

COVID-19 & HUMAN RIGHTS

180 DAYS OF WHAT?

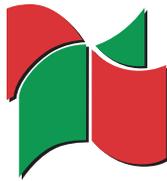
LOCKDOWN • IMPUNITY • REPRESSION • CORRUPTION • 180 STORIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

A SUMMARY REVIEW OF THE FIRST 180 DAYS OF THE
COVID-19 NATIONAL LOCKDOWN IN ZIMBABWE

SEPTEMBER 2020



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HUMAN RIGHTS
NGO Forum



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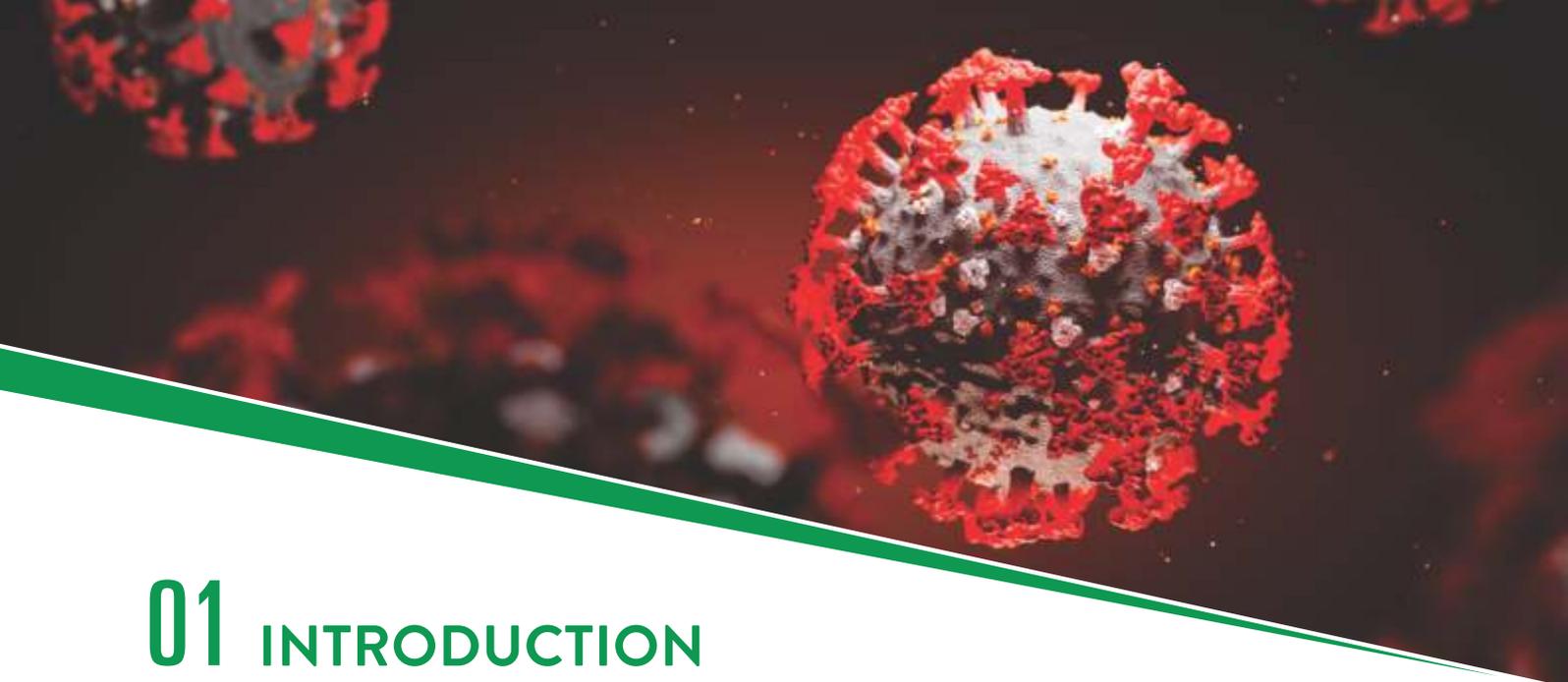
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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report covers the first 180 days of the national lockdown declared by President Emmerson Mnangagwa and has been in place since 30 March 2020. The report details human rights violations relating to the COVID-19 lockdown. The report also features stories from citizens relating to their experiences during the lockdown.

Information contained in this report was gathered through both primary and secondary data gathering. The Forum's monitors and members provided information on what they were witnessing and attending to. The media reported many cases. The 180 stories were mostly documented through primary data gathering by the Forum Secretariat.



01 INTRODUCTION

On 17 March 2020, President Emmerson Mnangagwa declared a state of disaster in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The declaration was in terms of section 27 of the Civil Protection Act [Chapter 10:06]. The declaration allowed the government to make emergency disaster response regulations and allocate financial and human resources to respond to the pandemic.

On 27 March 2020, President Mnangagwa again addressed the nation and wherein he imposed a 21-day national lockdown which was to take effect from 30 March 2020. The national lockdown would subsist until 19 April 2020. Consequently, the Minister of Health and Child Care acting under section 68 of the Public Health Act [Chapter 15:17], promulgated several regulations to implement public health measures to curb the pandemic.

On 18 April 2020 which was day 21 of the lockdown, the President extended the COVID-19 national lockdown by a further 14 days to 3 May 2020 as part of the Government's response to the rising number of positive cases in the country. The announcement was immediately followed by the gazetting of Statutory Instrument (SI) 93 of 2020 - Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 3).

On 1 May 2020 which was day 33 of the national lockdown, President Emmerson Mnangagwa addressed the nation and extended the national lockdown by a further 14 days to 17 May 2020. This was followed by the gazetting of Statutory Instrument (SI) Statutory Instrument 99 of 2020 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 5) on 2 May 2020. On 16 May, President Mnangagwa announced the indefinite extension of the lockdown measures. According to the President, the country would remain under Level 2 of the lockdown.

The announcement that the country was under Level 2 came as a surprise to many. At the initial stage when the lockdown was implemented, the President did not explain that the implementation of the lockdown would come in various stages, nor was it clarified how many stages the lockdown was made up of. Most importantly it was also not explained what each stage of the national lockdown entailed. All these pointed to a lack of preparedness and lack of well thought through strategies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe.

Nonetheless, the declaration of the “Level 2” lockdown meant that the government would assess the situation at two-week intervals.

Restriction measures under this level also meant that citizens were expected to stay at home, except to seek medical assistance, buy food, and receive other essential services. Wearing a face mask in public spaces was to remain mandatory.

All public transportation services, except the State-owned Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO), remained suspended. Security personnel who had been deployed across the country to ensure that the public complied with the lockdown measures were to remain. Zimbabwe’s borders remained closed to foreign nationals and public gatherings of more than 50 people continued to be prohibited.

***On 17 March 2020,
President Emmerson Mnangagwa
declared a state of disaster in
response to the COVID-19
pandemic.***



02 A WAVE OF REGULATIONS

The national lockdown has been implemented through a sporadic wave of regulations, dealing with issues such as lockdown restriction measures and prohibition of gatherings, rent and mortgage payment deferrals, direct tax measures, formal and informal employment measures and economic stimulus measures. In total, the government has promulgated thirty-four (34) COVID-19 related legislative regulations to enact laws related to the pandemic as of 21 September 2020. The regulations are listed below, with the latest being on top of the list.

- SI 2020-076 Civil Protection (Declaration of State of Disaster Rural and Urban Areas of Zimbabwe) (COVID-19) Notice, 2020¹
- SI 2020-077 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) Regulations, 2020
- SI 2020-077 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) Regulations, 2020 (Consolidated)
- SI 2020-077 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) Regulations, 2020 (Consolidation 2)
- SI 2020-077 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) Regulations, 2020 Consolidated as at 2020.06.12
- SI 2020-082 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (No. 1)

1. Source – Veritas Zimbabwe Website available at <https://www.veritaszim.net/covid-posts?page=1>

- SI 2020-083 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) Order, 2020
- SI 2020-083 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) Order, 2020 (Consolidation No. 6)
- SI 2020-084 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (No. 1)
- SI 2020-092 Public Health (Standards for Personal Protective Apparel, Materials and Equipment) Regulations, 2020
- SI 2020-093 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 3)
- SI 2020-094 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 4)
- SI 2020-096 Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) (Deferral of Rent and Mortgage Payments During National Lockdown) Regulations, 2020)
- SI 2020-096 Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) (Deferral of Rent and Mortgage Payments During National Lockdown) Regulations, 2020 Consolidated (2020.06.12)
- SI 2020-097 Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) (Deferral of Rent and Mortgage Payments During National Lockdown) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (No. 1)
- SI 2020-098 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (No. 2)
- SI 2020-099 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 5)
- SI 2020-101 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 6)
- SI 2020-102 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 7)

- SI 2020-103 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (No. 3)
- SI 2020-110 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 8)
- SI 2020-115 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 9)
- SI 2020-134 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020 (No. 4)
- SI 2020-136 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 10)
- SI 2020-144 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 11)
- SI 2020-153 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 12)
- SI 2020-160 Public Health COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 13)
- SI 2020-174 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 14)
- SI 2020-186 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 15)
- SI 2020-200 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Consolidation and Amendment) Order, 2020
- SI 2020-208 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Consolidation and Amendment) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 1)
- SI 2020-209 Civil Aviation (Guidance for Air Travel through the Covid-19 Public Health Crisis) Regulations, 2020

- SI 2020-216 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (No. 2) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 2)
- SI 2020-217 Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (No. 2) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 3)

**Of the regulations published by the Minister of Health and Child Care,
the following are significant:**

- Statutory Instrument 83 of 2020 - Implemented a 21-day lockdown order. Gatherings of more than two people were prohibited. Borders were closed and there was an automatic extension of permitted residence of foreign nationals. Airports were closed and restrictions imposed on aerial transportation.
- Statutory Instrument 93 of 2020 - Extended the period of the lock-down to 3 May.
- Statutory Instrument 96 of 2020 - Rent and mortgage payments were deferred for the duration of the lockdown. Tenants were not to be subjected to eviction or ejection from the land or premises constituting the rented accommodation during the period of the lockdown. The deferred rental was repayable in six equal instalments over six months beginning with the month immediately following the end of the national lockdown.
- Statutory Instrument 99 of 2020 - Started a phased relaxation of the national lockdown effective until 17 May 2020.
- Statutory Instrument 102 of 2020 - Enforced the reopening of businesses and mandatory testing of employees. Only ZUPCO buses and commuter omnibuses were allowed to begin operating with requirements to put certain measures into place to curb the spread of the virus.
- Statutory Instrument 134 of 2020 - Removed the requirement in section 8 of SI 83 of 2020, requiring the Minister of Health and Child Care to consult the President and to act in conformity with any of the President's directives before publishing orders in the Gazette enacting measures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Statutory Instrument 135 of 2020 - Announced that 30 June 2020 was the cut-off date for any deferments on rentals and mortgages which the President had prescribed under SI 96 of 2020. Tenants and those with mortgages to pay are now required to pay their debts according to their leases and mortgage agreement. Deferred payments are to be paid in instalments.
- Statutory Instrument 136 of 2020 - Allowed restricted rights to certain groups in the informal sector to resume work under Level 2 of the lockdown as follows:
 - i. informal traders who earn less than ZWL\$60 000.00 a year, such as hawkers, street

vendors and people who sell goods at flea markets and who are registered to pay tax in terms of the Income Tax Act was allowed to resume their informal trade. Further, they had to be screened and tested, maintain social distance and trade from 8.30 am to 4.00 pm.

ii. small-scale miners, taxi and combi drivers, cross-border traders, people who run food and drink outlets, and cottage industry operators were not allowed to resume operations under this regulation.

iii. the work of Parliament was also categorised as an essential service. Public gatherings conducted by parliament were allowed to resume as long as they observed the limit on gatherings and practised social distancing.

- Statutory Instrument 144 of 2020 - The Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 11). This regulation extended learner's drivers licences and defensive driving certificates for a further six months or until the lockdown was lifted.

- Statutory Instrument 200 of 2020 - Re-enacted the previous order, incorporating all the amendments made to it, and making a few additional provisions amongst which are:

i. prosecution for false reporting during the national lockdown. Any person who publishes or communicates false news about any public officer, official or enforcement officer involved with enforcing or implementing the national lockdown in his or her capacity as such, or about any private individual that has the effect of prejudicing the State's enforcement of the national lockdown, shall be liable for prosecution under section 31 of the Criminal Law Code (*"Publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to the State"*) and liable to the penalty there provided, that is to say, a fine up to or exceeding level 14 or imprisonment for a period not exceeding twenty years or both.

ii. deferment of expiry of defensive driving certificates, learner' licences and re-testing certificates required by public service vehicle drivers.

iii. a nationwide curfew between 8:00 pm to 6:00 was implemented. Low-risk sporting activities and gatherings were restricted to times between 9:00am and 3:00pm.



03 LOCKDOWN ENFORCEMENT

The high number of regulations brought about confusion and difficulties in tracing their full implications on trade, industry and commerce. It also made adherence to the regulations difficult as some of the regulations were promulgated days apart, yet they contained contrasting regulations on the same issues.

Another difficult aspect related to enforcement was the deployment of soldiers as an additional force to the police and municipal officers involved in the enforcement of the COVID-19 national lockdown. The inclusion of the army as law enforcement officers brought a fearful expectation of violence as soldiers have been previously implicated in gross human rights violations in the recent past. True to this fearful expectation, the Forum noted that soldiers were identified in the major categories of human rights violations documented, especially cases of assault and harassment of civilians.



Police officers checking exemption letters from pedestrians in Harare

The Forum also noted a trend of inconsistency in the enforcement of the national lockdown. On various occasions, police officers deployed at checkpoints nationally turned people away including members of the public with exemption letters. In such incidents, police officers and soldiers had directives to only allow members of the security sector and medical professionals.

The inconsistent enforcement of the lockdown particularly under Level 2 remained a cause for concern for citizens. On different incidences, stringent lockdown regulations were implemented

without prior notice or reasonable motive. For instance, in the wake of the reopening of industry and commerce, some Forum Members were requested to produce “*sanitisation certificates*” by individuals purporting to be municipal officers. However, the Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) Regulations, 2020 (published as Statutory Instrument 77 of 2020), did not make mention of “*sanitary certificates*.” The Legal Department of Harare City Council as well as the Chamber Secretary, also confirmed that nothing of the nature of “*sanitisation certificates*” was required.

The Harare City Council also expressly stated that it had not mandated any of its officers to check for the sanitisation certificates.

The confusion relating to the regulations allowed an unjustified restriction on the right to movement, access to information, peaceful protest and citizen participation in critical national processes, contrary to provisions of the regulations which allowed essential service providers to move to and from their places of employment.

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04 VIOLATIONS DURING THE LOCKDOWN

The 180 days national lockdown period was marred by violations of civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. The Forum recorded at least 920 human rights violations between 30 March and 18 September 2020. The consolidated statistics relate to abductions and torture, extrajudicial killings, assaults on citizens by law enforcement officers, attacks on journalists, unlawful arrests and gunshots. Other violations that could not be adequately quantified due to their high frequency include harassment, threats and intimidation. The lockdown was also marred by reports of violations on fundamental rights to dignity and rights not to be tortured, rights to water, food, medical services, access to information, and restrictions to freedom of expression, non-compliance with court orders and corruption.

