawayo Polytechnic embarked on a boycott in protest against the proposed launch of the compulsory “National Strategic Studies” course. The Student Representative Council spokesperson called on other institutions affected by the course to join the boycott, “to save tomorrow’s generation from brainwashing”. The students referred to the course as a “political ploy” by ZANU-PF to “entice them to the party”.<sup>189</sup>

### **For those already in the education service, a patriotism course**

During 2002, the Department of Education began enforcing a crash course in compulsory National Service Training for those teachers and headmasters already working under the ministry. Teachers were informed that they were expected to do the training during the school holidays. However, teacher turnout was below that wanted by government, although several training sessions were held across the country. In Masvingo for example, in December 2002, only 87 teachers from Masvingo Province and 2 from Harare turned up at Mushagashe Training Centre, instead of the expected 200.<sup>190</sup>

Many of Zimbabwe’s schools are staffed predominantly by temporary teachers, who do not have formal teaching qualifications, but have some O levels. Temporary teachers were informed in early 2003 that if they failed to do national service training during their April school holidays, they would not have their contracts renewed.<sup>191</sup> A circular was sent to all temporary teachers saying they would need “clearance by the ministry” before reemployment, and that to be cleared they must do three weeks of militia training during school holidays. Those aged over 30 had to attend a two-day “reorientation” exercise. A teacher who did the two day reorientation commented that it was a “sad development”, and that the lectures had emphasised the Unity Accord and “why ZANU-PF deserves to be in power as long as possible”.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, 29 November: “Government to introduce a patriotism course”.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 1 March 2003: “Students reject national service lectures”.

<sup>190</sup> *The Standard*, Harare, 15 December 2002: “Poor teacher turnout at national service”.

<sup>191</sup> *The Daily News*, Harare, 18 May 2003: Temporary teachers forced to join national service”.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*



### 3. Two affidavits on role of militia in denial of access to health care

#### Affidavit 1: (anonymised to protect informant)

I, the undersigned, X of X do hereby make oath and state as follows:

1. I reside at X, under Chief X and my address is X.
2. I am married to A, and our marriage is not registered.
3. I have six minor children born of the above.
4. During the Zimbabwe presidential elections, I was a polling agent for the MDC party.
5. On 20 March, 2002, I went to my local clinic as my child was coughing.
6. As I was approaching the clinic, I observed a group of people who were attending a meeting, which I believed to be a ZANU-PF party meeting.
7. I recognized RM, whom I believe to be the ZANU-PF leader of the youths.
8. As I was coming towards the group, R pointed a finger at me, but I could not hear what he was saying.
9. As I was passing, the youths inquired from me where I was going.
10. I answered that I was going to the clinic.
11. The youths ordered me to return to where I had come from, as there was no clinic for MDC supporters, and that I should go to Britain.
12. Too scared of the youths, I turned and went back home.
13. As this happened, I was still far from the clinic, and I have no knowledge whether the clinic staff had any knowledge of what had happened.
14. From the best of my knowledge and belief, the facts stated above are true and correct.

Thus done at N this..... day of June, 2002.

Before me ..... Commissioner of Oaths

#### Affidavit 2: (anonymised to protect informant)

I the undersigned Y, of Y make oath and state as follows:

1. I reside at Y communal lands in Y under Chief Y.
2. I am married to N, and our marriage is not registered.
3. I have four minor children with the above named.
4. I gave birth to a child on 7 September 2001 at D Mission Hospital, and on the second day being 8 September, BCG vaccination was given to the child.
5. On 16 October, 2001, I travelled to the clinic, which is nearer to my home area, to have my first review after birth of the child as per health requirements.
6. At the clinic, I was checked together with my child and notes of the review entered on the yellow child health card.
7. Three months after the birth of the child I returned to the clinic for polio vaccination, but the clinic had no medicine.
8. On 10 January, 2002, I returned to the same clinic and had my child vaccinated for polio.

9. Four months later at a date unknown, I returned to clinic for further vaccination as per health requirement.
10. At the clinic I found youths whom I believed to be members of the ruling ZANU-PF party by reason that the youths wore T-shirts with the inscription “THIRD CHIMURENGA”.
11. As I entered the clinic entrance, three youths approached me and enquired from me the purpose of my visit to the clinic.
12. I replied that I had come to have my child vaccinated.
13. The youths ordered me out of the clinic, saying “we do not want to see you here, you MDC people, “yendai munobayisa kunaPresident wenyu”, which literally means go to your president to have your children vaccinated.
14. I then left the clinic and returned at a later date; while I was on the queue, the same youth approached me, and stood behind me singing their party songs.
15. One of the youths ordered me to stand up and I was ordered out of the clinic premises.
16. The youths escorted me up to the clinic gate and then returned back to the clinic.
17. The youths did not assault me but sang their songs saying “muchafa nenzara”, which literally means you will die of hunger.
18. I then travelled to Masvingo clinic sometime in May 2002 to have my child vaccinated.

