



Zimbabwe Peace Project

First Quarter 2018: Human Rights Situation

Introduction

Since inception in 2000, the Zimbabwe Peace Project has been monitoring and recording cases of human rights violations throughout the country with a view to building peace and promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflict. As part of the monitoring exercise, in 2016, ZPP came up with a particular initiative to try and detect the early warning signs of political violence with a view to coming up with early intervention measures. Proactive in its outlook, the initiative involved identifying a list of potential indicators of political violence to look out for during the monitoring exercise. Once identified and recorded, the indicators would then be analysed and, depending on the findings, appropriate intervention measures would be fashioned. This exercise has been going on since 2016.

This report looks at the human rights violations recorded in the first three months of 2017 in order to: first, identify the general nature, context and characteristics of the violations; and second, to decipher what that means in view of the impending general election, which will reportedly be held in July this year. The idea is to identify the nature of the violations, understand their underlying causes, and then try to identify the appropriate intervention measures. Closer attention will be given to the potential for electoral violence in view of the impending election and how the violence could be averted.

Analysis

Into the New Year

The year 2018 started on a rather unpromising note. Political bickering within Zanu PF, in particular the persecution of the so-called G40 cabal after the ouster of President Robert Mugabe, continued to shape the course of political events into the New Year. The impending election on the other hand also played a part in shaping political events, especially the high incidents of intimidation and harassment recorded in the first month going forward.

The year thus started with a 24% increase in recorded incidents of human rights violations. 245 violations were recorded in January, up from 186 cases the previous December. Notably, 169 cases of harassment and intimidation and 57 discrimination cases were recorded

in January. Of the harassment and intimidation cases, an evolving trend could be observed where ruling party politicians and supporters, including traditional leaders, were forcing registered voters to surrender their voter registration information to party officials. While the motive is still unclear, the practice had an intimidating effect, especially on opposition or perceived opposition supporters.

Discrimination cases on the other hand largely came in the form of the partisan distribution of government aid, in particular agricultural inputs and food aid. Most of the aid was being distributed to ruling party supporters to the exclusion of opposition or perceived opposition members or supporters. Commendably though, cases of outright violence were by comparison significantly lower with only 6 cases recorded. The cases were largely interparty skirmishes between Zanu PF and MDC-T supporters and intraparty squabbling within Zanu PF as part of the continued G40 purge.

By location, Manicaland province had the highest number of violations with 62 cases, followed by Mashonaland Central with 60, and Masvingo with 38.

In terms of the victims, the majority were of unknown political affiliation, with a very small percentage (3.2% MDC-T and 2.5% Zanu PF) being politically identifiable.

Zanu PF was accused as the main perpetrator, accounting for 85.8% of the violations, followed by the Zimbabwe Republic Police at 5.3%, the War Veterans at 0.7%, the MDC-T at 0.2%, and the Zimbabwe National Army at 0.2%. Most of the violations by Zanu PF were at a local level and were spearheaded by local party leaders at district or lower levels. A few times, sitting or aspiring Members of Parliament were also implicated. Chiefs and local headmen on the other hand were heavily implicated in cases of discrimination, harassment and intimidation. Notably, the violations by the state agents (the ZRP and the ZNA) were primarily of a non-political nature. Rather, they were of a civil nature and mainly related to the maintenance of law and order.

By gender, there were more male victims (1575) than female victims (1471) and more male perpetrators (465) than female perpetrators (100).

Tragedy on Saint Valentine's

The same overall situation in January continued into February. The death of MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai on 14 February after a long battle with cancer would however change the situation almost immediately. With no clear succession policy in place, his death plunged his party into a succession crisis that would see it descend into violence and eventually another split. The intraparty violence that erupted at the iconic leader's funeral with the assault of three senior party officials would escalate throughout the month to debunk the myth that political violence was a preserve of the ruling party.

The month of February thus saw an increase in cases of political violence with 17 cases of intraparty violence being recorded in both Zanu PF and the MDC-T. Other than that, there was however a welcome 30% decrease in recorded violations. 176 cases were recorded in February, down from 245 in January. Cases of harassment and intimidation decreased significantly from 169 to 118, followed by a decrease in discrimination cases, down from 57 to 20 cases.