Nature of Violation	Number of Victims	Location
Assaults and torture including dog bites	280	Harare, Zvishavane, Masvingo, Bulawayo, Wedza, Chinhoyi, Zaka, Gweru, Chitungwiza, Bindura, Nembudziya, Chiredzi, Marondera, Mutoko, Chivi, Bikita, Zvishavane, Mvurwi, Mutare, Marondera, Beitbridge, Domboshava, Wengezi, Binga, Mt Darwin
Attack on journalists	20	Mutare, Gweru, Chinhoyi, Harare, Chiredzi, Masvingo, Beitbridge, Bulawayo
Unlawful arrests and detention	538	Masvingo, Gokwe, Gweru, Bulawayo, Chinhoyi, Hwange, Harare, Magunje, Lupane, Norton, Bikita, Mutasa, Chitungwiza, Nkayi, Makoni, Chipinge, Beitbridge, Lupane, Tsholotsho, Mwenezi, Guruve, Hwange, Murwi, Kwekwe, Chinhoyi, Chiredzi

Nature of Violation	Number of Victims	Location
Abductions	12	Chitungwiza, Bulawayo, Harare, Gweru, Hopley
Gunshots	2	Chitungwiza, Hwange
Extra-judicial Killings	4	Hurungwe, Bulawayo
Raids	8	Chitungwiza, Bulawayo, Harare, Mkoba Gweru
Displacement	57	Banket, Harare
Harassment, threat, intimidation	2	Harare

4.1. EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

The Forum documented four cases of extrajudicial killings during the 180 days of the COVID-19 lockdown. On 24 May, It was reported that police officers shot and killed Paul Munakopa (34) following a high-speed vehicle chase. Munakopa, who was in the company of his girlfriend, Tracy Mufudzi died a few minutes after he was admitted at the United Bulawayo Hospitals (UBH). The pair, according to reports, had been parked at a spot in a city suburb when police and members of the neighbourhood watch committee driving an unmarked Toyota Prado, confronted it. The family of the late Munakopa has since demanded that an inquest into the cause of his death be conducted.

On 27 August, the MDC Alliance reported the extrajudicial killing of the party’s Karoi District Coordinating Chairperson, Councillor Lovender Chiwaya (34) of Ward 4 Hurungwe Central. Reports are that Chiwaya’s body was

found dumped on his doorstep with signs of torture and aggravated assault. The MDC Alliance reported that Chiwaya was being threatened with death by State agents regarding his involvement in the planned 31 July anti-corruption protests prior to his death.

On 24 July, MDC Alliance member Mazwi Ndlovu was assaulted by ZANU-PF supporters in Bulilima Ward 2 in Matabeleland South. It was alleged that ZANU-PF members assaulted him for querying a partisan maize distribution list. He was taken to Plumtree Hospital where he was further referred to the United Bulawayo Hospital. He passed away on admission in Bulawayo on 25 July.

On 30 March, police officers in Bulawayo assaulted Levison Ncube who died on 7 April 2020 from the injuries sustained during the assault. Police officers allegedly used excessive force in apprehending the victim who had

been found strolling outside eMabuthweni suburb in Bulawayo in defiance of the national COVID-19 lockdown. The victim lost consciousness as a result of the assault. He was initially taken to the United Bulawayo Hospital where he regained consciousness and was discharged. Ncube is alleged to have subsequently suffered paralysis on his left side a day after being discharged and eventually passed away on 7 April as a result of the injuries sustained during the assault.

4.2. GUNSHOTS

On 5 July, police officers in Chitungwiza allegedly shot Tinashe Zharare on his right leg at Jambanja vendors market at Unit L in Chitungwiza. It was reported that Zharare was selling groceries from his vehicle when police officers from Chitungwiza Police Station began their usual raid on the area. Zharare quickly got into his vehicle and closed the door intending to drive off the scene. A police officer then allegedly fired directly at the vehicle. The bullet not only damaged the drivers' door but it went through the vehicle resulting in Zharare sustaining serious injuries on his right leg and was left needing reconstructive surgery on the said right leg. The police officers immediately rushed the injured Zharare to Chitungwiza Hospital and dropped him off before vanishing without leaving any documentation.

Similarly, on 22 August, two women Zulani Mudenda and Twabona Nyathi were shot and badly injured in Hwange by stray bullets fired by officers of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) who were scaring away informal coke traders. It was reported that police officers enforcing the COVID-19 regulations had running battles with vendors who refused to stop selling their products. During the commotion, one police officer discharged his rifle and indiscriminately shot at the crowd of vendors hitting Zulani Mudenda (46) whose abdomen was ripped open and is admitted to Mater Dei Hospital in Bulawayo, and Twabona Nyoni (25) who was injured on the left breast and was admitted to St Patrick's Hospital in Hwange.

4.3. ASSAULTS

The Forum documented 280 cases of assault of civilians primarily by police officers, soldiers and suspected Central Intelligence Officers (CIO). Even after a judgment was pronounced by



the High Court of Zimbabwe, prohibiting the police from using unwarranted and disproportionate force against citizens in the enforcement of the national lockdown in the case of *Lucia Masvondo & Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights v Minister of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage & Others HC 2170/20*, cases of excessive use of force and assault in effecting the lockdown persisted. The cases were recorded mainly in high-density suburbs across Zimbabwe including in Harare, Karoi, Mutare, Bulawayo and Masvingo. In the majority of reported incidents, civilians were assaulted with blunt objects, sjamboks and baton sticks for allegedly violating the lockdown regulations.

One particularly brutal case occurred in Bulawayo. On 16 April 2020, two sisters from Bulawayo Nokuthula Mpofo and Ntombizodwa Mpofo were brutally assaulted for hours with batons on their backs, hips and legs by police officers who accused them of violating the ongoing national lockdown. It was alleged that the 2 sisters were leaving Pick n Pay supermarket in Cowdray Park in April when a police officer lashed out with a baton stick, damaging Ntombizodwa's phone. When she pointed out the damage to her phone, the two women were handcuffed to their backs and repeatedly assaulted with baton sticks. The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) intervened and assisted the two women in filing a formal police complaint. Six (6) police officers were arrested in connection with the case. The trial of the police officers is proceeding in the Magistrates Courts in Bulawayo.

4.4. ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS

The government through Statutory Instrument 93 of 2020 gazetted on 19 April categorized the media as an essential service, among other critical sectors. This came after the realisation of the importance of the role of the media in advancing the exercise and enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. Regrettably, events during the 180 days of the lockdown have severely tested the country's adherence and respect for the right to media freedom as provided for under section 61 of the Constitution which also promotes freedom of expression.

State security agents relentlessly attacked journalists in their line of duty. The Forum documented 20 cases of attacks on journalists in Mutare, Gweru, Chinhoyi, Harare, Chiredzi, Masvingo and Beitbridge.



Journalists discharging their duties were subjected to assaults, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention and harassment. In the documented cases, journalists explicitly produced their press cards, yet they were subjected to harassment and/or assault. A member of the Forum, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) had to approach the High Court for relief. On 20 April 2020, Harare High Court judge Justice Jacob Manzungu ordered the police and other law enforcement agencies charged with enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown not to arrest, detain or interfere with the work of journalists. Justice Manzungu also ordered police to recognize 2019 press cards and not to interfere with the work of journalists on the basis that their press cards were issued in 2019. The Commissioner-General Godwin Matanga was also ordered to ensure that a statement by the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) regarding the validity of the 2019 press cards was communicated to all police stations in Zimbabwe.

Nonetheless, the rights of the media continued to face attacks. On 22 May 2020, journalists Frank Chikowore and Samuel Takawira were arrested by police officers in Waterfalls. The arrests followed the abduction and torture of Honourable Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimbiri and Netsai Marova from police custody which was highly publicised in Zimbabwe. The two journalists went to Parktown Hospital where the women were receiving treatment after their abduction. The journalists were detained at Waterfalls Police Station and charged with violating the lockdown regulations. They appeared at Mbare Magistrate Court where they were initially denied bail only to be granted bail by the High Court after spending 4 days at Harare

Remand Prison. They were acquitted on 9 September 2020 of the charges.

Another prominent case of attacks on the media involved journalist Hopewell Chin'ono. On 20 July 2020, he was arrested on charges of incitement to participate in a gathering with intent to promote public violence as defined in section 187(1) (a) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] as read with section 37(1) (a) of the same Code, due to a series of tweets he made, regarding corruption. Hopewell Chin'ono's arrest appears to be a reprisal against his exposure of alleged government corruption involving COVID-19 response supplies.

The arrest of Mr Chin'ono is troubling for many reasons. Firstly, the grounds upon which he was charged are a violation of free speech and journalistic freedoms. Everyone has a right to free speech, including speaking out against corruption. Secondly, the arrest and detention was preceded by warnings from acting ZANU-PF Spokesperson, Mr Patrick Chinamasa that the allegations of corruption were an attack on the first family. Chin'ono also alleged receiving threats from State-security agents and ZANU-PF members.

On the day of his arrest, eight State security agents raided Chin'ono's home and refused to identify themselves. The State security agents also arrested Chin'ono without presenting a warrant of arrest as required by the law. Lastly, Mr Chin'ono spent more than 40 days in pretrial detention before his third bail application was granted by the High Court on 3 September.

4.5. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTION

The Forum documented 538 cases of arbitrary arrests and detention of citizens nationally. Among the arrested were human rights defenders, labour leaders, opposition activists, vendors, commuter omnibus drivers and members of the general public going about their business. The majority of the arrested persons were accused of violating different terms of the lockdown particularly defying physical distancing, “suspicious” exemption letters and not wearing face masks.

The majority of the arrests were conducted during the first phase of the lockdown. The violations mainly related to citizens allegedly defying lockdown regulations in pursuit of basic commodities such as food and water. In later phases of the lockdown, arrested persons were mainly alleged to be using fake exemption letters. Some arrests were followed by the refusal of bail applications and lengthy pretrial detention whilst other arrests were followed by bail with onerous reporting conditions.



Figure 2. Police Officers arrest MDC Alliance supporters at the Harare Magistrate's court

4.6. ABDUCTIONS

The Forum noted a disturbing pattern of abductions and torture of dissenting voices during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Within the 180 days of COVID-19, the Forum documented 12 abductions. Section 49 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe grants every person the right to personal liberty, which includes the right not to be detained without trial and not to be deprived of their liberty arbitrarily or without just cause. Section 52 protects the right to personal security, by providing that every person has the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right to freedom from all forms of violence from public or private sources. Section 53 enshrines freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In spite of the existence of the constitutional guarantees, the State continues to be implicated in cases of abductions followed by torture or severe assaults.

From the patterns that have emerged in cases of abductions, victims of such abductions included political and non-political activists, calling for the respect of human rights and the law, implying that the State is using abductions and torture as another weapon to silence dissent or attack human rights defenders.

The State authorities have failed to investigate the allegations of abductions and bring perpetrators to book. Instead, the victims of such acts are arrested and criminalised. Prominent examples include the following:

- MDC Alliance Harare West Member of Parliament Joana Mamombe and MDC Alliance Youth Assembly leaders Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova were abducted and tortured on 13 May 2020. The trio now face charges of publishing falsehood prejudicial to the State through allegedly faking their abduction. They were denied bail by the Magistrate Court on 15 June before eventually being released by the High Court on appeal. Their case is still ongoing.
- On 30 July, unknown assailants abducted Tawanda Muchehiwa, the nephew to ZimLive editor Mduzuzi Mathuthu in Bulawayo. Tawanda Muchehiwa was dumped about 5 km from his place of residence on 1 August around 2200hrs following a High Court ruling earlier in the day by Justice Martin Makonese directing the police to produce him before a Bulawayo magistrate within 72 hours of the order. Muchehiwa sustained serious injuries. Reports indicate that doctors are worried that he was poisoned as he is exhibiting symptoms of acute renal failure.

4.7. ARREST, INTIMIDATION AND REPRISALS AGAINST LAWYERS

The national lockdown has also brought with it the arrest, intimidation and reprisals against lawyers. International law on the role of lawyers guarantees the functioning of lawyers by requiring that governments must ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; ensure that lawyers shall not suffer or be threatened with prosecution or

administrative-economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards and ethics; and recognise and respect that all communications and consultations between lawyers and their clients within the professional relationship are confidential.



Figure 3. Lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa is barred from entering the Magistrate Court in Harare to represent her Client Hopewell Chin'ono

International law further requires that lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions and that lawyers shall enjoy civil and penal immunity for relevant statements made in good faith in written or oral pleadings or in their professional appearances before a court, tribunal or other legal or administrative authority.

CASE EXAMPLES

From 1 June to 10 June, police officers arrested lawyers Thabani Mpfu, Sylvester Hashiti, Tapiwa Makanza, Joshua Chirambwe and Dimusani Dube. Choice Damiso and Lawman Chimuriswo were questioned by police but not charged. The matter involving the arrested lawyers and the subsequent questioning of Choice Damiso appears to be a reprisal against the

lawyers in connection with a constitutional challenge to the appointment of the Prosecutor General, Kumbirai Hodzi. In the challenge, the applicant represented by Thabani Mpfu sought the court to nullify the appointment of Kumbirai Hodzi as Prosecutor General for the reason that President Emmerson Mnangagwa failed to adhere to constitutional provisions and rejected consideration of qualified candidates without cause. It was argued in the case that the President had appointed a person who disqualified himself during the public interviews by announcing that he was not prepared to be independent but would take instructions from the executive. The office of the Prosecutor General is now reportedly behind the arrests and questioning of these lawyers.

On 18 August 2020, human rights defender lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa was barred from representing detained investigative journalist Hopewell Chin'ono at the Harare Magistrate Court. In an unprecedented move, Magistrate Ngoni Nduna ordered that Beatrice Mtetwa be charged with contempt of court in relation to comments about the case that were posted on a Facebook page. State prosecutors argued that the alleged comments scandalised the State. Although The Facebook page is run by an independent filmmaker who produced a documentary about the human rights lawyer's work, and who has stated in several posts that Beatrice Mtetwa does not operate the page nor has she ever posted on the page, the Magistrate still declared that he would refer his ruling to the Law Society of Zimbabwe for possible further sanctions to be made against Ms Mtetwa.

4.8. RAIDS

During the days leading to 31 July, anti-riot police officers accompanied by soldiers and other unidentified State security agents raided houses of opposition party supporters, journalists, labour leaders and pro-democracy activists. In most cases, police officers did not have search warrants or warrants of arrests. In the process, property such as windows and doors were destroyed. In total, eight (8) cases of raids were reported nationally.





05 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Confronted with an already ailing economy, the pandemic further exacerbated the plight of citizens in relation to social and economic rights. Access to water, food and to health became a major challenge for communities.

5.1. FOOD INSECURITY

During the lockdown, citizens could not access basic commodities due to the erratic supplies of commodities such as maize, cooking oil and bread. Apart from the deficiencies in the availability of basic commodities, most families could not afford to buy food given that the prices of basic commodities increased substantially. Most shops were exclusively charging in United States Dollars. The government introduced subsidised mealie meal and ZWL180 COVID-19 relief fund per every vulnerable household. By the time some of the citizens received the funds, they could barely pay for 10kg of mealie meal. Beneficiaries of the COVID-19 relief fund consisted of child-headed families, the elderly and informal traders as identified by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. However, the actual number of people who benefited from the program were not published. It is thus unclear whether all



Figure 4. Citizens receive subsidised mealie meal from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare

intended beneficiaries in fact received the support. The Grain Millers Association of Zimbabwe (GMAZ) also advised that it would be delivering mealie meal to shops in neighbourhoods nationally. To this effect, GMAZ released a mealie-meal distribution schedule which detailed when community members would expect mealie meal in their various neighbourhoods.

People with disabilities (PWD) faced critical challenges in accessing basic commodities during the lockdown. PWD in the form of hard of hearing and the visually impaired had challenges in accessing information relating to the availability of basic commodities and measures implemented by the government to curb the pandemic. Due to the long queues and price increases, PWD also found it difficult to queue for basic commodities in the wake of social distancing as some of them are not mobile without assistance.