From the best of my knowledge and belief the facts stated above are true and correct.

Thus done at N this .....day of June, 2002.

Before me .....Commissioner of Oaths

While it is not Ministry of Health policy for anyone to be denied access to health on any grounds, these youths seemed able nonetheless to operate with impunity, and at times with the active support of health professionals, in the vicinity of some rural health care facilities for periods during 2002.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> There are other affidavits to hand implicating complicity at times of health professionals.

#### 4. Personal testimony from youth militia

The following two interviews were originally conducted partly in the vernacular and are translated, summarised versions. Precise details of place have been left out to protect the informants.

##### **Female youth militia, aged 19**

*This narrative is a summary of several interviews conducted during July and August 2002*

“My life has been destroyed by this experience. Now I am going to have a baby – I don’t even know who the father is because I was raped by so many people. I am also HIV positive and so I will die anyway. I wish I was dead. I think about ending my life as there is nothing left for me.”<sup>194</sup>

I was forced to join the youth militia in November 2001. I was abducted in M suburb of Z where I was selling vegetables on the side of the road, by a group of about 30 youths. They were accompanied by a white twin cab with ZANU-PF written on the side. They took me home to get my belongings, and when my aunt objected, she was told to be quiet or the place where we lodged would be burnt down. So there was nothing she could do. I was taken to a local high school, where I was among other youth numbering around 600, both boys and girls. We were told to shout ZANU-PF slogans, and I did not know them, so I was beaten with a stick. We were then taught the slogans and revolutionary songs.

We had to get up at 3 am and run 20km every day. This was for two weeks. After running, we had to march on parade like soldiers and at 9 am we got breakfast. We got one cup of tea and 3 slices of bread. The next meal was between 8 pm and midnight depending on when food supplies arrived. Some days youths would faint from hunger or thirst and they would be beaten and told they were making it up. We then went to a bigger training centre for two days before deployment back to a Bulawayo camp. The first day back, we were made to stand in the sun for two hours, and some of the girls fainted. All the girls, numbering around 300, were therefore sent back to the bigger camp for one more week of training, to make us tougher. I was then redeployed to the camp in town, and was there from December until July 2002. There were about 900 of us youths in this base, around 500 boys and 400 girls. A war veteran called N was in charge of the whole camp, and a female war veteran aged 32 was in charge of the girls, like a matron.

At the high school in November, there was no-one in charge of the dormitories, and on a nightly basis, we were raped. The men and male youths would come into our dormitory in the dark, and they would just rape us – you would just have a man on top of you, and you could not even see who it was. If we cried afterwards, we were beaten with hosepipes. We were so scared that we did not report the rapes. The gate to the school was always locked and manned by war veterans, and no girls were allowed anywhere near the gates. The war vet in charge, S, said we would sell out to MDC if we were allowed out at all.

Once we got to the base camp where we stayed for 7 months, the female youth militia slept in a big room in a house, and were not allowed out at night. The room did not lock, and the boy militias woke

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<sup>194</sup> With extensive counselling and support, this girl was by August 2003 no longer suicidal. However, she remains isolated from her community.

up at night and came into our room and raped any girl they felt like. The youngest girl in our group was aged 11 and she was raped repeatedly in the base. She soon suffered from sexually transmitted infections. The matron complained and was threatened with being beaten up. She complained to N, but this did not help, because he himself raped the girls whenever he wanted. There were 4 girls he liked in particular. Two of these were aged only 15, one was 16 and one was 17. He used to take these girls to hotels in Bulawayo and he and his friends raped these girls in the hotel rooms. I am very angry about what happened to them, and to me. I was very angry in the camp about being raped and I reported to another war veteran, who reported my complaint to N. He then ordered two male militia to beat me up with a knobkerrie, as I was an MDC sellout. My body was very swollen after this, and I was allowed no treatment, not even a pain killer.

After the Presidential election, many of the girls were sent to proper training camps, for example to Guyu, and there were only a few of us girls left, around 20. Of these 20, it became clear that 6 were pregnant, including myself, as a result of rape. I can't say how many of those who went to Guyu were pregnant. When we were all finally chased away from the camp in July, when it was closed and we were just told to go away, the parents of 4 of the pregnant girls came back to complain about the pregnancies, but were sent away without seeing N.