Manicaland province continued to have the highest number of recorded violations with 34 cases, followed by Mashonaland Central with 29, and Midlands with 28 cases.

Zanu PF continued to account for most of the violations at 46%, followed by the MDC-T at 28%, up from 0.2%. While the violations by Zanu PF remained localised and mainly related to discrimination (the partisan distribution of government aid), and harassment and intimidation (demands for voter registration information and political intimidation), violations by the MDC-T mainly related to intraparty violence/squabbling associated with the party's succession dispute, which eventually pitted Deputy Party President Thokozani Khuphe and Co-Vice President Nelson Chamisa. Violations by state actors on the other hand remained minimal if grave with the death of three protestors at the hands of the police in Harare following public disturbances over plans to remove commuter omnibuses from the city centre. Men (402) continued to be the main violators compared to women (44).

In terms of the victims, 89% could still not be associated with any political party, while 5.5% were associated with Zanu PF and 4.8% with the MDC-T. 737 of the victims were female and 934 male.

The Ides of March

The same political situation in February played into March, with a slight 10% increase in recorded violations. 188 cases were recorded in March, up from the 176 cases in February. The majority of the violations related to intimidation and harassment (demands for voter registration slips, forced donations, forced meeting attendances and forced purchases of party cards by Zanu PF officials) – 113 cases, and discrimination (the partisan distribution of government aid) – 22 cases. Cases of outright political violence increased to 25 and largely remained in the nature of intraparty violence/intimidation within Zanu PF and the MDC-T. 13 cases of intraparty violence in these two parties were recorded. Cases of interparty violence on the other hand were mostly isolated and sporadic skirmishes triggered by external causes.

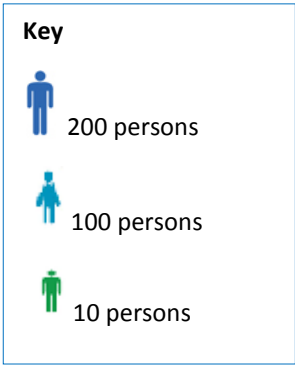
By province, Mashonaland Central had the highest recorded violations with 53 cases, followed by Mashonaland East with 31, and Manicaland with 27 cases.

Zanu PF continued to account for most of the perpetrators, with the culprits mainly being local party leaders, members or supporters. No state actors were implicated directly save in two instances: one, where a government minister was accused of using inflammatory language at a local rally, and another where a local resident minister allegedly forced people to attend his rallies with absentees being threatened. Local traditional leaders on the other hand continued to be implicated in cases of harassment, intimidation and discrimination, while War Veterans were implicated in very isolated cases of intimidation.

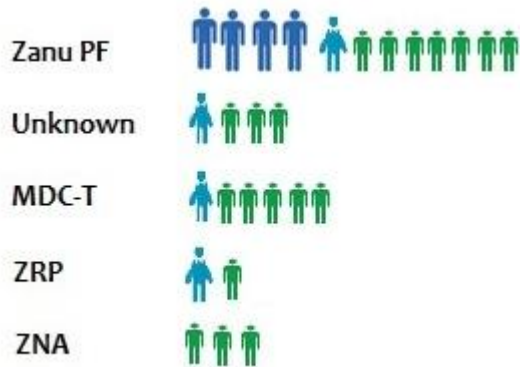
The victims of intimidation, harassment and discrimination remained predominantly male and unidentifiable by political affiliation. The victims of political violence on the other hand could be identified by political affiliation either as victims of interparty violence between Zanu PF and the MDC-T or as victims of intraparty violence in the two parties.