Apart from these circumstances, the Forum Secretariat and Members documented cases of partisan distribution of food aid. In reported incidents, ZANU PF supporters were alleged to hijack food aid distribution processes by changing the distribution lists to only benefit ZANU PF members. The Forum submitted eight cases of partisan distribution of food aid involving sixty-seven victims to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) on 21 May 2020. The Commission acknowledged receipt of the cases and made an undertaking to investigate the cases.

5.2. RIGHT TO TRADE AND OCCUPATION

According to the 2019 Labour Force Survey released by ZimStats in March 2020, 74% of the Zimbabwean workforce is in the informal sector. However, the figure could be higher. It is estimated that close to 90% of Zimbabweans depend on informal trade to either supplement low income from formal employment or to survive. COVID-19 restrictions during the national lockdown banned informal trading for the greater part. Therefore for most of the 180 days covered in

this report, most citizens have not been earning any.

During the relaxed Level 2 lockdown, informal traders are required to register with local authorities for them to be allocated trading spaces. The registration and allocation process, however, requires financial obligations on the part of informal traders. Bearing in mind that informal traders have not been productive for the greater part of the lockdown, this regulation severely affects the capacity of informal traders to resume operations.

Further, local authorities nationally demolished vending stalls, temporary structures and informal traders workshops, removing the capability of traders to continue with their informal business. The demolishing of vending stalls and other temporary structures disrupted livelihoods of the majority of Zimbabweans. During the demolitions, goods and products belonging to informal traders were destroyed and confiscated by local authorities. In April at Sakubva farmers market, police officers raided and destroyed vegetables, fruits and other agricultural products during a raid of the farmer's market. The destruction and confiscation of vendors and informal trader's goods further impoverished the vulnerable group. A number of court challenges were brought by local residents associations to this effect.

The national lockdown also brought about an increase in the unemployment rate as the lockdown induced job losses for commuter omnibus operators, informal traders and other businesses were closed. Private commuter omnibus operators nationally were barred from ferrying people unless they registered

with the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO). However, private commuter omnibus operators bemoaned the regulations as they viewed them as trade barriers aimed at monopolising the transport industry. The national lockdown also had an impact on women who constitute the majority of informal vendors selling second-hand clothes, vegetables and cross border traders of various wares.

As a result of the impact of COVID-19 on business, the government through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development announced a ZWL17 million COVID-19 youth relief fund and a ZWL18 billion COVID-19 economic recovery and stimulus package to provide liquidity support to agriculture, mining, tourism, small and medium enterprises. For transparency, the government is yet to publish the distribution of these funds. However, since the announcement in April, companies and businesses are yet to benefit from the COVID-19 economic recovery and stimulus package.

5.3. SAFE, CLEAN AND ADEQUATE WATER

Inadequate water supplies by local municipalities forced residents to spend long hours in queues at boreholes, in contravention of lockdown and social distancing regulations. The Forum received reports that women and children bore the brunt of water-related challenges as they constitute the majority of citizens who have to fetch water for family use. Six residents associations from Harare, Mutare, Masvingo, Gweru, Chitungwiza and Hwange filed lawsuits to force their central and local governments to ensure safe, portable, and

uninterrupted supply of water during the lockdown indicating the severity of the lack of water in these areas.



Figure 5. Women fetch water from a well amidst continuous water rationing in Bulawayo

Despite success in most of these lawsuits, the provision of water did not improve. Private players and some local authorities resorted to providing water bowsers to assist communities in accessing water. However, cases of harassment, verbal and sexual abuse of women were rampant at the water collection points.

In Bulawayo, there was an outbreak of diarrhoea, dysentery and typhoid linked to water shortages facing the city. Citizens in Bulawayo resorted to open wells dug out in wetlands as a source of water. Potable water remained a challenge in areas such as Tafara where citizens have gone for over a decade without receiving tap water. Community members with private boreholes charged exorbitant prices for water. In August, a 20-litre bucket of water in Chitungwiza was being sold for ZWL20, these prices have since increased due to the depreciating local currency.

06 CAPACITATION OF THE HEALTH SECTOR

Historically, public health care facilities to which most are depended on in Zimbabwe have deteriorated due to lack of adequate funding by the government. At the onset of the pandemic, the inadequacies came to the fore, with many facilities in the country reporting that they were ill-prepared to deal with cases of COVID-19 due to lack of ventilators, personal protective equipment for frontline health workers, water, electricity and other crucial medical resources to adequately respond to the pandemic. The Constitution provides under section 76 that every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has the right to have access to basic health-care services, including reproductive health care services; every person living with a chronic illness has the right to have access to basic healthcare services for the illness; and that no person may be refused emergency medical treatment in any health care institution.

As a result of the inherent incapacitation of the health sector, the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) filed a court application to compel the government to take effective and proper actions to handle COVID-19 at public hospitals. The High Court granted the order. In Harare, the Wilkins Hospital was prepared as an isolation and treatment centre. But the first reported case of COVID-19 death, the case of the late Zororo Makamba, exposed huge discrepancies between government announcements and the realities at the hospital. Reports of these discrepancies were also received from other



Figure 6. Health Professionals demonstrating against lack of adequate protective equipment

major hospitals in Bulawayo, Mutare and Mount Darwin. There were also allegations that private hospitals had been set up to exclusively service the elite.² In addition to these problems, in June nurses nationally went on a strike to protest low salaries and the unavailability of protective equipment and sundries.

Of concern are the inconsistencies in the statistics published by the Ministry of Health and Child Care concerning infections. On 19 August, for example, the Ministry reported that Masvingo Province had 23 new cases but went to indicate that the province only had 15 active cases and 1 death and no recoveries. It is difficult to understand how a province with 23 new cases can have 15 active cases. The pandemic also exacerbated challenges to women's rights in accessing sexual and reproductive health care. For children and pregnant women, municipal wellness clinics were reportedly closed as health care workers

were reportedly taking in very serious cases or reported that they did not have the required personal protective equipment to be able to attend to those in need of care. Those with chronic illnesses were also unable to access medication due to lockdown induced shortages and closures of medical facilities.

Due to the incapacitation of the health sector, 18 health workers in the same ward at the United Bulawayo Hospitals tested positive for COVID-19 after a patient admitted at the hospital tested positive. Affected staff members were placed in self-isolation at home after a man admitted to the hospital tested positive for COVID-19. The exact number of health workers who came into contact with him was not immediately available, but results of 18 of them came positive. At Mpilo hospital, 14 nurses at Mpilo Central Hospital who were part of 197 isolating at home tested positive for COVID-19 after coming into contact with patients who were infected with COVID-19.

The spread of COVID-19 in public hospitals is a confirmation of the lack of adequate equipment and protective clothing for frontline health workers.

2. Zimbabwe: Tagwirei Grabs Kereke Upmarket Clinic to Set Up Coronavirus Hospital for the Elite (26 March 2020) available on this link <https://allafrica.com/stories/202003260210.html>



07 CIVIL UNREST

As the nation felt the pinch of the national lockdown, protests against the weakening economy started to sprout. The first of the protests was allegedly led by MDC Alliance Harare West Member of Parliament Joana Mamombe on 13 May 2020 in Warren Park, Harare. The flash hunger protest was aimed at addressing the plight of citizens amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Police officers responded by initially arresting Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimбири and Netsai Marova for defying the lockdown by arranging a protest. However, their lawyers could not find them in any of the police stations in Harare. The trio confirmed that they were abducted when they were later discovered on 14 May in Bindura. The trio was severely assaulted and tortured by suspected State security agents before they were dumped. Following this, the trio was again arrested and arraigned to the courts on fresh charges of communicating and publishing false statements against the state following a press conference by the Minister of Justice Mr Ziyambi Ziyambi in which he purported that the trio made up the story to divert attention from the fact that they broke lockdown rules by attending a protest. As a result of the protest, other MDC Alliance activists were also arrested and persecuted by State security agents. The MDC Alliance youth leader Obey Sithole was arrested and detained for one night on 26 May in connection with the protest. Similarly, on 29



Figure 7. Police arrest protestors in Harare CBD

June, Makomborero Haruzivishe was arrested at Mbare Magistrates Court over the Warren Park flash demonstration and taken to Harare Central Police Station where he was detained for 5 hours before being released without charge.

The increasing number of cases of arbitrary arrest for protesting is a cause for concern amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Citizens have a right to demonstrate and petition

guaranteed under section 59 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. In light of the constitutionally guaranteed right to demonstrate and petition, citizens should only be required to satisfy the COVID-19 regulations of physical distancing and wearing of face masks. However, the Forum also noted a trend by law enforcement to use disproportionate force to disperse protesters and the interpretation of COVID-19 regulations to violate the right to demonstrate and petition.

CASE EXAMPLES

On 18 June Zimbabwe nurses staged protests in Harare amid reports that the government had cut their June salaries without consulting them. The nurses also demanded improved working conditions, in particular, the provision of personal protective equipment. On 20 June in Mutare, at least 35 nurses protesting against the lack of personal protective clothing were arrested for staging a demonstration which violated the COVID-19 regulations. On 6 July, police officers in Harare also arrested 12 nurses and charged them with contravening section 8(3)(a) of Statutory Instrument 136 of 2020-The Public Health (COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown) (Amendment) Order, 2020 (No. 10).

On 19 June police officers arrested Namatai Kwekweza and Vongai Zimudzi outside the New Government Complex in Harare for allegedly participating in a gathering with intent to cause public violence, breach of peace, bigotry as provided under Section 37 of Criminal

Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]. The duo sat with placards outside the complex urging the government to consult three million people who voted in favour of the Constitution to gather their input on the proposed amendments to the Constitution. The duo was released on ZW\$3 000 bail.

On 31 July, police officers arrested eighteen people including award-winning novel writer Tsitsi Dangarembga, Advocate Fadzai Mahere who is the spokesperson for the MDC Alliance, Simon and Jessica Drury, Tinashe Murapatsa, Nyasha Musendu, Josee Lots and Tinotenda Muswe for staging peaceful protests. Arrests were also rampant in Bulawayo, Chegutu and Chakari. Police officers cited COVID-19 lockdown regulations to arrest peaceful protestors who were exercising the recommended physical distancing among other regulations.

The protests were aimed at addressing the plight of citizens amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.



08 MANDATORY QUARANTINE

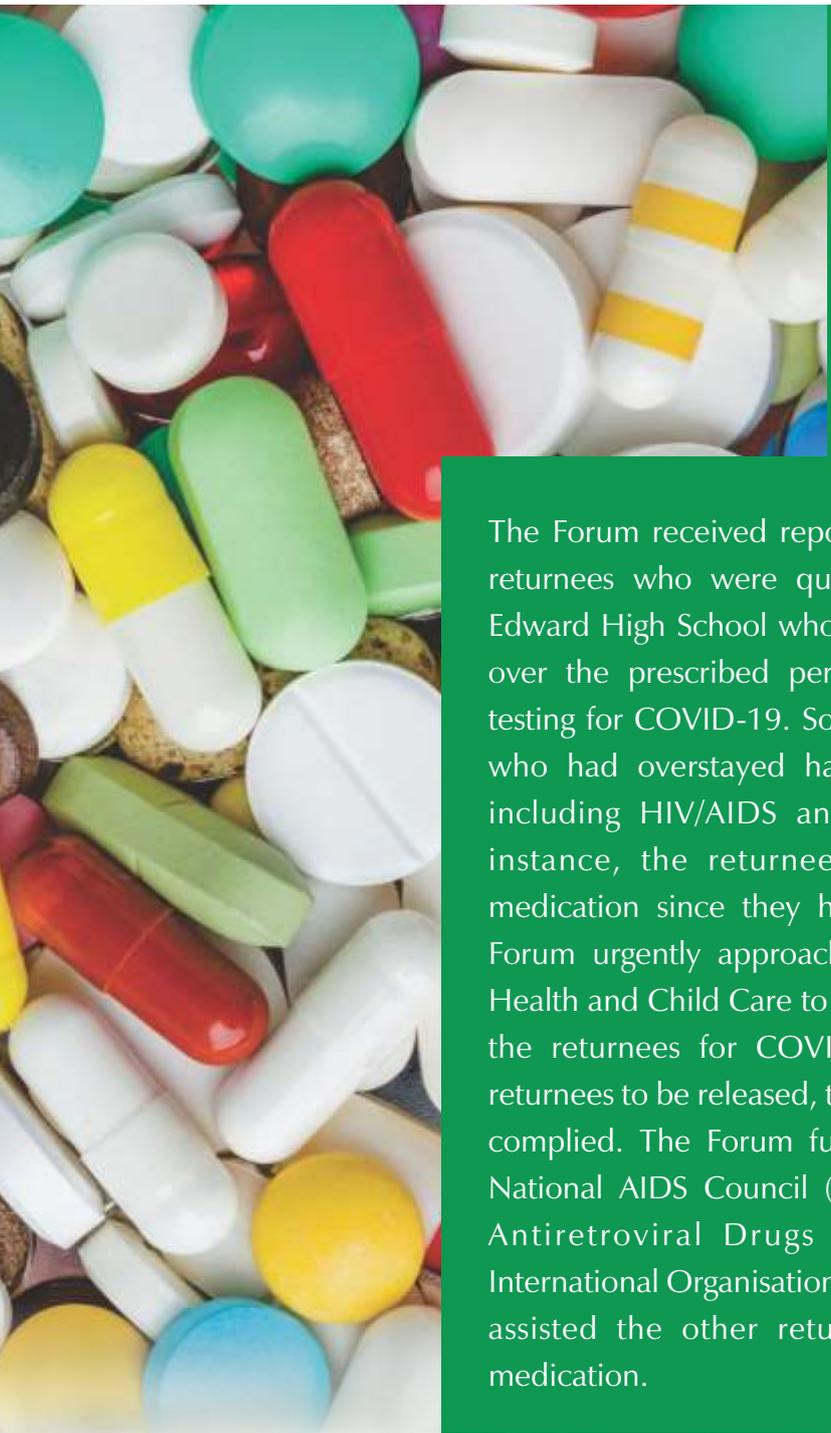
The government ordered mandatory quarantine of all residents returning to Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 lockdown. Addressing the media at State House on 1 May President Mnangagwa advised that all returning residents and international travellers to the country will be put on a 21-day mandatory quarantine with full testing on day one, day eight and day twenty-one. Shortly after the announcement, quarantine centres were set up in every province mainly at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in the various provinces. Over 4000 returnees have gone through quarantine centres in Zimbabwe over the past 150 days. Zimbabwe has a total of 64 isolation centres.

Reports received by the Forum point to poor living conditions in most quarantine centres leading to returnees sharing ablution facilities. The conditions in the quarantine facilities were a major risk factor in the spread of COVID-19 among the returnees.

As a result of the poor living conditions, protests broke out at Belvedere Teachers College Quarantine Centre on 21 April. Police officers were called in to quell the protest after returnees demanded better living facilities, particularly blankets and food. The returnees also bemoaned the self-funding of COVID-19 test kits at the rate of USD65. On 8 June similar protests broke out at the Harare Polytechnic College Quarantine Centre when authorities failed to release returnees who had exceeded

the World Health Organisation-stipulated 21-day holding period and their test results were taking too long to come. The returnees also indicated that some of them had never been tested for COVID-19 since they had been seconded to the quarantine centre.

Returnees also reported harrowing and abusive experiences suffered at the hands of security officers manning the centres. In Masvingo on 30 May, a female returnee was allegedly assaulted by a police officer manning the Masvingo Polytechnic Quarantine Centre after returnees had requested to speak to the Ministry of Health and Child Care representatives in relation to torrid living conditions.