I witnessed torture in the base camp. People were picked up by N and others, and brought to the camp for torture. They were people wearing MDC t-shirts and others said to support MDC. I saw around 50 people beaten in our camp. At times we used to hang them upside down and then beat them with sjamboks, iron bars and knobkerries. Most would be allowed home, but I was told of 5 people who died in our camp as a result of beatings. The dead were apparently buried in the hills behind our camp, but I am not sure where. If the militia complained about beating people they were told they would be "sent to the hills". Some of the youths from our camp were ordered by war vets to rob a local store. They stabbed the store owner and stole some money. One was arrested and I think he is now in prison. On other occasions when the local police came to investigate crimes, they went away after N paid them money.

### **Male youth militia, aged 25**

*This narrative is based on an interview conducted during August 2003*

We got a lot of power. Our source of power was this encouragement we were getting, particularly from the police and others. We were getting this power and it was instilled in us that whenever we go out, we are free to do whatever we want and nobody was going to question that.

I'm 25 and entered the youth militia training in September last year [2002]. We were on the farms during the farm invasion periods and we had remained based there. As we were based there, there came a phase where we were supposed to go and be taught further things, so the training started on the farms and then later on we had to upgrade in the youth training. We were told that by doing national service we would be allowed to really access the government service, the civil service, and be employed there. And for us to get employment there, we were advised that all those that did not go through the National Youth Service were going to be removed and that was going to create jobs for us.

The war vets took down a list of our names from the farms, and then the list was sent to the ZANU-PF offices. Then they came to collect us on the farms. This is how we joined. We went to train at Dadaya

Training Centre. We were only 20 from this side, out of 2,400, half boys, half girls. We were aged between 25 and 15 years.

To begin with they were pushing us around and it was more of ill-treatment according to me. And to make matters worse, we were told we do not think. They have to think for us. So we do not do anything without being told.

When it came to food, when we were left with two months of training, it became bad. There was no food in the centre, but we were told that it was a technique to be drilled on survival skills. So you would be given tea without sugar and be given a single egg, and then you were told that's OK. If it was a matter of being given milk, you would be given a single tube of milk, that is 300 mills, and you share it being five. Five people sharing a 300 mills tube! There were times when food was enough, but in most cases there was hardly much to survive on, such that one had to survive on his own resources.

The training was six months. We were taught how to do some exercises which was the component of physical fitness. Then there were road runs, which were still part of physical fitness. And then in addition there was what they termed "orientation". We were taught about the Zimbabwean history from the time of Lobengula up to the 2002. We were told that during the times of Lobengula, whites came in to the country and robbed him of riches. Then later on, whites went on to even seize land and when they seized this land, they made a land for wild game and they started these safari operations. Whenever the hunters come in, all the royalties do not go to the Zimbabwean government or to the Zimbabweans at large. All the royalties are sent out of the country. Zimbabweans as a population are not gaining anything. So we were taught that it is an advantage for the blacks or the Zimbabweans to seize land from the whites and to start using it for farming, particularly irrigation as well as crop farming, because all the produce will go the Grain Marketing Board, so that in times of hunger, the Grain Marketing Board is going to plough that back to the people, which does not happen with the safari lodges.

They were really reinforcing that whites are coming in to rob us. Also, if we don't join this 3<sup>rd</sup> Chimurenga revolution, we are really betraying this country, or selling out. So there is really a need for us to come together as Zimbabweans and really fight this cause to the end. But I am not quite sure what this 3<sup>rd</sup> Chimurenga looked like and what they had in the backs of their minds.

What we were taught really was more of destruction. If you compare what we were taught and what used to happen before we were taught that, you realise that really life was normal, but once we were taught these skills and they started being implemented, things became abnormal, and even today you can see that a lot of things have been destroyed in the process. So what we were taught was more on destruction than on reconstruction. Among us it was not even possible to raise a question about what we were taught. If you felt that what you were being taught was destructive, it was better for you to escape, because you would come out alive, than to question what was taking place. If ever one was going to dare question, that person was going to be taken for dead.

In the camp they don't mention anything constructive about any other party save for ZANU-PF and they just tell us categorically that MDC is wrong. It's a dirty party, and there is hardly any other mention of it, save for that. It's a condemned party full stop.

Once you get out of the camps, you will be having a negative view of all normal life - you will be violent, such that if you arrive at a store, you wouldn't like to see people just buying and all that. You would like to get in and just seize property and close that shop on the spot. So that spirit was instilled

during the training and I find that was not good. You know, when you come out of the camp, you have a feeling of vengeance, because the treatment that we were getting there was very bad. We were tortured. Anytime you were seen wearing a joyful face, they would really be on you and push you around and torture you, until you are very unhappy. And when you leave this place, there is this feeling that you would like to revenge, only to find that you revenge on whoever is near you and is powerless.