Dashboard of Incidents

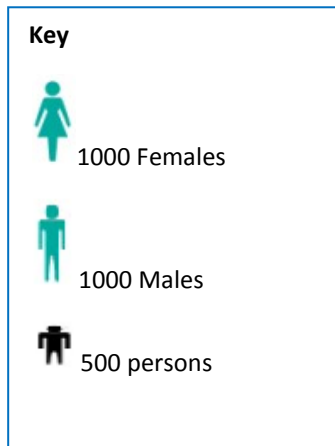
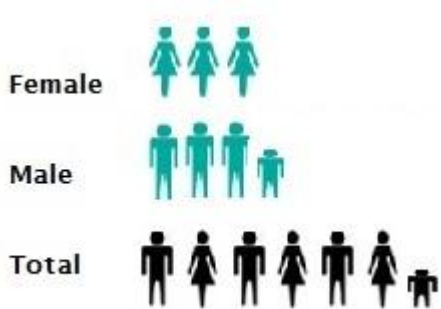
Victims by Affiliation



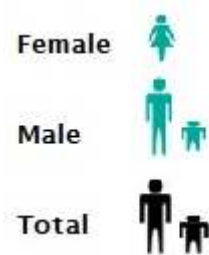
Perpetrators by Affiliation

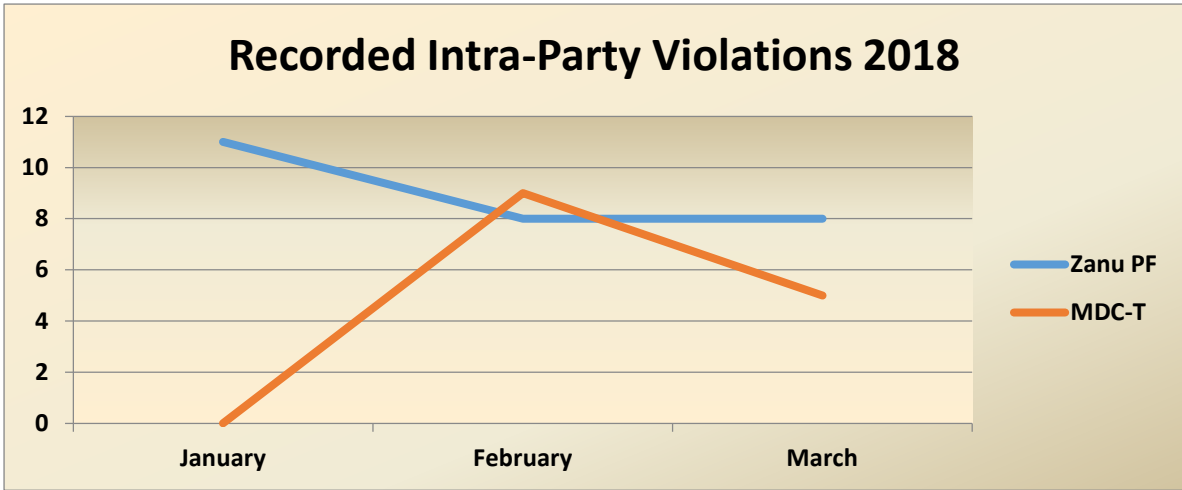