The Forum received reports from a group of returnees who were quarantined at Prince Edward High School who had been detained over the prescribed period without getting testing for COVID-19. Some of the returnees who had overstayed had chronic illnesses including HIV/AIDS and epilepsy. In this instance, the returnees had run out of medication since they had overstayed. The Forum urgently approached the Ministry of Health and Child Care to compel them to test the returnees for COVID-19 to allow the returnees to be released, to which the Ministry complied. The Forum further contacted the National AIDS Council (NAC) to assist with Antiretroviral Drugs (ARV) whilst the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) assisted the other returnees to get their medication.





09 CORRUPTION

While the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a humanitarian crisis of gigantic proportions, there is a serious concern in that Zimbabwe's senior government officials and their associates have taken advantage of the pandemic to loot public funds.

During the first 180 days of the national lockdown, a USD2 million payment by the government to a two-week-old Hungarian branch of Swiss-registered Drax International in March 2020 attracted the interest of Interpol and Hungarian officials, who commenced money laundering investigations. Drax International – whose Zimbabwean frontman, Delish Nguwaya, is a convicted criminal and an alleged associate of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's son Collins – is at the centre of a COVID-19 procurement scandal.

Nguwaya who was arrested following unrelenting public pressure has been pictured with Mnangagwa, his sons, Collins and Sean, as well as first lady Auxilia Mnangagwa. He is also known to have attended functions at the State House despite failing a security clearance conducted by the Central Intelligence Organisation. ZANU-PF came to the defence of the first family on allegations of corruption which the Acting Spokesman Patrick Chinamasa described as a baseless attack on the first family.

Drax was supplying medical supplies at grossly inflated figures, as revealed by official invoices. For example, the company was providing N95 face masks at \$28, yet the average cost of the product is \$4 in local pharmacies.

A letter dated 8 May 2020 from Finance Permanent Secretary George Guvamatanga to former Health Secretary Agnes Mahomva authorising procurement, revealed the purchasing figure.



Former Minister of Health and Child Care Dr Obadiah Moyo was arrested on account of the scandal, but the State did not oppose bail when he appeared in court, accompanied by his aides. Unlike most other political detainees, Moyo enjoyed a rare privilege and was allowed to sleep at home. Moyo was arrested on allegations of illegally awarding a multi-million-dollar contract for COVID-19 testing kits, drugs and personal protective equipment to a shadowy company. The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) arrested Moyo for his dealings with Drax International LLC and Drax Consult SAGL on 26 June 2020. President Mnangagwa only relieved Moyo of his duties as Minister a fortnight later amid leaked reports that Moyo might have received a golden handshake as he left cabinet.

Ironically, journalist and whistleblower, Hopewell Chin'ono, who exposed this matter spent over 40 days in prison facing several denials of his bail applications, both at the Magistrates Court and at the High Court.



***There is a serious concern in
that Zimbabwe's senior government
officials and their associates have
taken advantage of the pandemic
to loot public funds.***



10 HEAR THEM SPEAK

180 STORIES

OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

UNDER THE COVID-19

LOCKDOWN

In what follows, we profile 180 stories of human rights violations during the 180 days of lockdown. Most of these accounts were documented by the Forum Secretariat through direct engagement with the victims.

LEFT IN THE OPEN

In Mutare, 15 families were left homeless and with nowhere to go after they were evicted from Mutare City Council Compound. The families were evicted despite a government directive ordering citizens to stay at home during the 21-day COVID-19 national lockdown. The evicted tenants included retired council workers and widows.

The evictions by municipal police officers took place on 4 April 2020. Some of the families had no relatives residing in Mutare and had to sleep in the open in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A tearful widow named Nyarai Masunda relayed that she had not forgotten the ordeal, explaining that her property was dumped in the open by municipal police officers.

“My property was dumped outside and I have nowhere to go. I am sleeping out in the open and my husband, who worked for Mutare City Council, died a few years ago,” she said.

A 67-year-old former Mutare City Council worker named Thomas Zuze narrated a similar experience.

Member of Parliament for the area, Honorable Regai Tsunga stated that the evicted workers had the right to a clean environment, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I lament that prior measures were not taken to ensure the protection of the constitutional rights of victims, including the right to shelter, the right to health, the right to potable water, the right to a clean environment, among other rights in the wake of COVID-19,” said Honorable Tsunga.

THE DARKEST MOMENT FOR JOURNALISM

During the COVID-19 national lockdown, several journalists across the country were arrested by state security details on various charges. The arrests took place during various press and media coverage exercises and were described by some journalists as the “darkest moment” in their profession.

A student journalist named Tatenda Julius of Pungwe News (New Ziana) in Mutare, unfortunately, fell victim to harassment and arrest by State security

agents on 30 March 2020. He was arrested at Mupfumi Business Centre while taking pictures. Tatenda was charged with practising journalism without a valid Press card. Tatenda subsequently detailed the experience in the following terms;

“I was taking pictures since it was the first day of the lockdown. I was tasked with giving updates of the first day of the lockdown by my bosses. Police details pounced on me, accusing me of taking pictures. I told them that I was a student journalist and I phoned my boss, Simbarashe Muparaganda, who notified them that I was a student journalist who was working for them, I had to spend the entire night in prison and pay a fine before I was released. My bosses had to intervene as the police wanted to take me to court.”

POLICE UNLEASH DOGS ON CIVILIANS IN SAKUBVA

In a move that sparked widespread condemnation from human rights defenders; police in Mutare saw fit to unleash dogs on people milling around the usually densely populated Sakubva market and bus terminus. The incident flew in the face of the government’s directive to stay at home during the imposed 21-day national lockdown.

Vendors and informal traders who had defied the government’s directive were the most affected, as they continued conducting business despite the directive not to.

The incident occurred on 2 April 2020, in the suburb of Sakubva, and a victim of the incident named Tinashe Saurombe had his to say following the ordeal:

“It was around 6 a.m. at Sakubva’s produce market when I saw some trucks with police officers with dogs as I was selling my tomatoes. Some of the police officers set dogs on us whilst accusing us of failing to stay at home. Some of us are still nursing injuries from being mauled by the dogs.”

United Mutare Resident Ratepayers Trust (UMRRT) as represented by Edson Dube said the UMRRT had taken the matter to the relevant authorities, further stating that it had received numerous reports of the incident.

Police in Mutare have subsequently been accused of using brute force against civilians during the national lockdown period to enforce compliance with the regulations thereof.



POLICE BURN VENDORS' PRODUCE

Right on the heels of the incident of police dogs being set on civilians by the police, Sakubva's vegetable vendors were left counting their losses on 3 April when; members of Mutare's ZRP's Support Unit branch confiscated and burnt their vegetables. The actions of the police were allegedly spurred by the vendors' disregard for the 21-day national lockdown regulations.

Working on a tip-off, police ambushed the vendors who had already set up their wares by 4 a.m. The law enforcement officers destroyed produce including cabbages, tomatoes and fruits amongst others.

The National Vendors Union of Zimbabwe condemned the move by the police.

One of the vendors, Marian Manhanga (29) who was affected narrated her ordeal: "Police arrived early in the morning as we sought to dispose of our remaining stock, We could not defend ourselves as they confiscated our wares and burnt them."

Ivan Mabika, another vegetable vendor, said that it was painful to see their vegetables in flames.

He stated:

"We are struggling and we live from hand to mouth. It was painful to watch the police burn our wares. They suddenly appeared in the morning and some of us ran for dear life as we feared the worst."

VILLAGERS ARRESTED FOR HOSTING A MEETING DURING THE NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

Amalgamated Chiadzwa Community Development Trust (ACCDT) members were arrested by the police for allegedly holding a meeting during the COVID-19 national lockdown.

The three members, namely, Jey Kasakara, Amos Muchena and Clive Gore were arrested on 2 April whilst conducting a periodical meeting of their Trust.

Human rights groups in the country have stated that the arrests constitute human rights violations.

The trio was released after admitting guilt for the offence and paying a fine of ZWL500.



One of the arrested members, Jey Kasakara, who is the Chairman of the ACCDT said that they were arrested while conducting their periodical meetings at Rombe Primary School in Chiadzwa. He stated that the persons in attendance practised the World Health Organisations (WHO) precautionary measures.

“We were arrested doing one of our periodical discussions concerning developmental programmes in Chiadzwa. What surprised us was that we were arrested while practising all of the prescribed COVID-19 precautionary measures,” he said,

Muchena expressed that it was unfortunate that the police arrested them: “About eight police officers approached us and arrested us saying that we were not supposed to conduct our meeting, even though we were few and observing the necessary COVID-19 precautionary measures,” he said.

BULAWAYO POULTRY FARMER LEFT COUNTING LOSSES

On 5 July 2020, some poultry farmers in Bulawayo that had travelled to collect day old chicks at Pro-Feeds main branch in the city centre were caught in a running battle between illegal vendors and police officers on horseback.

Mandlenkosi Ndlovu (33) was hard-hit by the incident as the officers took away all his chicks before ordering him to flee the scene. Others who were on their way to board commuter omnibuses also lost their chicks in the same manner.

In narrating the incident, Ndlovu said the police displayed extreme hostility towards him in particular.

He stated:

“The situation was horrible, with many dropping their chicks whilst fleeing. Those who were affected included the elderly and people with disabilities. After they forcibly took my box of 100 chicks, I ran towards a nearby toilet with others and hid inside for some time to avoid more trouble. The toilet was filthy and we felt at risk of catching diseases,” he added.



POLICE BURN DAY OLD CHICKS

Nomore Mahlangu was one of many farmers whose day old chicks were burnt by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) and the Veterinary Services at Beitbridge border post on 14 June, after they deemed the day-old chicks to be contraband smuggled into the country from South Africa in defiance of the COVID-19 regulations.

The number of destroyed chicks were estimated to be approximately 20 000 and belonged to various farmers.

Mahlangu stated:

“The chicks were not smuggled but we differed with the border control officers on issues of some bribes so they said we will fix you all. That was inhumane treatment. The image of chicks being burnt alive, some desperately scurrying for cover was disturbing. Up to this day, those images are still fresh in my mind,” he said.

The chicks were confiscated from the farmers and were taken to ZIMRA premises where officials burnt them alive with guidance from veterinarians.

Mahlangu stated that what upset him most of all was the fact that the matter was never taken to court.

SOLDIERS GANG UP ON STUDENT

A 21-year-old Hotel and Catering student at the Kwekwe Polytechnic College who met a group of soldiers on 4 March in the suburb of Newtown and was assaulted for not carrying an Identity Card has bemoaned the incident.

“I explained to the soldiers that I had left my ID in my room at college as I had escorted a friend but the soldiers could not understand. They treated me like a petty thief and hit me several times with open hands claiming that I had defied lockdown regulations. They also boasted that students are not patriotic and need beatings,” he said.

“It was a very sad experience because in fact, not carrying an ID is not a crime. It is just an abuse of power and authority by these soldiers. I have since developed a hearing impairment due to the assaults. One of my ears can longer function well.” he added.

56-YEAR-OLD ASSAULTED BY YOUTHFUL POLICE OFFICERS

On 28 April, police enforcing lockdown regulations destroyed the grave top flowers of a 59-year-old Gweru man outside Nyaradzo funeral parlour before assaulting him for violating national lockdown regulations.

Namatirai Mabhiza, has been a trader of grave top flowers for the past 13 years and used the entrances of funeral parlours as his hunting ground for clients.

"I explained to the police who were in riot gear that I was only trying to make ends meet by selling the flowers. I asked if I could be allowed to go to the police station and pay a fine but keep the flowers because they were worth close to USD600. But all my pleas fell on deaf ears. The officers chopped all the flowers into pieces while others stepped over them," said Mabhiza.

The incident invited anger from passers-by who pleaded with the police officers, however, the officers retaliated by assaulting Mabhiza. "Given my age, it was a sad chapter in my life because my source of livelihood was decimated unlawfully," said Mabhiza.

KAROI WOMAN SUES GOVERNMENT OVER POLICE BRUTALITY

On 3 April, at around 7 p.m, Lucia Masvondo was preparing supper outside her house in Chikangwe's high-density suburb of Karoi when she was shocked to see a group of uniformed police and army officers charging towards her.

"I was busy preparing supper at the fireplace when I saw four army officers who had a police dog coming into our yard, I never thought preparing sadza outside was a crime under the COVID-19 national lockdown restrictions. I was assaulted and police dogs were set on me," said Masvondo.

She was treated by members of the Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) on 5 April, two days after the incident. She had three stitches on her right thigh and underwent treatment to prevent rabies for two weeks.

"I suffered both physical and mental torture following the attack by uniformed forces that should be protecting us as ordinary citizens," she added.

Masvondo was the first victim to take several government ministers including the Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the

Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Child Care and the Ministry of Local Government as well as the Police Commissioner-General, among others to court over COVID-19 related rights.

She was represented by the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights during her quest for justice.

FORCED TO SWIM IN SEWAGE

The 21-day national lockdown left scars of State-sponsored brutality against unsuspecting victims who have been forced to remain silent.

One of many victims was 20-year old Assan Gusha, a gold-panner from Chikuti, On 3 April, he set out on a journey to Karoi to see his girlfriend, Lucia Masvondo.

“It was around 7 p.m. when I was seated in the room, relaxing and waiting for Lucia to bring in the food that she was preparing outside using firewood,” Gusha said.

“I heard her crying for help after she was bitten by a police dog set on her by the law enforcement agents. Before I could come to terms with reality, there was a bang on the door and all hell broke loose. I was beaten by both army and police personnel. They took turns beating me,” he further added.

“I was dragged from Lucia’s room. I was limping outside from the dog bites but three army officers forced me to roll into raw flowing sewage. They said there was no need for men to have sex during COVID-19, let alone travel from Chikuti. Aside from my injuries, I was forced to roll around in raw sewage several times as they sang the war song; “Amai nababa musandichema kana ndafa nehondo, ndini ndakazvida kufira nyika.”

Bruised, with torn jeans and bleeding thighs, Gusha was forced to walk for 10 kilometres along the Karoi-Chinhoyi highway in an attempt to get back to Chikuti in the middle of the night.

“I managed to get treatment from local traditional leaders for the dog bites” he recalled.





ARMY, POLICE ASSAULT KAROI PREGNANT WOMAN

Twenty-five-year old Privilege Mujanga was seven months pregnant when State-security agents raided her lodgings on the night of 3 April in the Chikangwe suburb of Karoi.

She recalled how she was forced to run despite her heavily pregnant belly by soldiers and members of the police force.

“It was around 7 p.m. when I saw at least six members of the army and eight police officers combing through our lodgings. One of them had a police dog. They started beating Lucia Masvondo with sjamboks, setting dogs on her and accusing her of not staying indoors.

“I froze as I was outside with her. I tried to run but my legs became numb and I could not move. I fell down due to fear and whilst on the ground, army officers shouted that I must move or they will shoot me. I forced myself to crawl to a nearby door but it was tough for me,” she said.

After a few minutes, she regained consciousness and witnessed Gusha being forced to roll around in a pool of sewage.

“My husband was not at home and when I heard Gusha groaning from the pain of the dog bites and saw him being forced to roll around in raw sewage, I could only pray that he would not come back to that.”

BRUTALISED BY THE ARMY FOR SEEING OFF HIS BROTHER

Kempton Guvheya (48) will forever rue the day he attempted to see off his brother who had paid him a visit on 3 April in Chikangwe’s Ward 6.

“It was around 8.30 p.m. that I saw off my brother from Chiedza. He had visited me in connection to an emergency. Just as I told him to travel safely, four-armed Zimbabwe National Army officers who had taken cover under a nearby hedge emerged. Two of them grabbed me and told me to lie down. With a gun pointed at me, I could not resist. They assaulted me on my back and my buttocks. I tried to explain that we were brothers and were within our premises but they would not have any of it,” said Guvheya.