You know, when you move as a group, we felt that we were a feared lot and this was evident in our reactions. Even if we beat up people, we knew they would call the police, but when the police came, they encouraged us to change our statement and put it as if we were provoked, that people were being insulting, calling us 'green bombers' - then that would be the statement that was brought forward, and the police would encourage us to just beat up those people. We got a lot of power. Our source of power was this encouragement we were getting, particularly from the police and others. We were getting this power and it was instilled in us that whenever we go out, we are free to do whatever we want and nobody was going to question that.

At times the youth are put into groups of 10 to 20 and then they are taken out to a camp somewhere. They are there to do community service, which involved going to do some minor work within some government centres, for example food distribution from the Grain Marketing Board centres. The food distribution was not really done in a clean way, in the sense that the militia would seize some of those items, like bags of maize, and just say the government is going to pay on their behalf. We were taking this maize both for consumption as well as to sell in order to get money, because we were told that there was no one who was going to receive payment in the camps because food was provided for, soap was provided for, and almost everything...clothing, then what's the need?

The group you were in dictated how people should behave. If it was composed of the majority who were into destroying, you find that it was very difficult for the minority not to join in because they would be viewed as sell-outs. So that's how we found the whole group being destructive by the end of the day. The situation was really forcing me to behave as they did, but it was difficult on my part because I didn't have this intention. As a result that's why I had to escape.

When we were out there, our instructors were mainly the ones raping the girls. They would ask some new recruits to wash for them and clean their houses. In the process they ended up sleeping with them. This happened to a lot of girls and most of them had to be expelled as they fell pregnant before the end of the six months training. There were some who were found sleeping with the instructors and as a result the instructor would be expelled as well as the girl. So whilst I know personally of three who became pregnant, these others were found sleeping with the instructors and they were expelled in the process, I don't know how many of them were pregnant. The instructors were not allowing the boys to sleep with the girls. It was quite strict and at night they would go around monitoring, making sure that the militia youths do not have access to the females. The dormitories for females were surrounded with a fence, whilst the dormitories for men were not really enclosed.

Later on, after being involved in these violent activities, that's when you would regret and feel that you had done something wrong. This remained an internal feeling but I had difficulties to share it with others and I didn't and I wouldn't have dared to. Most of them really felt at home with the violence and they never cared. I was deployed in my home area, and this is where I spent my two months of active service. I felt that I was in my home area and I couldn't do all those things that we were doing to my own people.

And to make matters worse, I thought one day the militia thing was going to come to an end, and how was I going to join the community? At some stage I felt I had a responsibility to stop on my own accord.

At times I actually beat people I knew, and this did not go down well with me. I had to beat them because they were selling their carvings by the roadside. They were attracting whites by doing this. As a result, they need to be beaten up so that they stop that. It was said that such people that have links with whites are MDC supporters. So they needed a beating so they could be stopped once and for all. And the people who operated lodges, the safari lodges, they were seen as a conduit for MDC and whites. So it was felt that they need to be attacked so that they are stopped.

We were after something that would really intoxicate oneself like alcohol, as well as things like mbanje, dagga [terms for marijuana]. You would really smoke those things before you spring the attacks. If we sell some items from the lootings, then we would get some money to buy this. The majority of the youth would smoke as well as drink. Anyone who did not, had a difficult time and was in danger of becoming a victim himself.

Once you are in the community, you get some people who are friendly and who become your informers. They will tell you that so and so and so and so were talking badly about you or at such and such a place, they were generally talking badly about the militia youth and then you will be just forced to go and attack. You find that you wouldn't know a lot of people. And as a result when you get this information, you just go to the area and start attacking people. But at times you would do so even sober. You would just get into the habit.

When I escaped, I was ill. Then we were taken to S Clinic. It's near D Centre. That's where I ran away. When we escaped, I was not alone. There were some boys who stay in M. So we ran away together. These others returned to the camp, although 4 of us did not.

I think the government is preparing for war. I think the youth training - it's just a path to war. The youth are the armed wing for ZANU-PF. They are preparing a war against the MDC. The MDC party is labelled the party led by whites. So whenever MDC people are targeted it's as good as thus targeting the whites.

When I think of the youth militia now I feel anxious, really, I feel very angry. Even when I am looking at them, I don't feel well. I don't see anything that I can envy from the National Youth Service. I don't see anything good in it at all.

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