Victims by Gender

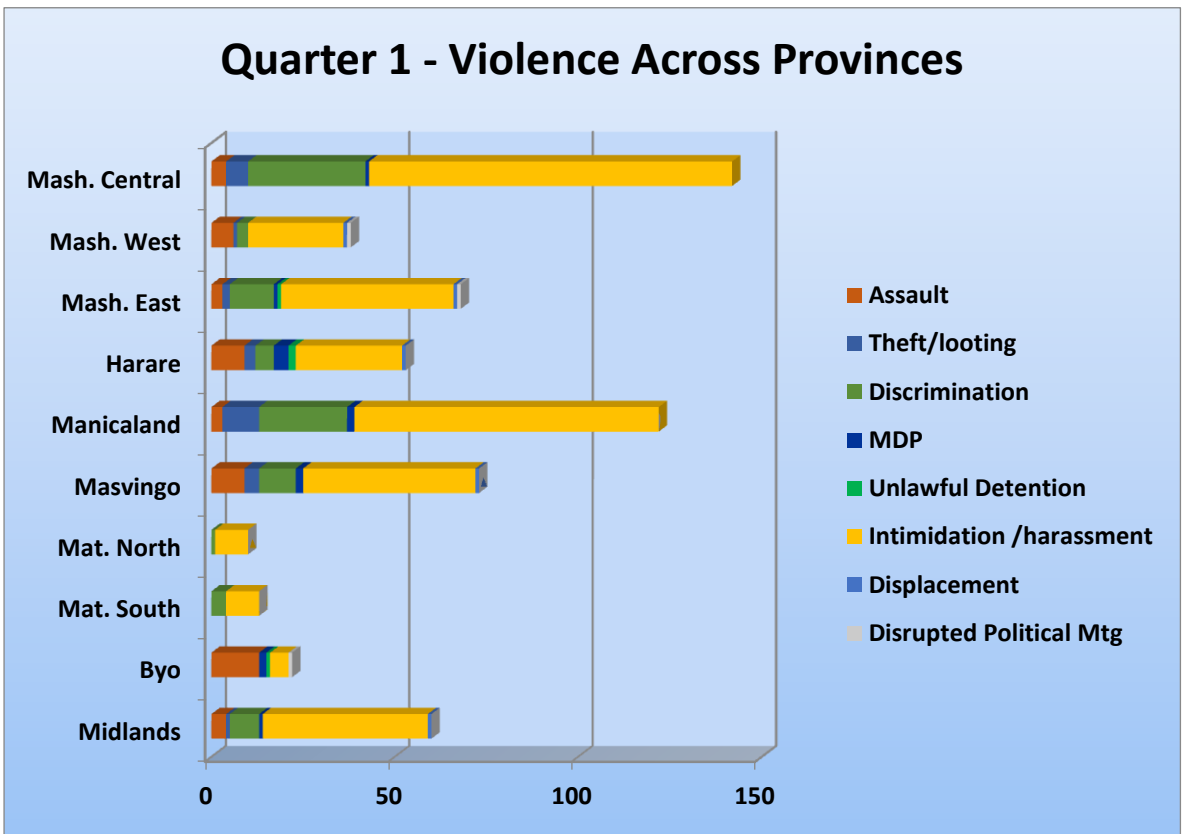


Perpetrators by Gender

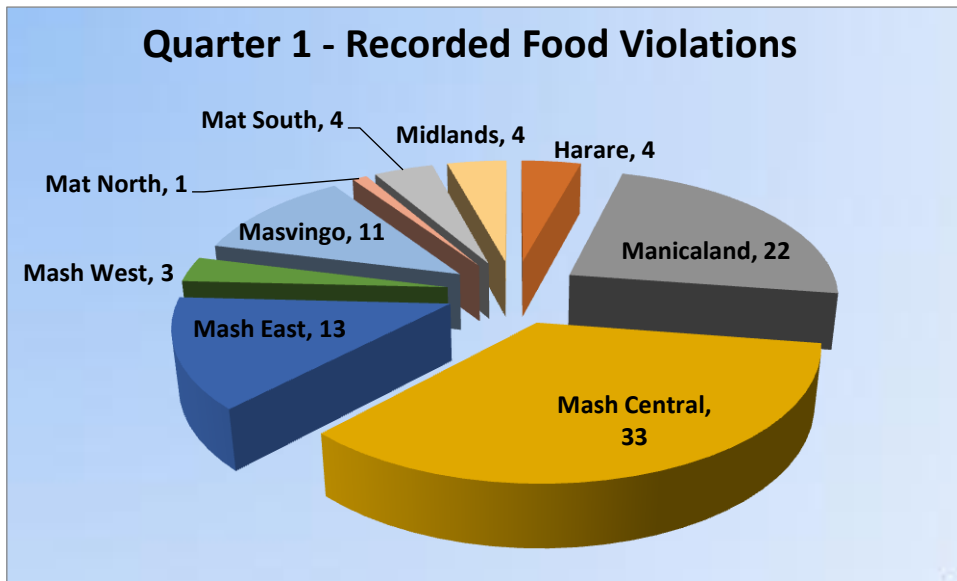




Over the period, 14 intra-party violations have been recorded for MDC-T and 27 for Zanu PF