He suffered a fractured hand as he tried to block the button stick. He had bruises on the chest, back and legs.

An X-ray performed by the Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) proved that Kempton suffered fractures and as a result had to wear a plaster on his hand for a few weeks.

Cosmas (42) was assaulted on the back.

“Our right to movement was violated and we were assaulted without any valid reason by members of ZNA and ZRP officers who ambushed us near my brother’s house. The soldiers and police officers who assaulted my brother said I must not tell anyone of what happened to me when I got back in Chiedza.”

HAIRDRESSER ASSAULTED BY ARMY, POLICE

Petros Mukanga (25) is a dreadlocked youth who lives in Chiedza and earns a living through hairdressing. There was no electricity at his place of residence when, on 13 April, he was assaulted by soldiers. He was assaulted whilst on his way to collect his mobile phone that was being charged three houses away from where he lived.

“On 13 April, at around 8.30 p.m., I wanted to collect my phone from a neighbour about three houses from mine. Some army officers ambushed me. I heard low voices telling me to stop moving. All of a sudden, four armed officers emerged from different directions and gave me different commands. One of them ordered me to sit down whilst the other one simultaneously ordered me to walk. The third one called me and in my confused state, I was slapped in the face. A different armed officer later told me to lie facing downwards and they took turns beating me all over my body. Nobody came out of their houses as I cried for help.” he said as he stammered.

After the assault, he was told to go home.

“I was forced to go to my rural area in Chidamoyo as I could not bear to stay in town any longer given the fact that we were being harassed by state security agencies without any justification,” he said.



A NIGHT WALK THAT BECAME COSTLY

When Bekhitemba Ndlovu thought of walking a few meters home in Chiedza around 8 p.m. on 10 April, he did not think it would be costly for him and his family.

A mechanic by profession, Ndlovu said he wanted to relax for a few minutes outside the house. He also wanted to get airtime sold at the house next to his so that he could call some family members.

“The evening stroll became one of the worst days of my life. I was approached by a group of eight armed ZNA officers and six policemen. They asked who had permitted me to move during the night when the country was under national lockdown. I told them that I was looking for airtime but they would not listen. Two army officers took turns to assault me with baton sticks and a sjambok. They assaulted me all over my body. Later on, one of the police officers recognized me after a car flashed its car lights on me whereupon he apologized for the incident. The two soldiers that were with him defied him and told me to lie down with my face to the ground. They took turns beating me all over my body and later told me to go home running. It was painful.”

He phoned his friends who managed to drive him to a private doctor where he was attended to.

“I used over USD80 for medication at a private medical facility surgery.”

YOUTHS FORCED TO SPEND NIGHT IN A TOILET

Two residents of Karoi were forced to sleep in a toilet after a joint operation by the Zimbabwe National Army and Zimbabwe Republic Police on 10 April.

Recalling what they went through, Norman Kofi of Ward 4 in Chikangwe high-density suburb said they were among a few residents who were relaxing at a friend's house that night.

“It was nearly 9 p.m. when a truckload of armed ZNA officers and policemen showed up to the house where we were. They arrived amidst a flurry of activity and many were forced to run in different directions. My friend, Edward Nyamupaguma and I were unlucky as we were caught and forced to roll on the ground where they had poured some water. We rolled in the mud for several minutes from one end to the other. The army officers did not show any mercy

towards us," Kofi narrated.

After what seemed to be an unending punishment, the youths were told to go into a toilet in which they spent the night after the soldiers locked them in from the outside using a nail.

"We had no choice. We had to spend the night in a toilet as it was where they demanded that we sleep. It was possibly the longest night of my life. We could not get out as we were not sure if they were gone. We had no one to ask," Kofi added.

KAROI WOMAN BASHED FOR COOKING OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Good Friday (April 10) started like any normal day for many residents of Chikangwe in Karoi town.

For Shelter Kamhanga (26), she never knew she was courting trouble by cooking outside. There was no electricity and was using firewood to cook.

A mother of three, she was preparing supper around 7 p.m. when officers from ZNA and ZRP pounced on her.

"I was using firewood as there was load-shedding. They asked me why I was using firewood during lockdown; I was speechless as I thought these officers were not new in Zimbabwe and obviously knew that the country was going through load shedding. Just as I was pondering on what to do, one of the army officer's pointed a gun at me and ordered me to put out the fire and go back into the house. I had nothing to give my children to eat that evening and my children are aged between five and thirteen. Electricity was only restored around midnight," Kamhanga said.

BLOODY EASTER FOR KAROI PASTOR

Pastor Joseph Nyamutamba (34) was assaulted by the police on his way to attend to his son who had taken ill. He was robbed of his bible, phone and some money by State-security agents.

Nyamutamba said: "I was waiting for some lifts to go to Chitomborwizi where my son was critically ill. There were many commuters along the Karoi-Harare

highway bus stop when a group of police officers led by Constable Milton Gunduza approached us. Out of fear, we ran in different directions and Constable Gunduza followed me on his bicycle. I fell in a ditch and lost my phone, a bible and USD10 that I intended to use as transport money. The officer had a whip which he used to beat me with as I fled. After a while, the officer returned to where he suspected I had lost my valuables but he failed to recover anything. I failed to attend to my son who was battling for his life and I never recovered any of my lost valuables.”

SOLDIERS RANDOMLY BEAT CHINHOYI RESIDENTS

Several people were left nursing injuries on 17 April after members of the Zimbabwe National Army went on a rampage wherein they arbitrarily beat up people residing in Chinhoyi’s high-density suburbs.

The officers used baton sticks against people, whom they claimed were violating COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

One of the victims from Ruvimbo who identified himself as Nobert said: “I was heading to the city market when I met five soldiers. They started assaulting me all over my body for no apparent reason.”

Another resident, Chido from Chikonohono high-density suburb was also beaten by soldiers.

“The action by the military was uncalled for, instilling fear among citizens was the worst thing we ever thought could happen during the COVID-19 pandemic,” he added.

POLICE OFFICERS LEAVE CHIRUNDU DRIVER FOR DEAD

A Chirundu driver named Andrew Matsika was brutally assaulted by members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police at Chirundu border post in April.

Matsika’s car windscreen was smashed and he was later assaulted all over his body while he was handcuffed. He passed away in police cells as he was not allowed to see his doctors. “The police were cruel to him,” said another resident who asked to remain anonymous for fear of victimization.

Another added: "Police were not friendly to him and they harassed him with impunity claiming that they wanted to teach locals a lesson on how to observe COVID-19 lockdown regulations. Matsika was test driving a car as he was employed as a mechanic, but the police were hostile to him leading to his assault and subsequent death."

BINDURA VENDOR DECRY ARMY CLAMPDOWN

On 28 July in Bindura, police officers raided vendors and confiscated their wares under the guise of enforcing lockdown regulations.

Police officers confiscated the wares at a time when the national lockdown measures had been partially lifted allowing small scale businesses to resume operations.

"We were raided by police officers, the army and Bindura city council officials. Our wares were confiscated and we were beaten up. Up to now, all efforts to recover our wares which are worth thousands of dollars have amounted to nothing despite having been cleared by the courts," said Venah Tinago from Chiwadziro.

She further explained;

"The police, army and city council officials came with their vehicles and ordered everyone to go home. Those who were caught were asked to pay bribes or risk being detained. I don't have the capital to start another business since I lost everything to those heartless police officers. I have nothing left and my situation is worsening every day because I cannot find a job and I have no means with which to support myself."

BINDURA MINER RELIVES HORRENDOUS EXPERIENCE

On 13 August, at Kitsiyatota Village in Bindura, scores of defenceless civilians and illegal miners were ambushed by military officers in an operation to flush out alleged criminals who were defying the national lockdown.

Joshua Moyo, who was in the gold-rich area, said he was caught up in the melee while on his way to monitor building developments at his sister's residential stand.

“The military beat up everyone in sight because it was night-time. I was severely assaulted. The miners were caught off guard and one of them was accused of attacking a soldier in the area. They used sticks and kicked us with booted feet. It was very painful. I tried to escape but I failed since I became unconscious during the relentless attack,” he said of the harrowing ordeal.

JOURNALIST'S HOME RAIDED, SISTER ABDUCTED

Police on 30 July raided the home of journalist Mduzuzi Mathuthu and took into their custody his sister, Nomagugu Mathuthu after they failed to locate him.

Mathuthu, the editor of the online ZimLive publication, was wanted by police over his involvement in the 31 July anti-corruption protests, which the government declared as unlawful in the wake of the national lockdown restrictions.

“They raided my house, found me absent and they gave my sister the ultimatum: “Get Mduzuzi here, or we will take you.” They took her.

“She has no journalistic or political bone on her. Please stop this madness,” Mathuthu tweeted on Thursday evening as he confirmed the arrest of his sister.

On the strength of a search warrant granted by the Magistrates Court, the police sought to locate subversive material allegedly in the possession of the former Chronicle editor.

“He is believed to be communicating with Zimbabweans through his cellular phone(s) and other various means, intending by the communication, to persuade or induce Zimbabweans to engage in public violence. Furthermore, he is believed to be manufacturing, storing and distributing to members of the public, some materials for use during the illegal demonstration on 31 July,” the warrant read.

Mathuthu has been at the forefront of exposing high-level corruption, particularly as it pertains to the grant of COVID-19 tenders.



COUNCILLOR'S WIFE BASHED

Bulawayo Ward 24 Councillor Arnold Batirai's wife was left nursing injuries after an assault by suspected State-security agents, for refusing to disclose the whereabouts of her husband to them.

The incident occurred on the night of 25 July wherein the suspected State agents raided Batirai's house and assaulted his wife intending to force her to disclose his whereabouts.

Batirai was in hiding following a State-sponsored crackdown against opposition and civil society activists in connection with the 31 July anti-corruption protests. MDC Alliance Bulawayo Spokesperson Swithern Chirowodza said Batirai's wife was left nursing injuries after the brutal assault.

"After they discovered that Batirai was not at home, the agents assaulted his wife and his younger brother as they demanded to know his whereabouts," Chirowodza said.

Following the government threats, there has been a systematic crackdown against alleged leaders of the 31 July protests as confirmed by Chirowodza.

Chirowodza said: "The incidents are, however, executed similarly and are consistent in so far as the manner of attack, the number of attackers and the information demanded."

MDC ALLIANCE ACTIVIST TORTURED

Bulawayo MDC Alliance activist Takunda Madzana was a victim of torture at the hands of suspected State security agents, who snatched him from his home and left him for dead after severely assaulting him.

Madzana was forcibly taken from his Magwegwe home on 26 July by his abductors, who allegedly carried guns and wore masks. He was driven to a bush where he was subjected to torture by his abductors, who demanded information about the financiers of the 31 July protests.

MDC Alliance Bulawayo spokesperson Swithern Chirowodza confirmed the incident stating;

"He was abducted from his Magwegwe home between 11 p.m. and 12 a.m. They

took him to a secluded area near Magwegwe, where he was tortured and dumped. The abductors wanted information on who was funding the 31 July protests. They also wanted to know about other officials in the party involved, as well as details about other organisations that are offering solidarity.”

This comes in the wake of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) releasing a statement urging authorities to desist from the use of “State machinery” to instil fear into citizens ahead of the 31 July protests. The anti-corruption protests angered the government, with organisers of the demonstrations calling on Zimbabweans to make their voice heard against the scandals related to COVID-19 tenders, which scandals also involve allegations against the First Family.

JOURNALIST TELLS OF NEPHEW'S ABDUCTION

THE nephew of Zimbabwean journalist Mduduzi Mathuthu suffered renal failure after being subjected to severe torture by his abductors.

Tawanda Muchehiwa was abducted on 30 July in Bulawayo, outside a hardware shop. He was beaten and tortured for three days. The events occurred as the government continued to attract widespread condemnation over a wave of gross human rights violations.

Tawanda was dumped by his abductors on 1 August evening, following a High Court ruling earlier in the day by Justice Martin Makonese directing the police to produce him before a Bulawayo magistrate within 72 hours of the order.

Mduduzi Mathuthu stated that:

“The captors would chain him and take turns to assault him. They took him to someplace out of town where some sort of farming activity was going on. There were two army trucks there. They gave him a sack and told him it would serve as his blanket, At some point, they ordered him to urinate into a container and drink it. They gave him bread and “isitshwala”, both of which he says seemed off, resulting in his refusal to eat it. They assaulted him further for that, saying he was ‘wasting their money’ by refusing to eat. They stood on top of him leading the doctors to believe that the trauma caused the renal failure.”

The government continues to deny its involvement in the abduction and torture of opposition and civic activists.



BULAWAYO ACTIVIST FLEES TO SA

BULAWAYO political activist Josphat Ngulube fled to South Africa in fear for his life, after suspected State security agents abducted and sexually assaulted his 23-year-old niece.

Ngulube has been in hiding since 31 July following reports that the police were looking for him in connection with the anti-corruption protests.

Emerging from his hideout in the neighbouring country on 13 August, Ngulube said he would not return to the country until a genuine dialogue could be had with the government that accommodated opposition and civic activists.

"I fled Zimbabwe in fear of my life as the State continues a witch hunt for the purported instigators of the 31 July protests that morphed into a national shutdown," Ngulube said.

Ngulube says his family was targeted and his niece Noxolo Maphosa was abducted on 7 August and sexually assaulted by suspected State security agents looking for him.

"I will not return to Zimbabwe until the nation holds a genuine dialogue that accommodates opposition political parties, civic society, and human rights defenders to stop the wanton crackdown on activists."

Ngulube and another party activist, Otilia Sibanda, are out on bail after spending 5 months at Chikurubi maximum prison.

The pair were convicted and sentenced to 6 years in prison on charges of burning three cars and destruction of property at a house belonging to ZANU-PF Bulawayo provincial women's league chairperson, Eva Bitu, during the January 2019 fuel protests.

Ngulube described his incarceration as political persecution, insisting he was jailed for nothing. He added, however, that the experience made him 'stronger and a lot wiser'.



GIRL KIDNAPPED, SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

A 23-year-old woman named Noxolo Maphosa was kidnapped, sexually assaulted and beaten by her captors who were looking for her political activist uncle, Josphat Ngulube.

Maphosa was snatched by her captors on 7 August near Bulawayo's Pick and Pay shop at about 10 a.m. She was blindfolded and taken to an unknown destination and tortured.

"I called my friend and told her that there were men following me. As I ended the call, they grabbed me from behind and took my phone. They forced me into a white Isuzu pick-up truck vehicle and upon arrival at an unknown destination, they demanded to know the whereabouts of my uncle," she said.

Maphosa professed ignorance about the whereabouts of her uncle and was tortured.

"One of the men took out a knife and cut through my bra, leggings and panties," Maphosa said. She added that the men took turns to beat her on her legs and thighs with logs.

At the end of her ordeal, the men dropped her off at her home in Cowdray Park suburb.

Her lawyer Ngobani Sithole has since released pictures showing Maphosa with whip welts on her thighs and legs from the assault.

ABDUCTED MUCHEHIWA RECOUNTS ORDEAL

"You are not George Floyd," said one of the abductors of Tawanda Muchehiwa, after he complained: "I can't breathe" when they sat on his stomach.

Muchehiwa is the nephew of journalist Mduduzi Mathuthu. He was abducted on 30 July outside a hardware shop and tortured for three days before his release.

"I was bundled into a white Isuzu pick-up truck vehicle and told to keep my head down. One man pointed a gun to my head and threatened that if I screamed or raised my head he would pull the trigger," Muchehiwa narrated.

