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GOVERNMENT PANICK AS ZIM CRISIS ESCALATES



By Staff Reporter

Government was in panic mode as anti-riot police on Friday 29 September 2017 fired live bullets to disperse a demonstration led by #Tajamuka in Harare's CBD. Protestors under the #Tajamuka movement were protesting against the cash crisis in the country and the worsening economic conditions. The police brutality has reportedly resulted in injuries involving a journalist and a member of the Tajamuka group.

The protests were led by #Tajamuka a social movement which started last year and has been firm in fighting for economic and political reforms citing section 59 of the constitution which guarantees citizens the right to peaceful protest.

The protestors demanded that the RBZ governor Dr J. Mangudya resign following his pledge that if bondnotes fail he would resign. The protestors began their procession from Park Street into Jason Moyo where a meandering CABS Bank queue immediately joined the demo turning right into Leopold Takawira where riot police started firing two shot guns and teargas canisters.

Speaking to the Crisis Report the spokesperson of #Tajamuka Mr Promise Mkwanzani said, "The protest started peaceful as usual until the police (unprovoked) started to throw teargases and shot live bullets into the air to scare off the protesters."

The police also brutally assaulted Mugove Tafirenyika a journalist for the Daily News who was capturing the police firing at protestors.

Tafirenyika suffered severe head injuries from the assault.

Commenting on the brutality, CiZC Spokesperson Mr Dumisani Nkomo said "It is regrettable that police continue to use violence against protestors and have in essence outlawed journalists from covering protests, during last year's protests the police destroyed equipment worth thousands belonging to journalists and arrested and brutally assaulted over 10 media practitioners."

"Today's violence is clear testimony that Zimbabwe is a police state and the police are a captured force that now stand between the people and their democratic and constitutional freedoms. If this total disregard of the constitution and the rule of law continues unabated Zimbabwe will not have credible free and fair elections that pass the democratic test," said Nkomo

Meanwhile citizens and civil society leaders took heed of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe's PocketsOut protest with teachers in rural areas and citizens expressing their dismay at the current liquidity crisis. Speaking to the Crisis Report, ARTUZ President Mr Obert Masaraure said, "Last year ARTUZ was involved in a protest walk from Mutawatawa to Harare demanding a redress of the challenges faced by rural teachers with ten clear demands. Now #PocketsOut is a continuation from where we left and we are saying that if the government is failing to uplift the working and living conditions of the rural educationists

and all Zimbabweans in general, it must be dissolved."

The new wave of protests follows last year's protests that were led by #ThisFlag and Tajamuka against the deteriorating economic situation with the protest movements citing bad governance and corruption as the major contributors to the crisis.

Last year's protests saw over 500 people in Harare, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Beitbridge and Kwekwe arrested and appeared in court on various charges ranging from treason to public violence. Over the same period, human rights organisations such as Zimbabwe NGO

Forum, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Habakkuk Trust and Heal Zimbabwe recorded over 1000 incidences of human rights violations involving arbitrary arrests, abductions, arson and assault.

The Election Resource Centre also produced and launched a report on Zimbabwe's compliance with electoral best practise, the Election Barometer, which postulated and provided evidence that based on the prevailing current political environment Zimbabwe is not ready to hold a credible, free and fair elections. The report cited state sponsored violence as one of the key issues affecting the conduct of free and fair elections in Zimbabwe.



Updates from the spokesperson :- **CiZC Position on Zimbabwe's economy**

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is deeply disheartened by the continuous crumbling of the Zimbabwean economy amid allegations of **Government's political blunders** chief among them being the introduction of bond notes to compete against the United States Dollar. We are deeply concerned about the worsening economic situation in Zimbabwe especially the recent price hiking impregnated with shortages of basic commodities and fuel which have instilled so much panic amongst the Zimbabweans.

We have noted with great concern the sudden rise in basic commodities especially cooking oil and the long queues that are being noticed in some few filling stations which are still supplying fuel while many other have ran dry. Prior to that, the living standards of many Zimbabweans have declined further for the past 4 to 5 days from their already miserable state they were before. All these calamities are primarily caused by the existence of the bond notes which have solved nothing since their introduction rather than inflicting agony and suffering to the already bleeding economy of Zimbabwe.