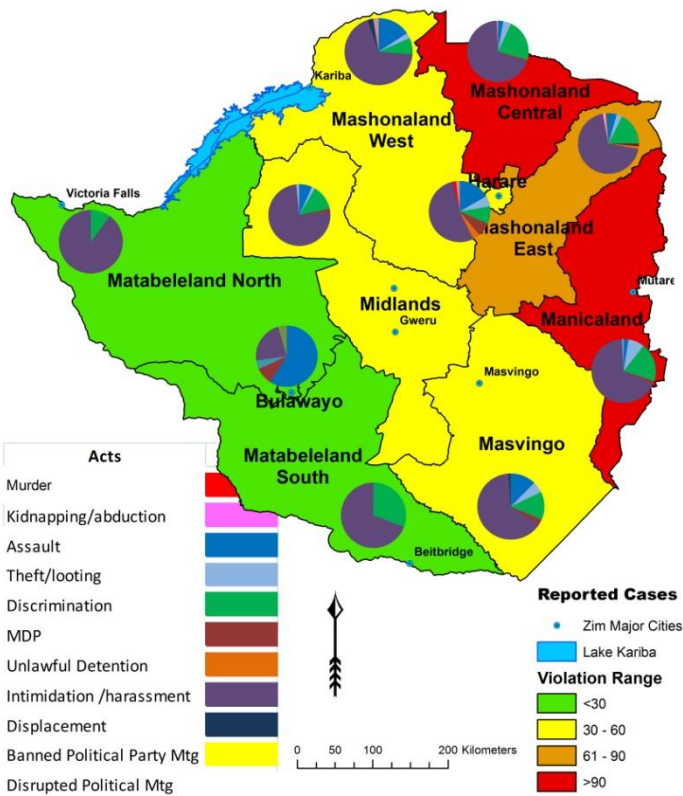


Quarter 1 of 2018 has recorded 399 harassment/intimidation violations, 99 discriminations, 51 assaults and 27 theft/looting violations. A murder was recorded in this quarter, as well as 5 displacements. Mashonaland Central has recorded the highest violations with 142, followed by Manicaland with 123, and Masvingo with 73 for the quarter.

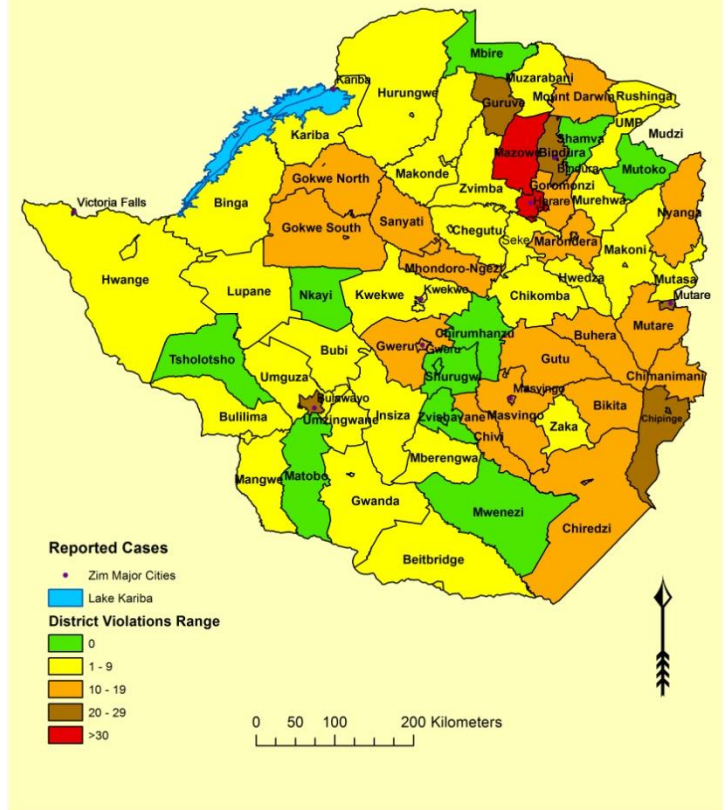


Mashonaland Central has recorded the highest food and other aid related violations with 33, followed by Manicaland with 22. Bulawayo has not recorded any food related violations