"One guy sat on my head and the other on my stomach. When I complained that

I couldn't breathe, one of the men punched me hard. "The man told Muchehiwa that "Zimbabwe is not America and you're not George Floyd, after all, we don't want you to breathe."

George Floyd, 46, was an American citizen that died after being arrested by police outside a shop in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Footage captured of the arrest on 25 May shows a white male police officer, Derek Chauvin, kneeling on Floyd's neck whilst he was pinned to the ground. Floyd could be heard pleading with the police officer, "I can't breathe".

Muchehiwa continued to narrate his ordeal in the following terms:

"The Ford Ranger then drove off at breakneck speed. We came to a stop at an unknown location when suddenly, the sound of gunfire could be heard. It appeared to me that at least one of my captors was shooting in the air without cause. Was he trying to let me know that their guns work? I was ordered to stop and kneel whereupon I felt a gun at the back of my head. They told me to say my last words."

Muchehiwa who was released following a High Court order said he was additionally subjected to beatings with logs.

He explained:

"They picked up logs and sticks and started beating me, focusing mainly on my buttocks. The beating went on forever and finally, my knees buckled. I slumped to the ground. Every time I fell down, the beatings intensified and I would be hung up again. After the marching, I had to lie down on the ground, and they took turns beating me. It might sound crazy to most, but at that point, I had made peace with the fact that I was going to die."

BULAWAYO SISTERS BASHED FOR VIOLATING LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS

On 16 April arrested and severely tortured two Bulawayo sisters, after accusing them of violating the directive to stay at home in line with the national COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

Nokuthula and Ntombizodwa Mporu were one their way home from "Pick and Pay" shops at Cowdray Park suburb when they met police officers who arrested and assaulted them with truncheons. A police officer also damaged Nokuthula's cell phone during the assault.



“When I went over to the offending police officer and explained that he had damaged my phone, he told me to go and fix it. He said I shouldn’t be complaining about a USD70 phone, he normally damages iPhones,” Nokuthula said.

Mpofu said she left the officer and returned to her sister, Ntombizodwa but the officers – who were six in total, followed them. Two of the police officers later handcuffed them from behind, beginning a sustained assault against them as they were marched to a police post in the suburb.

While making tribal slurs against Ndebele people, Mpofu said the officers assaulted them both outside and inside the police post. The two women were detained overnight and in the morning, they were ordered to each pay an admission of guilt fine for “conduct likely to provoke breach of peace.”

Pictures of their injuries from the assault which circulated on Twitter sparked public outrage.

“In all my life, I have never been assaulted the way the police officers did to me. They made us sit down and kicked me with booted feet on my thighs. When I managed to get up, I realised that I had sustained serious injuries and there was blood all over. I was left almost out of breath and I could hardly walk,” narrated Nokuthula.

MDC ALLIANCE ACTIVISTS FLEA HOMES

About thirty Bulawayo MDC Alliance activists have fled their homes fearing for their lives following a wave of arrests and abductions of opposition and civil society activists.

As of 8 August, the opposition party had received reports of at least 30 of its members who had gone into hiding.

“We have so far drawn a list of about 30 cadres who are no longer living at their homes for fear of being abducted, tortured or detained,” MDC Alliance Bulawayo spokesperson Swithern Chirowodza said.

Government denies any involvement in the wave of abductions targeted at opposition and civic activists in relation to the 31 July anti-government protests.



There is an identifiable trend of the alleged abductors seeking to torture family members of wanted political or opposition activists.

According to Chirowodza, this has forced some activists to consider moving their children to safe houses in order to protect them from harm.

“Some are contemplating moving their children to safer places, while others are bogged down with repairs to damaged premises. As such the provincial administration committee will meet soon to set the agenda of the next Bulawayo provincial executive meeting. This is going to be one item on the agenda meeting so I cannot disclose or pre-empt anything,” Chiroadza said.

FAMILIES GO FOR DAYS WITHOUT FOOD

BULAWAYO families are going for days without food since the inception of the 21-day COVID-19 national lockdown.

A number of families have been failing to access food as police have been strictly enforcing the measure that people stay indoors during the period of the national lockdown.

In an interview on 23 April, Zimbabwe Christian Alliance Director, Useni Sibanda, said that the clergy had uncovered the harsh realities of the situation and noted that some families had gone for as long as three days without food.

“I am shocked some families in Bulawayo have gone for three days without food. The “I am 4Byo-Against COVID-19” initiative and ZCA have started distributing food to starving families. We are targeting about 10 000 families in the city. The food aid will be distributed to vulnerable families only and about 1 400 families from Njube, Lobengula, and Entumbane will be the first beneficiaries. Informal traders whose businesses have been affected by the lockdown are some of the targeted beneficiaries. Our target is to reach at least 10 000 households. No one must die of hunger during the COVID-19 national lockdown,” said Sibanda.

The majority of Zimbabweans survive on informal trading but the lockdown measures have seen numerous vendors having their only source of income cut, leaving them facing hunger.





BULAWAYO RESIDENT DIES DUE TO INJURIES

A Bulawayo resident, Levison Ncube, died as a result of injuries sustained after he was brutally assaulted by police officers for violating COVID-19 national lockdown regulations on 30 March, the first day of the 21-day national lockdown.

Ncube died from “subarachnoid haemorrhage and head trauma” a few days after an unnamed officer assaulted him for allegedly violating the stay-at-home regulations at Mabuthweni (Number 2) neighbourhood.

The victim lost consciousness as a result of the beating that he received from the police officer. When the police officers realized that Ncube had become unconscious, they called for an ambulance which came and ferried him to Mpilo Central Hospital whilst he was still unconscious.

At Mpilo Central Hospital, Ncube was able to regain consciousness after getting medical treatment. He was later discharged from the hospital. Unfortunately, Ncube was reported to have suffered paralysis of the left side of his body. He died on 7 April, after succumbing to the injuries that he sustained during the attack. His family has instituted legal proceedings against the police for Ncube’s death.

“Our clients hold the position that the deceased died as a result of the injuries he sustained after being assaulted by a police officer, who at the material time was acting within the scope and course of his employment as a police officer employed by the ministry of home affairs, which makes the State vicariously liable for his conduct,” Mehluli Dube, a lawyer with Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZHLR) representing the Ncube family said.

POLICE KILL MAN (34) AFTER HIGH-SPEED CHASE

Police in Bulawayo on 23 May shot and killed a 34-year-old man, Paul Munakopa after a high-speed chase.

The police, who were using an unmarked vehicle, claim that they suspected Munakopa was a thief. The incident happened at about 10 p.m.

The incident came at a time when the security forces faced criticism over heavy-handedness in enforcing COVID-19 lockdown regulations. According to Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi:

“A police patrol team made up of regular officers and community officers in the Hillside area came across a black Honda Fit parked on a road. The vehicle sped off and the officers gave chase. During the chase, the Honda Fit turned and hit the officers’ car and a shoot-out ensued. Unfortunately, a man was injured and later passed on. What is of interest is that the parties (in the Honda Fit) were found naked in the car,” Nyathi said.

According to the family, the now deceased was in the company of his girlfriend, Tracy Mufudzi. They decided to flee as the police had not identified themselves. Loveradge Mufudzi who is a member of the family said.

“Not knowing who the occupants of the other vehicle were, or their intentions, he reversed and got into Cecil Avenue. The other vehicle chased after them. I heard from my sister that you couldn’t see their faces, only their eyes were visible. These two guys approached the Honda Fit and started banging on the bonnet, and I understand at this time Paul again tried to reverse away. Two uniformed police officers emerged from the car and started firing. Paul was shot on one of his hands and lost control of the vehicle which reversed into a ditch. The police officers then approached and used the butt of a gun to break the windscreen and pull him out.”

Mufudzi said that at the scene of the shooting, the police officers would not identify themselves to the family.

VENDORS CRY FOUL

Bulawayo vendors have been reduced to beggars after their businesses were disrupted by the COVID-19 national lockdown measures.

According to Rev Sibanda:

“What has happened is that because we had a vulnerable group already. We know more than 5, 5 million in Zimbabwe needed food aid, but added to this group now, are the vendors and the informal sector people. These are people who normally were living from hand to mouth but because of COVID-19, they are now forced to beg. The food is no longer there, so now we have a humanitarian food crisis that has been brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The civic society has been involved in the responses to COVID-19 for the simple reason that the pandemic started as a medical crisis but has grown



branches. It's now more of a governance and humanitarian crisis. Food aid comes with a lot of things as we know that the government also receives food aid. The civic society's role now is to audit how the government was giving food and cash to people who were facing hunger. I think that is one big priority for us as a civic society."

CHILD LABOUR TO AVERT COVID-19 VAGARIES

Bulawayo residents have raised concern over the increase in child labour incidences as informal traders are reportedly sending their school-going children to prowl the streets selling various products.

This is more prevalent in the central business district where informal trading remains banned as a COVID-19 preventive measure. The local authorities have used the time to destroy the vending stalls of informal traders and without a source of income or any other government social welfare support system, parents are deploying their children to vending spots in the city. This is particularly so at bus termini. People take advantage of the fact that the police appear not to be as strict when dealing with minors who flout the stay-at-home regulations.

Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association (BVTA) Director, Michael Ndiweni said vendors were deploying their children and taking advantage of the fact that minors cannot be arrested by municipal police. Ndiweni stated:

"It is a result of the closing of space for traders. As a result, families are now using their children to trade but that amounts to child labour and as BVTA we don't condone that. Children must be reading or preparing their school work as opposed to having parents sending them out to be vending. We discourage child labour."

Bulawayo mayor, Councillor Solomon Mguni said children were not just used as vendors but even beggars. He said:

"Times are hard and we have noticed increases of not only child vendors but beggars as well. This is terrible for the city and the people of Bulawayo. It goes against the very foundations of our "Ubuntu" where the child is left to fend for the family."



POLICE TURN AWAY ESSENTIAL SERVICES WORKERS

Several Bulawayo residents accused police manning national lockdown roadblocks of turning them away from entering the central business district even with exemption letters.

Police mounted roadblocks checking for exemption letters that President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced as a requirement for one to leave their home. However, many could be seen being turned back at the roadblocks as police revealed that the city had seen an increase in the statistics of lockdown violators.

As of 20 April, police had arrested 9 889 people for various offences since the commencement of the national lockdown, with Bulawayo recording the highest number of arrests at 2 214.

Police spokesperson, Inspector Abednico Ncube, however, said police do not take joy in arresting national lockdown offenders as he appealed for people to stay at home.

“We don't enjoy arresting people. We can only be at peace as a city if we are all compliant with the lockdown regulations and stop the spread of COVID-19,” Ncube said.

Bulawayo police have been under attack for violating the rights of many residents who allegedly violated lockdown restrictions.

The Matabeleland Forum, a grouping of human rights organisations in the region, in a complaint, cited the abuse of two Cowdray Park women who were assaulted and labelled prostitutes after their arrest on their way back home from grocery shopping.

“While the lockdown has measures for restricting movement, residents are normally allowed to move within a 5km radius of their homes to access essential services, as long as social distancing measures are observed. According to the two ladies, who happen to be sisters, nothing they did was in violation of such rules nor required such heavy-handedness from law enforcers,” a Forum representative complained.



HARARE COUNCIL DESTROYS VENDING STALLS

On 18 April, Harare City Council took advantage of the national lockdown restrictions and demolished vending stalls around Machipisa in Highfield and around Mbare's Mupedzanhamo Market while the vendors were at home.

Council said it would allocate the affected vendors with new regulated vending sites, according to spokesperson Michael Chideme.

He defended the demolitions stating that they were above board, despite an outcry by vendors whose livelihoods had been robbed.

"We were at home when we were told that earthmovers were demolishing our stalls. We rushed to check and we saw graders busy pulling down our vending stalls. We asked why during the lockdown, but we were told the stalls were illegal," Hamandishe Majongwe, a vendor from Mbare said.

National Vendors Union Zimbabwe chairperson, Stern Zvorwadza attacked the Harare municipality for demolishing the stalls.

"What the City of Harare is doing is inhumane. This is not the time to ruin the little remaining investments for the poor after a 21-day mandatory lockdown. There are several ways of resolving trading challenges amicably," he said.

Samuel Wadzai, leader of "Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation" said it was reckless and irresponsible for the City Council to destroy livelihoods under the cover of the national lockdown.

MDC ALLIANCE MP MAMOMBE 'ABDUCTED'

On 13 May, Harare West MP Joana Mamombe and MDC Alliance youth leaders Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova were abducted.

Initially, police confirmed arresting the trio for violating the COVID-19 national lockdown regulations after they had staged a flash demonstration in Harare's Warren Park suburb.

Police subsequently made an about-turn the following day, when the whereabouts of the three ladies could not be ascertained. The three were later found dumped at Muchapondwa Business Centre in Bindura, 48 hours after they

went missing. They were found after a manhunt involving the police, the MDC Alliance and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights.

Police denied that the three were abducted and ZANU-PF claimed the three were faking the abduction in order to tarnish the image of the ruling party.

Chimbiri however, insisted that they were abducted by State agents and assaulted for over 24 hours. She said after the protest, they were arrested at a police checkpoint “for violating lockdown restrictions” and taken to Harare Central Police Station where they were handed over to their abductors, who took them into a car, claiming they wanted them to take them back to the crime scene.

In the car, they were blindfolded and taken to an unknown place where they were tortured. Chimbiri claimed they were thrown into a pit and subjected to hours of beatings and sexual assault by five men.

MDC ALLIANCE ACTIVISTS RECOUNT HORROR

On 15 May, Cecelia Chimbiri, one of the three MDC Alliance activists who was allegedly abducted, gave harrowing insight into how she and two others were tortured and sexually assaulted by abductors.

From Muchapondwa Business Centre where they were picked, the three were taken to a private hospital in Harare for treatment.

Chimbiri, who spoke to journalists after a visit by MDC Alliance leader, Nelson Chamisa, said that the abductors took turns to suck their breasts and at some point shoved the barrel of a gun up her anal passage.

“They were taking turns to suck my boobs. They forced a gun into my anal passage. They forced us to drink urine. They beat us under our feet (and on) my back. They also beat us with bare hands. But most of all, they violated me. They sexually assaulted me. They asked me if I had labia minora, and I thought they wanted to rape me. They went on to force the barrel of their gun and a stick up my anal passage,” she said.

She also claimed they were forced to sing non-stop for a lengthy period.



The police, however, denied ever arresting the three. They insisted that they were carrying out investigations as to what happened, despite having admitted to arresting the three on Wednesday (the day the activists went missing) for protesting.

Ndavaningi Mangwana, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Publicity also issued a statement claiming that the government was not aware of what happened to the three opposition officials.

“The three women were part of the group of MDC youths that defied the lockdown laws in the country and took part in an illegal demonstration in Warren Park. Police then sought to interview them on suspicion of committing crimes related to the lockdown and holding of illegal demonstrations. While the police were looking for them, social media chatter indicating that the three had disappeared was observed,” Mangwana said.

POLICE TURN AWAY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM OVER FACE MASK

On 15 July, police at Tongogara Police Station in Shurugwi turned away a victim of domestic violence because she did not have a face mask. The woman left her house in a state as she was running away from her abusive husband, who had taken to assaulting her. In the commotion, she forgot to carry a face mask.

The police declined to take her report in the absence of a face mask. Cases of domestic violence have been on the rise since the implementation of the 21-day national lockdown period was implemented.

Chipo Moyo, a 25-year-old mother of one, narrated how she was turned away by Tongogara police officers upon reaching their charge office, despite physical evidence of abuse on her body.