It has become under everyone's nose now that the Government has failed to resuscitate the fortunes of this country's economy from the time it has started to diminish in early 2000 when the Zanu-PF Government embarked on a fast track land reform program. Since then the Government has been struggling to run the economy in a more equitable and progressive manner that should have seen this tiny Southern Country returning its prestige of being the breadbasket of Africa.

The fact that Activists took to the centre stage to lambast and express their displeasure to the government on its failure to put

in place suitable measures that will address the economic challenges which are currently being faced shows how real and devastating these problems have become. However the decision by Government to arrest His Generation

Church leader Pastor Evan Mawarire on Sunday 24 September is so worrisome. As civic society we express our displeasure on the Government's persistence in stifling our constitutional right of expressing our opin-

ions without interference. To make matters worse the Government through Minister Ignatius Chombo issued a press statement threatening the citizens of Zimbabweans who will enlighten other citizens on the current economic disaster with arrest depriving them of their basic constitutional right.

It further gobbles the mind, how the government minister and the President himself persists in blaming the ordinary Zimbabwean for the situation the country finds itself in. President Mugabe pointed a finger to other people to be the culprits in causing panic, havoc and pandemonium into the country ignoring his party members who have proven to be incompetent in vibrantly deliver their mandate. How can they explain the existence of bond notes in such large amounts to a few individuals in the streets?

To make matters worse all this is happening at time when the economic meltdown has reached its apex with the unemployment rate have been recorded to 95% equivalent to the employment rate of



CiZC Spokesperson Dumisani Nkomo

other countries. The once called sunshine city has turned into a city of vendors as citizens are embarking on doing anything possible to put food on the table, potholes have become

the norm of every road. In juxtapose social ills have loomed to a dilapidated levels as man and woman of Zimbabwe have lost shame due to poverty result in prostitution becoming not deviant. As such it is therefore irresponsibility of the Government to blame the ordinary citizens for all this.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition therefore strongly recommend for the government to look for agent alternatives that will see a turn around to current situation before we go back old dark days of 2008 where people used to languish in poverty and hunger as a **result of government's recklessness** in running the economy. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe should stop printing more bond notes rather it should find other

means of recovering the current liquidity crisis, in fact the Governor Dr J Mangudya should fulfill his promised when he said he is going to resign if bond note fail and resign allowing a fresh candidate with new ideas to take over.

We also urge sober minded citizens of Zimbabwe to act and act now in defending our future and that of our children by being vivid on what we want our government to do for us. The change we all eagerly want lies in our hands. On the same juncture, we encourage member of parliament as they are going to appoint new members of the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) to perform this crucial role in a non-partisan manner that will see competent members being selected.

Recent developments that saw Kwese licence being challenged in court do not reflect well in terms of investment opportunities as well liberalisation of the airwaves in Zimbabwe.

#THISFLAG PASTOR ARRESTED



EVAN MAWARIRE Motivational Public Speaker

In a desperate attempt to stifle democratic in Zimbabwe, the government arrested prominent activist and Clergy man Pastor Evan Mawarire over allegations of attempting to overthrow Robert Mugabe's government.

Mawarire. Who first appeared before High Court Judge Justice Priscilla Chigumba on 25 September was arrested during a church service at his His Generation Church.

Mawarire's arrest follows a social media video that went viral where he expressed concern over government policy, fuel shortages and long winding queues that have become the order of the day in Zimbabwe.

High Court Judge Justice Priscilla Chigumba granted Mawarire bail over a case in which he is accused of illegally participating in a demonstration organised by University of Zimbabwe students. He however remains in police custody over fresh charges of inciting violence.

Justice Chigumbu granted Mawarire USD 200.00 bail over another case in which he is being accused of inciting violence at a University of Zimbabwe medical students organised demonstration against fees hikes. He however remains in police custody answering on fresh charges levelled against him. In a statement soon after his arrest, Heal Zimbabwe strongly condemned the arrest of Pastor Evan Mawarire as it is unconstitutional and illegal.