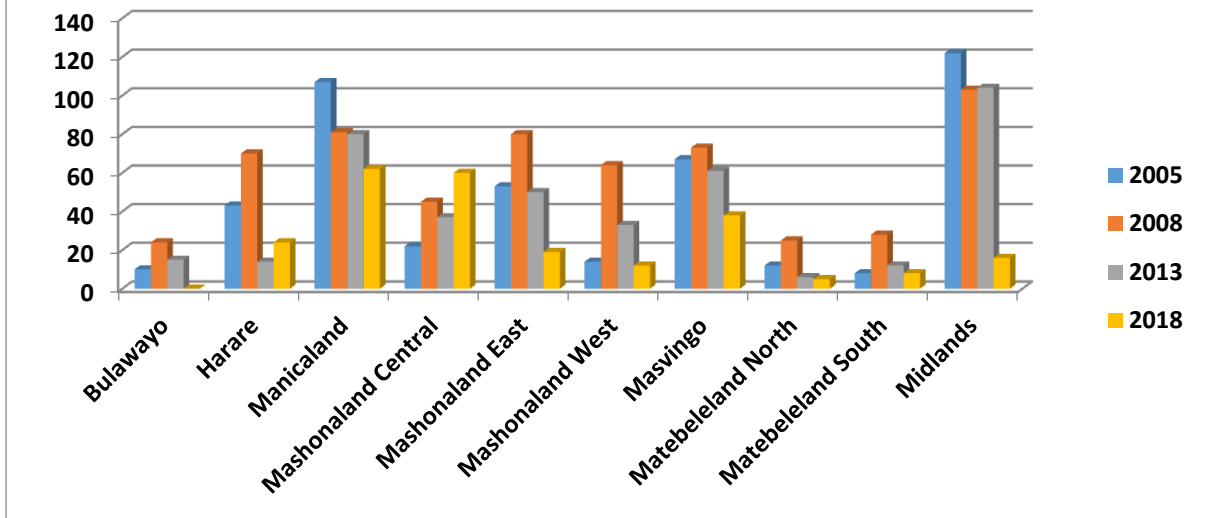
January to March 2018 Provincial Map



**January to March 2018 District Map
Quarter 1 Violations**



Comparison of Pre-election Periods of 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2018



The above graph shows recorded violations three months before previous elections, comparing with 3 months before the forthcoming general elections. Mashonaland Central province is the only province which is showing violations higher than for previous elections.

General Observations

All in all, the first quarter of the year was characterised by three fundamental developments namely:

- ❖ Heightened cases of intimidation and harassment;
- ❖ A steady increase in political violence, especially cases of intraparty violence in both Zanu PF and the MDC-T; and
- ❖ A steady decline in cases of discrimination, especially cases relating to the partisan distribution of government aid.

Other notable features were the localised nature of the violations, the victims and the perpetrators, and the near absence of state actors as violators.

Intimidation and harassment: The heightened cases of intimidation and harassment, it is important to observe, were fuelled mostly by the voter registration exercise, which saw Zanu PF institute what appeared to be a policy, if one looks at the prevalence of the practice across the country at such a localised level, to compel voters to disclose their voter registration information. While the motive is not yet clear, it has been suggested that the practice was designed to encourage party

members to register to vote. ZPP will therefore continue to monitor the situation closely to see if the practice will persist now that voter registration blitz and mop up exercise is closed and what is ongoing is the continuous registration limited to district level. Should the practice persist, then it forebodes a potentially sinister design.

Besides the cases of intimidation and harassment related to the voter registration process, other cases, which were marginal by comparison, related to forcible donations to the ruling party, forcible attendance of ruling party meetings, and outright threats not to attend opposition meetings or to vote for the opposition. Naturally, these cases, it may be observed, are likely to increase as the general election draws closer.

Political violence: The systematic rise in cases of political violence, especially intraparty violence, as already observed, can be traced directly to the succession politics of both Zanu PF and the MDC-T. The sustained purging of the G40 continued to fuel factional fighting in Zanu PF while the Khuphe/Chamisa succession tussle fuelled the intraparty violence in the MDC-T.