“I narrowly escaped death when my husband bashed me several times all over the body after a minor misunderstanding on July 15. Luckily for me, I managed to escape. I was half-naked when I rushed to the police station. When I arrived at the station to make a report, the police said they could not help me because I was not wearing a face mask. They said I should go back home and collect it. I could not do that because I was afraid I would again fall into the hands of my assailant. I ended up giving up on reporting the case. That was a miscarriage of justice for me,” she said.



WIDOW RECOUNTS HELL AT THE HANDS OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

On 6 September, Theresa Madekufamba, a widowed mother of three, who lives with her daughters in a high-density suburb in Gweru, was subjected to inhuman treatment by soldiers.

Being the sole breadwinner of her family, Madekufamba decided to go shopping in town where the prices of basic commodities are less than in the suburbs.

Upon disembarking from a ZUPCO bus on her way to the supermarket, she was rounded up by soldiers and forced into a military truck for failing to produce an exemption letter. She, along with others, were taken to Gweru Central Police Station.

In the vehicle, they were packed in close proximity of each other contrary to the stipulated WHO COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. They were dropped at the police station and forced to stay in the scorching heat, without food or water.

Those with money in their pockets paid fines of ZWL500 to secure their release. Those who did not have the money, including Madekufamba, were left waiting in the scorching heat. Madekufamba was later released after spending six hours in the heat, with no food.

POLICE'S OPERATION LEAVES A TRAIL OF ABUSE

Police's crack operation against firewood poacher's code-named operation "Huni Dzabvepi-Inkuni Zivela ngaphi" has left house maids licking their wounds after being brutalized along roads in the suburbs of Gweru for carrying firewood during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The operation that began in June was rolled out countrywide in partnership with the Forestry Commission.

Juliet Gezamo, a 23-year-old housemaid in Mkoba 4 was severely assaulted by police officers from Nehanda police station after being caught with a bundle of firewood she took from a nearby forest.

"Three cops, brandishing baton sticks, manhandled me for carrying a bundle of firewood. They said I needed instant justice because I would not afford the money required to pay the required fine. My three front teeth are loose as a result of the brutal attack. I also had a swollen left arm and sadly, I cannot afford

medical care expenses because my employer is in South Africa right now and cannot come home because borders are closed,” she said.

Police said the operation “Huni Dzabvepi-Innkuni Zivela ngaphi” was targeted at suspects who were wantonly cutting down trees, carrying firewood without permits or selling charcoal and firewood without requisite permits during the COVID-19 lockdown.

But Gezamo alleged that some overzealous police were abusing innocent people in the name of the operation. This is being done at a time when many people use firewood as a source of power due to unaffordable electricity charges and constant outages.

LOCKED DOWN WITHOUT STI MEDICATION

Tariro (not her real name) aged 28 years, is a commercial sex worker who survives in the farming town of Karoi. She has two children aged 5 and 8 years old that live with her mother in Hurungwe.

On 31 March, Tariro fell sick due to a contracted sexually transmitted infection. She went to Hurungwe District Hospital in Karoi, which hospital houses the Centre for Sexual Reproductive HIV and AIDS Research (Cershar). She sought treatment but there was no one to assist her due to the fact that the clinic was closed for almost a week, pursuant to the declaration of the 21-day COVID-19 national lockdown.

“I went to the clinic seeking assistance, I could not find anyone there so I went back home. My friends told me about a traditional healer who can help me, I haven't gone to see him yet because he lives far away,” said Tariro.

The move to close clinics for a week violated several women's rights; more particularly the right to access medical health facilities. The move also affected various other women and young girls in Hurungwe district, which covers at least 26 rural wards and 2 wards in Karoi town.

The Government decree of Statutory Instrument 83 of 2020, made it mandatory for health service providers to be equipped with gloves, masks and sanitizers. The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was not in stock at the time, resulting in the hospital being forced to close for a week. The clinic was subsequently re-opened



and clients were able to access medication without challenge, but certainly, the first week of the national lockdown had direct health implications amongst the women in that area.

ARMY FORCED ME TO ROLL IN TYRE ASHES

Alec Jonasi is a Zimbabwean youth who was forced to roll through burnt tyres by military personnel on 31 March, pursuant to the declaration of the 21-day COVID-19 national lockdown.

“I was among the youths who demonstrated in Chiedza high-density suburb in Karoi where it was generally agreed upon in the community that the economic and social challenges were affecting us all. I participated as an exercise of my democratic rights, but late in the afternoon things turned against me and a few others,” he narrated.

Jonasi stated that he was taken by armed officers and forced to roll through burnt tyres.

“They were beating us all over the body using baton sticks and it was brutal. It took us almost three hours as we were forced to move from one area to the other. We were forced to carry heavy stones that were used to block the highway road from town to Chiedza,” he revealed.

After the incident, he could not access treatment or medication as the nation was under a lockdown and travel was not allowed.

CHEGUTU RUNS DRY DURING NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

Moffat Tembo, who is the President of Combined Chegutu Residents and Ratepayers Trust is bitter with the local district coordinating office which he says has not been forthcoming in representing the residents’ needs.

“The residents want legal representation to sue Chegutu whenever they breach the contract of supplying clean and safe water to the residents,” said Tembo, after the town went for several days without clean water during the first few weeks of the national lockdown.

The incident affected the majority of the 60 000 residents of the town.

Tembo further went on to state that, “such a remedy of taking council and government to court can be done on behalf of residents so that social justice is upheld. This action has violated citizens’ right to clean water according to part 77 that says every person has the right to water and food. It says every person has a right to (a) to safe, clean and potable water.”

CHILDREN SWIMMING IN SEWAGE DURING COVID-19

Kadoma residents expressed concern over the failure by the City Council to repair burst sewages in certain high-density suburbs.

Lameck Madziba, who is the Vice-Chairperson of the Greater Kadoma Residents and Ratepayers Association said:

“Almost all boreholes have broken down, leaving Kadoma residents exposed to an outbreak of waterborne diseases. Most people are relying on water from the wells in their yards which may have contaminated underground water sources. Areas with perennial sewer pipe bursts and blockages need constant attention. It has been a hard life since 30 March when the national lockdown kicked off. It has affected young girls who have to fetch water at night, women, children, people living with HIV and AIDS and other vulnerable members of the community”.

PRIMARY HEALTH COUNSELORS WITHOUT PPES

At the outset of the 21-day national lockdown, the government distributed risk allowances, amongst other benefits to health personnel. Government, however, neglected to make provision for Primary Health Counselors (PHCs) across the country. PHC’s have been adversely affected in that they are exposed to risk in the execution of their duties. PHCs like any other health personnel are exposed to persons suffering from communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB).

“We have been exposed due to lack of protective clothing among other necessities as required by the COVID-19 guidelines”, said one of the Primary Health Counselors speaking on condition of anonymity.

It goes without saying that the failure to provide PHC’s with personal protective equipment places them at risk in addition to their families.



CHIKANGWE VEGETABLE MARKET DEMOLISHED

Vegetable vendors in the high-density suburb of Chikangwe were left disgruntled after an order to shut down the market was issued on 30 July amidst the COVID-19 lockdown.

“We were surprised when police and ZNA officers arrived at around 6 a.m. informing us that no one could open the market. Farmers were coming from all over Hurungwe that were affected by the move,” said one of the vendors’ leaders, Charity Garanga.

The move affected a majority of vegetable vendors who survive through the sale of their wares.

“We were not given any notice so that we could work on how to navigate the challenges for us as a community. The decree by the officers was uncalled for as we need to make a living,” added another vendor named Chido Majanga.

KARIBA RUNS DRY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Residents in the resort town of Kariba were forced to utilize untreated water in April after town authorities failed to provide water for three days.

Sam Mawawo who is the Executive Chairperson of Kariba Incorporated Area Residents Ratepayers Association (KIARRA) said the failure by Kariba municipality to avail safe and potable water was a human rights violation that affected residents in the resort town.

“We are not happy at all by the move by the Kariba municipality management to fail to make water accessible to residents during the 21-day COVID-19 national lockdown. This violates our rights as the right to water is a human rights issue. We went for three days without water and this is a challenge that must be rectified as soon as it happens. We hoped that we could get clean and potable water during the COVID -19 lockdown but this was not to be. This is how our rights have been violated.” Mawawo said.



KAROI VENDORS RELOCATE

Miriyosi Kazembe is deeply disturbed after Makuva flea market was demolished on 22 April. He says certain members have since relocated to the rural areas after the event left them without employment

Makuva Flea Market has a membership of 300 vendors.

“The move by Karoi Town Council to demolish Makuva flea market was uncalled for. It has left some of our members jobless as it was a source of income and livelihood for our members,” Kazembe said.

Karoi Town Secretary, Wellington Mutikani said they were acting in compliance with the government directive calling on all unregistered premises to regularize their structures in accordance with city council plans.

Mutikani stated:

“Yes we demolished the flea market and we hope once it has been done according to our standards we move forward and relocate them where they will operate officially,”

Karoi town council has, to this day, failed to avail alternative premises.

Kazembe concluded with the following remarks:

“The majority of them [vendors] have no place where they can operate from and it has affected those who used to supply us with vegetable and motor vehicle bearings. Farmers who used to sell or purchase spare parts have nowhere to go. It is not good for our trade which is informal in nature,” he said.

KAROI CLINIC CLOSED INDEFINITELY

Karoi resident’s failed to access health care services at Karoi Clinic on 13 August after Chikangwe Clinic was closed indefinitely.

The closure of the Clinic was necessitated by a nurse who tested positive for COVID-19. The nurse provided health care services to patients in the Opportunistic Infection (OI) department.

Karoi town council secretary Wellington Mutikani confirmed that the health services provider has since been shut down.

He stated:

“Yes, I can confirm that our clinic has been closed indefinitely after a nurse tested positive to COVID-19. I am told she stays in Chinhoyi where she was tested and results came on Thursday. This then led to the compulsory testing of all frontline workers. As it is, our clinic will be temporarily closed whilst awaiting results.” He added that he was unsure as to when the clinic would be reopened to the public.

Mutikani provided the following statement:

“The length of time that it takes to obtain results will determine when we will open the clinic. The good thing is our staff is well protected through personal protective equipment (PPEs). We bought almost everything for them and we hope it will help as a social responsibility on our part.”

ARMY AND POLICE ROBBED US OF GOLD AND DIGITAL SCALES

On 22 April, several gold panners and buyers were raided by members of the ZNA and ZRP in the Senge area which falls under the jurisdiction of Chief Kazangarare in April.

The victims of the raid were mainly civil servants that included teachers from schools around Chikowa, Senge and Mwami who had turned to gold panning to earn an income due to the economic hardships relating to COVID-19. One of the victims narrated:

“An army truck came here late on that day and they raided the area where gold buyers meet sellers who are mostly youths. They demanded that we surrender all that we had, including money, gold and digital scales that we use when we buy the gold. No one resisted as they were armed officers with police officers. The law enforcement officers threatened to arrest us for violating the COVID-19 regulations”

Several other victims’ corroborated the incident stating that:

“One of our sources travels to Karoi town regularly to purchase groceries and he identified one Constable Milton Gunduza as among those who were present during the raid. We believe this raid was never sanctioned officially as no one was arrested and no documentation or record of the incident was prepared.”

Those affected claimed they were assaulted during the raid.



MAN TOLD TO PREPARE HIS OWN COFFIN

Joseph Mabanga is a carpenter who earns a living by selling coffins in Chikangwe. He has done so for the past ten years.

He stated:

"I have a considerable client base in Karoi town and Hurungwe district as some families have no funeral policies. They buy coffins at a budget as they are financially constrained. The COVID19 lockdown has forced me out of employment but the way state security agencies have enforced it here in Karoi town is rather excessive."

He recalled that on 16 April, he was approached by armed officers whilst he was making a coffin for a bereaved family.

"It was an emergency and they had pleaded with me to help them. Getting material was problematic for those who were not considered as essential service workers. The officers approached me and demanded that I provide a letter explaining why I was at work. I explained that I was a coffin maker and they told me to make another coffin for myself as I was going to die. It was a chilling moment for me. They went away promising to come back. I was told to wait for them. Unfortunately, the bereaved family never came back. I was traumatized and left wondering what had become of my life. I sat there with two coffins, one for the customer that never came to collect and mine. It was emotional."

The officers did not return but he remains haunted by the incident.

SHOCKED TO DEATH BY THE ARMY, BOY (8) DIES

On 17 April, the First Lady visited Ward 10 of Mudzi District, Mashonaland East province. The area was a scheduled stop in terms of her national outreach efforts to assist disadvantaged communities during the COVID-19 national lockdown.

The incident occurred when the now deceased, Tadiwa Katambarare, a boy aged 8 years old and a resident of Chinake village was herding cattle along the roadside with other boys. At some point, soldiers who were manning the rural outpost called him. Fearful of the soldiers, the little boy took to his heels and fled. He later collapsed and was taken to Kotwa District Hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

The incident has left many within the community fearful, as no justification has

been given as to why the boy passed on after his encounter with the soldiers, particularly if he was not assaulted or physically harmed.

“We don’t know what happened to the poor boy, we are now living in fear since we were not told about how the boy died. We strongly think he was assaulted by the soldiers,” said one of the residents.

The soldiers were deployed as part of security measure during the First Lady’s visit.

KAROI DAM DRYING UP

Residents in Karoi are not happy after town council management and the Environment Management Agency have failed to stop brick moulding activity near Karoi dam.

The activity increased, especially during the 21-day national lockdown that saw many of the town's touts and vendors forced out of employment.

Karoi Residents and Ratepayers Association Chairperson, Frecky Kuchekwa, highlighted that the failure by authorities to address the situation meant that access to water would remain a challenge for residents.

He stated:

“We have witnessed the abuse of the environment where people are allowed to mould bricks along the Karoi dam. We have raised our concerns with both Karoi town council management and EMA officials since the COVID-19 lockdown in March and nothing has been rectified. Our rights to access clean and potable water are being infringed. There have been calls and assurances that central Government will avail clean water in all towns as part of its service delivery during the COVID-19 crisis, but the reality is that we are suffering over the dam that is drying up where bricks are being moulded contrary to environmental laws,”

In Karoi, some residents in Wards 2, 3 and 4 have been affected by perennial water challenges.

“Generally speaking, water shortages now form a part of our daily living as we have had to fetch water from other wards for a decade,” said Rose Kabasa of



Ward 3. Her fears are that with the environmental abuses at Karoi dam, the whole town will dry up soon.

GOVT SIDELINES TRADITIONAL LEADERS IN COVID-19 AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

The government came under fire for sidelining traditional leaders in its advocacy and awareness campaigns against the spread of the global COVID-19 crisis in the country.

On 6 August, Headman Dhobia Katumha Manjiniwa of Ward 18, Chief Nematombo discussed challenges affecting the community during the COVID-19 national lockdown.

Manjiniwa said the Government is yet to engage them or share adequate information on the COVID-19 crisis.

He stated:

“Isu semasabhuku ndisu tine vanhu, uye vanotiremekedza matinogara umu. Chinoshamisa ndechekuti hatina ruzivo nechirwere cheCOVID-19 chametaura ichi. Hurumende haina zvairi kuita kuti tive neruzivo (As traditional leadership we have many of our subjects who respect us and if we were well equipped with basic information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. We could help to advocate in our communities. Government is not helping out at all).”

Manjiniwa said traditional leaders are ill-informed on issues pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost six months after the first case was reported in the country.

He added that it was imperative to have sanitizers to assist in the prevention of the spread of the pandemic that:

“Hatina kana zvamunoti sanitizer uye vanhu vakawanda vanouya kumatare kwedu zuva nezuva saka chirwere chotadza kupararira here? Kana zvekuvharamhino hatina. (We don’t have sanitizers to utilize in our communities. We are worried that we have not been considered for any progressive moves to curb the spread of this world pandemic. We have regular meetings at our homesteads but have no personal protective equipment.”