Updates from courts however indicate that the state is failing to justify the arrest of Mawarire as it seem not to have evidence to justify its claim. Mawarire is being represented by prominent human rights

lawyer Harrison Nkomo.

This is not the first the clergy man was brought before the courts. The popular clergyman had at one point helped to organize one of the most successful and a peaceful strike in the history of post-independent Zimbabwe, with long anguishing citizens heeding his call to stay away from work to defend the country's worsening economic situation.

Mawarire rose to firm through his #Thisflag campaign that mobilised and encouraged citizens to register their complaints with various government officials.

Civil Society Talking Points on the Liquidity Crisis and Three-tier Pricing:

We hold that the bond notes are not a panacea to the challenges that face our economy and advance the following reasons:

- ◆ We argued and still maintain our position that even at best, the US\$200 million will not be able to address the liquidity problems facing the economy. This inadequacy accounts for the reason why we continue to witness endless queues of citizens at banks.
- ◆ The US\$200 million amounts only to 3.4% of banking sector deposits of US\$5.913 billion as at June 2016.
- ◆ The US\$75 million that was released into the economy by end of December 2016 only amounted to 1.3% of banking sector deposits. Hence given its size, it failed to fill the fiscal gap and restore the RTGS and Nostro balances.

- ◆ The announcement on the 4th of May 2017 resulted in a run on deposits, externalisation and withdrawal of deposits from the banking system as it fed on past experiences with the Zimbabwean dollar during the hyperinflationary period. This panic was witnessed on basic commodities in the past week.
- ◆ The bond notes continue to fuel mistrust and have grounded a perception of the return of the Zimbabwe dollar and lack of confidence in the banking system.
- ◆ The parallel exchange rate between the bond note and the US\$ feeds on the mere fact that the bond note cannot be traded outside the country, impacting on the ability to import and meet external liabilities.

- ◆ Given general liquidity shortages, this has resulted in a parallel market, thus eroding its value.
- ◆ In view of shortages of liquidity in the economy, firms will continue to struggle to meet import requirements of the economy, creating temporary shortages and upward pressures on prices.

The Bond notes and Economic Fundamentals

- ◆ We maintain that the bond note does not address structural challenges and fiscal indiscipline and corruption, which are at the heart of the underperformance of the economy.
- ◆ Given the reversal of the measures announced in the mid-term budget statement of 2016, as projected by the Minister of Finance, the fiscal situation continues to get worse.

Women’s Coalition Strategizes on Elections

As the 2018 elections gathers momentum, women organisations here have agreed that it is high time women grab positions of authority in the political arena. A high level election dialogue organised by the Women’s Coalition in Zimbabwe (WiCOZ) set the women empowerment agenda in motion as Zimbabweans gear up for the 2018 elections.

The meeting which was attended by delegates drawn from different CSOs, CBOs, political party members and members of the parliament was organised with the objective of coming up with strategies of empowering women to participate in politics and elections as well as coming up with resolutions to address barriers to women’s participation in the political arena.

In Zimbabwe, women constitute up to 52% of the population yet they are excluded in the

political arena which currently favours men over women. In the run up to the 2013 elections, Zimbabwe



Sally Dura, Women’s Coalition National Director

adopted the quarter system as an effort to ensure that equal opportunities between men and women are created in the political arena.

The meeting comes at a time when the Zimbabwe Electoral Committee (ZEC) has started rolling out the biometric voter registration process in the country. While they are challenges with regards to the process in terms of rate of voter registration as well as shortages of forms such as VR1 and VR9, women do face unique challenges that the ZEC needs to address as the BVR process proceeds.

Speaking during the meeting, representatives of women’s organisations noted that most women in rural areas walk long distances to voter registration points and are sadly being turned away for failure to produce voter registration documents. The meeting also noted that a number of women do not have birth cer-

tificates and this will greatly affect their participation in the political arena as failure to obtain such will affect their ability to secure national IDs and ultimately register to vote.