Figure 1: Joice Mujuru supporter attacked in Harare



Figure 2: MDC-T supporter attacked in Chinhoyi for wearing party regalia

As the balance of powers now appears more settled in Zanu PF than in the MDC-T, it would appear there will be more cases of intraparty violence in the MDC-T than in Zanu PF. At the same time, as the general elections draw closer, cases of interparty violence between these two dominant parties will likely increase also. ZPP will therefore continue to monitor the cases of political violence, paying very close attention to the early indicators of such violence, including inciting and inflammatory language and hate speech, especially by senior officials. Happily, there has been very little of that so far.

Discrimination: The cases of discrimination in the period under review, as observed earlier, mainly related to the partisan distribution of government aid, mainly agricultural inputs and food aid, in favour of ruling party supporters. The cases, as observed earlier, have however been falling gradually, from 57 cases in January to 22 in March. This gradual decrease is however not by design. It reflects no penance on the part of the perpetrators. Rather, it is directly connected to the closing of the agricultural season, when the government hands out free agricultural inputs. As the agricultural season has been coming to an end, so too have the cases of discrimination declined.

What is more important to observe however is not the declining nature of the discrimination cases but rather what the cases represent. The discriminatory practices, which were implemented by Zanu PF local leaders virtually across the whole country reveal an entrenched system of political patronage. The practice suggests that Zanu PF's old system of political patronage, which also involves the traditional leaders, remains intact and will likely fester as the harmonised elections beckon. Going to the elections, the patronage system will

likely translate to vote buying and ultimately violence as beneficiaries fight hard to protect the system. Thus, going to the polls, ZPP will also continue to closely monitor the distribution of government aid and other benefits not only to register incidents of discrimination but more importantly as early warning signs of electoral fraud and/or electoral violence.

Localised nature of violations and absence of state actors: Most of the violations recorded in the period under review, as observed earlier, were quite localised. They were mainly at the district level and below and were perpetrated mostly by local political leaders, local traditional leaders or local party supporters. The victims too were largely local residents. Notably, there was minimal involvement of state actors like government officials, the police or the military. The few cases involving the police mainly related to the maintenance of public law and order and were not political.



Figure 3: Zanu PF leader taking down serial numbers on voting registration slips

These general factors, on the face of it, suggest that the violations – save for the demands for voter registration slips – were not part of a coordinated central plan. The violation, at least for now, appears not to be part of some centralised plan emanating from the top. Likewise, they do not appear to be institutionalised as has been the case in the past when state actors were implicated directly in human rights violations for political purposes. This should therefore make it easier to control the abuses. The local culprits can be controlled first, by engaging the law enforcements agents and; second, by engaging

their leaders at the national level. In this context, it is important to note that the national leadership both in government and within the opposition movement has pledged a peaceful, free and fair election. ZPP will thus continue to monitor the situation and engage, among others, the police and the national party leaders of all the political parties to ensure that the mantra of a peaceful, free and fair election holds true.



Figure 4 Violence at MDC-T Harvest House Offices

Conclusion

Going into the future, especially in view of the impending election, ZPP will continue to monitor the situation on the ground throughout the country not only for the purposes of documenting human rights violations but more importantly in order to detect the early warning signs of political/electoral violence with a view to devising necessary intervention measures, including engaging political parties, law enforcement agents and other government agencies. From the observations made above, ZPP will endeavour to engage or continue to:

- ❖ Engage all the political parties, especially the leadership of Zanu PF, to stop party members from intimidating and harassing the electorate or discriminating against political or perceived political

opponents in line with the government's declared mantra of a peaceful, free and fair election;

- ❖ Engage the government through the responsible Ministries and the ruling Zanu PF party leadership to ensure that government aid is not distributed in a partisan manner;
- ❖ Engage the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to stamp out the practice of forcing registered voters to disclose their voter registration information to political party leaders;
- ❖ Engage all the political parties, especially Zanu PF and MDC-T national leaders, for them to stop their party members and supporters from both intraparty and interparty violence in line with their professed commitment to peaceful, free and fair elections;
- ❖ Engage the police to clamp down political violence and other criminal practices, including incitement to violence, intimidation and harassment;
- ❖ Engage the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and the Council of Chiefs for them to restrain traditional leaders from acting in a partisan manner;
- ❖ Engage and collaborate with other local non-governmental organisation with similar objectives as necessary.