Further to that, the meeting noted that commissioner of oaths are not always available while at the same time, the failure by ZEC to conduct adequate voter education before registration commenced has created a situation where very few people have access to correct information with regards to obtaining documents such as birth certificates and IDs as well as the registration process itself.

Dr Rita Nyamupinga of FERMPRIST insisted that as civic organisations should advocate for the right of prisoners to vote. She pointed out that women are the major victims of election violence, including potential candidates who are intimidated by their male counterparts during elections.

With regards to legal issues, stakeholders noted that there is need to educate women on their legal rights in participation and decision making in the country as provided for by the constitution.

“GOVERNMENT SHOULD FIRE MANGUDYA”-ZCTU

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) joins the list of several organisations and individuals calling for the resignation of RBZ governor Dr John Mangudya. The call for Mangudya’s resignation comes at a time when the bond note is on a free fall against the United States Dollar, which upon its introduction were trading at 1:1. Speaking to journalists at a recent press conference, ZCTU President Mr Peter Mutasa demanded the government to replace the RBZ Governor with a more competent, non partisan individual who can bring sanity to the monetary system.

“The state of the Zimbabwean economy at the moment is of one that is languishing in deterioration as there is no vibrant industry leading to the jaw dropping 90 per cent unemployment rate. This in turn has created a nation of vendors as only a mere 40% of the 10 per cent that is employed is formally employed. The black market in Zimbabwe now has a booming population of traders particularly in a trade known as ‘money changing’ were individuals who have access to foreign currency sell it at a higher prize against the local bond notes. The majority of their customers are cross boarder traders who desperately need the illusive foreign currency that is the South African Rand and the United States Dollar.

“The spiralling of the black market can only be blamed on the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe as the sole monetary authority and government ministers...how do we explain the existence of millions of mint crisp bond notes on the streets when the banks are only issuing the smallest coin denominations” remarked Mr Mutasa.

The leading workers trade union insisted that Mangudya lied to Zim-

babweans when he said that the bond notes will continue trading at 1:1 with the United States Dollar.

“At the present moment, the US dollar exchange rate against the Rand is at a shocking 45 % meaning \$10 in bond notes is equivalent to about US\$14,50 which was presented to the nation as an unforeseeable reality at the time of the official launch of the bond notes in February this year”, said the ZCTU in a statement.

The ZCTU believes that the situation that Zimbabwe is in today is



Japhet Moyo and Peter Mutasa of ZCTU at a recent press conference in Harare

reminiscent of the 2007/8 era, were there was a wide-spread shortage of basic commodities caused by the hyperinflation that characterised the prevailing economic horizon at the time. In today’s version of the same events, there is now a lot more access to information through social media and the internet at large.

“The economy is now headed toward an all too familiar 2007/8 path. At the present moment, the country is experiencing short-

ages and prize surges in basic commodities such as fuel, drugs, electricity and something as basic as clean water!”, lamented ZCTU.

The organisation observed that as a result of a docile industry, the dependency on cross boarder trading, severe cash shortages and the high level of corruption, the nation is informally employing a pricing system sometimes referred to as four tier system whereby there are several means by which one can carry out a transaction. These include mobile money such as eco-cash, tele-cash or net-cash. The second one is ATM cards commonly referred to as “swipe” and then the third and is cash in the form of either US dollars, South African Rand or bond notes. The fourth which is commonly used in large payments is the RTGS (Real Time Gross Settlement). According to ZCTU, this system is a gruesome means to an end.

“Although it gets one the goods they desire, each one of these methods of payment has its own unique affect on one’s earnings. An example is mobile money whether its pay merchant or send money has charges withdrawn from the payee’s savings. RTGS and swipe have inflated bank charges of up to about 14 cents on the dollar. Therefore cash is by far the most convenient means of doing business however it is inexplicably illusive hence the general public is left with no option but to make do with whatever is at their disposal regardless of the charges they may incur in the process as all these including cash have no exemption from Value Added Tax. It has become quite cumbersome for the public to access cash. People are not even accessing their salaries and pensioners, some as old as 80 are having to sleep in bank queues in order to access their hard earned money”, said the ZCTU