BP TABLETS COSTLY

Beula Charara aged 46 of Chiedza high-density suburb in Karoi has been battling with high blood pressure for over 12 years.

A mother of five, she is a widow and has been living hand to mouth. Her plight has worsened since the implementation of the 21-day COVID-19 national lockdown.

She says:

“Since the COVID-19 lockdown in March, things became worse for the majority of us as we can’t afford to buy medication from pharmacies. They are charging us in United States dollars that we can’t access either.”

Charara is among several women suffering from non-communicable diseases that affect the majority of the population across the country.

KARIBA ELDERLY SUFFERS THROAT BLOCKAGE AFTER POLICE ASSAULT

Elderly Kariba based man, Homani Matamba, was the first victim of State-sponsored brutality on 1 April in the resort town.

The incident occurred around 8.30 p.m. when seven Zimbabwe Republic Police officers arrived at his house in Nyamhunga 1 high-density suburb.

The officers allegedly jumped from their truck and assaulted him, together with his son aged 28 years old. They used baton sticks and assaulted him and his son on the backside and neck until his son passed away.

“The police accused us of not adhering to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. I passed out after the assault. It took me several hours before I came to. Ndofunga kuti ndakafa asi pandakamuka ndainge ndisingagone kudya kwesvondo rese. Pahuro painge pasingakwanise kupinda chikafu kunze kwe porridge chete,” he recalled.

As a member of the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect, Matamba did not go to the hospital but was counselled by Clara Phiri representing Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights.

All efforts were made to trace the suspects who were on patrol during the assault

but no officer has been brought to book as yet.

“I was visited by top district officers from the Central Intelligence Organization, Military Intelligence Unit as well as ZANU-PF Politburo member and Senator James Gumpo who apologized and said that the incident was uncalled for. No officer was ever brought to book over my assault. We are suffering in silence as police officers assaulted me for no reason at all,” he added.

NO JUSTICE FOR KAROI TOWN POLICEMAN

Karoi town council police officer, Justice Musevenzo was assaulted by soldiers whilst on night duty on 14 April.

Musevenzo was in plain clothes and on night duty at Chikangwe bus terminus where he monitored and guarded the council guest house and kiosk bar. In the course of the night, he was assaulted by soldiers who were deployed in the area to ensure compliance with the COVID-19 national lockdown regulations.

Musevenzo narrated:

“It was around 9 p.m. and I was monitoring the premises. As I approached the guest house, I met four armed officers who asked me where I was going and why I was moving around during the national lockdown. I explained that I was a council police officer on duty. They did not believe me and demanded that I lay down. They proceeded to assault me with baton sticks on my back and buttocks, The following day, I reported the assault to my boss, Janny Chisunga and he assured me that an official enquiry would be made into the incident by town secretary, Wellington Mutikani. However, nothing fruitful came out of the exercise.”

VILLAGERS ASSAULTED BY POLICE OFFICERS

Villagers in Kabidza in Hurungwe Rural District Council Ward 8 were assaulted on 12 April, after Chief Abel Mbasera Chundu requested police assistance in ensuring that his subjects observed social distancing regulations.

Kabidza is situated about 70 kilometres north-west of Karoi. One villager, Rabson Kabatamuswe confirmed the incident:

‘Usually, Sunday is a day that villagers come to the business centre. To our

surprise, a truckload of ZRP officers came and rounded us all up. People were assaulted by officers using baton sticks and sjamboks. This forced some youths to seek sanctuary in the mountains.”

Others, however, criticized the government’s hardline stance against civilians without proper education on the COVID-19. A local teacher who spoke on condition of anonymity stated:

“Government failed to educate the public on the COVID-19 global pandemic. Rather, the government has used the opportunity to become abusive. Instead of deploying state security agencies to harass and assault citizens, they should have channelled resources into educating people.”

ZRP national spokesperson, Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi called on people to make formal reports of any assault by uniformed forces so that they can be brought to book.

Nyathi said:

“We urge members of the public to make formal reports of any assault by uniformed forces so that these cases can be investigated.”

ARMY LEAVES HAIRDRESSER WITH A BROKEN ARM

Twenty-seven-year-old hairdresser Olivia Katekwe was forced to nurse a broken arm for two months after she was threatened by uniformed Zimbabwe National Army officers for not wearing a face mask in April.

Narrating her ordeal that occurred on 7 April at around 6 p.m.,

Katekwe said:

“I was a few meters away from my house as I was seeing off a friend who had visited me. I did not have a face mask on when I met three ZNA members who were in a small lorry. Two of them were at the back and the other two were in front drinking beer. Since it was a private truck, I never suspected that the army officers were on duty. After calling me, they asked me where my facemask was and I explained that I was a few meters away from home. They came after me and as I fled, I fell in a gully. They stopped their pursuit and I managed to go home, but I was in pain.”



Her family managed to send her to a local hospital but they needed an X-ray. They had to go to a private surgery, where they were charged USD30.

It was then that it was discovered that she sustained a broken arm. She also had a bone protruding from her right hand.

“Unfortunately, even though the doctor applied a plaster to the hand, it did not heal for four weeks,” Katekwe said.

Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights were alerted of her plight a few days before her plaster was to be removed.

“They managed to get me a specialist who said I needed to undergo an operation so that the protruding bone could heal. It meant they were starting afresh on the plaster even though I thought it was healing,” Katekwe recalled.

After the second operation, Katekwe healed after almost two months with a plaster.

The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights are pursuing the matter on behalf of Olivia Katekwe.

ASSAULTED AND DETAINED FOR SHOPPING

The national lockdown restriction brought about different interpretations of the law from law enforcement agencies.

On 14 April, Isaac Fungulani (35) left Chiedza high-density suburb intending to buy groceries from Pick and Pay located within the Karoi central business district.

Fungulani narrated:

“I came into town around 10 a.m. to buy groceries. After I bought a few items, I thought of proceeding to OK to get more. On the way, I was stopped by six Zimbabwe Republic Police officers on bicycles. Their leader, Constable Milton Gunduza approached me and assaulted me with a whip. He said no one was allowed into town. I tried to explain that I wanted to buy groceries but this angered him and he began to assault me further, on my back and all over my body. I was then handcuffed and told that I was under arrest for violating lockdown regulations.”



Fungulani was among several others arrested during that day. He refused to pay anything as he believed he had not committed any crime.

"I was thrown into the police holding cells until 11 p.m. when my sister came to pay. This was done against my will," a frustrated Fungulani said.

TAILOR THRASHED BY ZRP RIOTS OFFICERS

Thirty-three-year old Tafadzwa Maikeni a tailor who makes African dress attire in Chikangwe high-density suburb in Karoi, was forced to lie down on a dusty road after he met ZNA and ZRP officers patrolling the area during the COVID-19 national lockdown:

"I had visited my customer to collect the cloth she wanted me to make an African attire from. I met the officers including four ZNA officers and six ZRP officers. Two of them were in riot gear. One of them stopped me and asked me why I was moving when I should be indoors. I explained that it was around 2.50pm and a few minutes before the 3 O'clock deadline. He looked at me and commanded that I lay on the ground," Maikeni narrated.

He was subsequently beaten multiple times on the buttocks with baton sticks. Maikeni concluded by saying:

"I wanted to make a formal police report but the officers, including Assistant Inspector Mugwidi kept shifting goalposts in respect of how to bring the suspects to book. They claimed the team that was on duty was from Magunje and they needed a parade to identify the suspect but how can I identify him when he was in riot gear?"

MOTORISTS ASSAULTED WHILST WAITING FOR FUEL IN KAROI

Several motorists who spent days waiting for fuel had to flee after soldiers descended on them on 16 April. The majority of the motorists were at a Total Service Station that is a few meters away from the Harare-Chirundu highway within Karoi central business district.

An affected farmer from Tengwe said he had spent several days looking for fuel as it was unavailable in Karoi. The farmer named narrated that:

“We had spent days sleeping in queues with empty promises of fuel by fuel attendants. On 16 April, Total Service received its allotted fuel supply but customers were left nursing injuries after the army came down hard on us. It was around 11 a.m. when two army trucks came into town. Several junior officers came with baton sticks and began to randomly assault everyone.”

A Magunje resident, Edmore Chanetsa said that they were forced to take cover under their Honda Fit car. He said:

“I managed to lie under the Honda Fit as the army continued with their attack on motorists at the service station.”

A Karoi taxi driver further stated that the army claimed that people were getting fuel for resale.

“They (army) did not want to see taxis getting fuel so they assaulted everyone in the queue. We were victims of overzealous junior officers,” said the taxi driver who declined to be named.

ZRP OFFICERS RAID DE TROOP AND LOOT

Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) officers from Chinhoyi who were enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown in the Chikuti area were accused of looting valuables belonging to vendors and gold buyers at De Troop on 17 April. It is alleged that the police officers in the guise of enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown unlawfully confiscated goods from vendors and gold traders for allegedly violating the lockdown.

Amongst the first victims was Stella Karima, who was forced to pay ZWL500 for violating lockdown restrictions after she was ‘arrested’ by the officers.

“2 police officers put me in handcuffs and told me I would spend a long time in the cells because courts are closed. One of them told me to pay a spot fine of ZWL500 for them to release me,” said Stella Karima.



I LOST USD\$300 AND RTGS\$7000 CASH- CHITALA

Moyenda Chitala (34) is amongst the victims of the police raid at De Troop.

He recalled that it was around 3 p.m. that the officers arrived in a police truck. There were at least twelve officers including those who wore anti-riot gear.

Chitala said:

"I was coming from gold panning at De Troop when I saw and heard teargas canisters being thrown by officers who were in a truck. This forced many people to run for cover in different places. The police dressed in riot gear came in droves to steal our belongings that we had left."

Speaking during a telephone interview Chitala said:

"I lost USD300, ZWL1000 and male briefs valued at USD50 that I had for purposes of sale. The case has been under investigation but Chinhoyi police have refuted that there was a team deployed to De Troop on the day in question. Murereka police have however sold them out but they have been delaying figuring out how we can recover what we lost. This is uncalled for as law enforcement agencies must protect civilians."

POLICE OFFICERS STEAL EGGS

Morie Chiveve (45) is one of the female victims of the De Troop raid. She operated a grocery shop at De Troop where she used to sell soft drinks among other things.

She narrated:

"When tear gas canisters were thrown, I managed to run away but I did not lock the container I use as a makeshift shop. There were cartons of biscuits, soft drinks and ten crates of eggs. These vanished after the police raided De-Troop and we are surprised that the police would turn into criminals. We have been waiting patiently for the law to take its course so that we can recover what we lost."

POLICE STEAL FUEL FROM VENDOR'S CAR

Kotsi Chimanga is at a loss of words after the police deployed at De Troop stole groceries that he had been selling in order to make a living. He narrated:

"I used to sell fuel, biscuits and soft drinks but when I came back they had drained

the fuel including another 20 litres of diesel. They also stole over RTGS\$10 000 cash. I was affected by the theft and we are praying that all the culprits will be brought to book for their actions."

Kotsi, like Chitala, has been waiting for reimbursement of the value of the goods they lost.

"Our local currency is losing value daily and we hope one-day justice will be met," Kotsi said.

ZRP OFFICERS STEAL A HONDA FIT

The ZRP officers who are accused of stealing cash, valuables, fuel and groceries are also accused of stealing a Honda Fit car used as a taxi by a vendor at De Troop.

The driver, James said:

"I left the car without fuel as I had gone away but was surprised that after the raid, the car was nowhere to be seen. The police used the fuel that they drained from Kotsi's car to drive the car. I had left the keys in there as I never thought anyone would steal it in that manner."

The car was found dumped along the Chikuti-Chinhoyi highway after it had run out of fuel.

ARRESTED FOR ASSISTING PWD

Panganai Chakanyuka of Chakanyuka Foundation in Magunje will forever rue the day the thought of assisting vulnerable members of the community during the 21-day COVID-19 national lockdown.

He said they had sourced 50 food hampers that included 10 kg roller meal, 2 kg sugar, 2 kg rice, 1 kg salt, 2 litres cooking oil among other things. These hampers were due to be delivered on 1 May at Magunje growth point.

Panganai revealed:

"Besides notifying all concerned members of the communities' leadership, including ZANU-PF Member of Parliament, Cecil Kashiri who had agreed to hand over the goods, I was arrested together with my daughter. We were accused of violating the lockdown restrictions."

Chakanyuka was arrested and handcuffed around mid-day. He spent the whole day at the charge office attending to charges of violating the national lockdown regulations. He paid a fine of ZWL500.

The food hampers were later collected by Hurungwe Rural District Council for distribution after five days.

Makisi Kofi, Chairperson of “Seka Urema Wafa” condemned the police action saying it was uncalled for.

He stated:

“It would have been better to arrest me instead of Chakanyuka as he was doing what the Government has failed to do by assisting people with disabilities during the national lockdown period. Most people in the community are suffering silently without food. Our members were the bulk of the beneficiaries but these efforts became fruitless due to a lack of understanding of how humanitarian issues are handled.”

“Seka Urema Wafa” has a membership of over 700 people including women and orphans amongst others.

ARRESTED AND ACCUSED OF LOITERING DURING FOOD HANDOUTS

Petronella Chakanyuka is a youth whose passion lies in equality amongst all citizens.

She believed that the calling by her father at Chakanyuka Foundation as a humanitarian Non-Government Organization was a noble idea. As a daughter, she is always at her father’s side during times of need in the Hurungwe community.

She said the 1 May event where they had gathered to distribute food hampers became a sad reality that some vulnerable communities will not be catered to.

She said:

“Justice is about fairness and feeling what must be to you and someone next to you equally without bias.”

Petronella was however arrested on the same day as her father after state security



agencies claimed they had violated the national lockdown restrictions after 50 people attended the handover ceremony.

“This is besides the fact that we had tried to maintain social distancing and that everyone had a face mask. I was charged for loitering and fined ZWL500,” she recalled.

BYO COUNCIL DESTROY VENDING STALLS

Bulawayo City Council destroyed vending stalls as part of plans to stop informal trading in the central business district.

Informal traders and residents argue that the demolition of tuck shops and vending stalls by local authorities’ amounts to compulsory deprivation of property, in violation of the fundamental right to property as enshrined in the Constitution.

The council, as part of a raft of measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, has since April been relocating all vendor operating stalls to the popular Fifth Avenue market place. Over 600 vendors have been affected. Council has not allocated new vending bays to the affected vendors.

A trader who spoke on condition of anonymity, citing fear of being denied a trading license under the new set-up said, the delay by the local authority to allocate vending bays is making trading unbearable.

“We are now selling our wares from our homes so as to avoid harassment and confiscation of goods,” she said.

Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association Director, Mr. Michael Ndiweni said the delay by the City Council to allocate vending stalls for informal traders has left them stranded as they have nowhere to trade from.

“The delay by the city council has affected informal traders because now they do not know where to work from,” Ndiweni said.

The local authority embarked on the relocation exercise in response to the spread of COVID-19 to decongest the city centre.



NO PPES FOR PRISONERS

Prisoners at Grey prison in Bulawayo do not have COVID-19 personal protective equipment, resulting in 76 of them testing positive for the coronavirus, a government minister confirmed.

Bulawayo Provincial Affairs Minister, Judith Ncube, said she was advised on 20 July that Grey prison had recorded COVID-19 cases. According to Ncube, the Zimbabwe Correctional Prisons and Correctional Services (ZCPS) are at a loss for words over the development.

"I have just verified with them, they are also at a loss," Ncube said. ZPCS spokesperson Superintendent Meya Khanyezi said she was still gathering the statistics when contacted for comment.

GOVT ROUNDS UP STREET KIDS AND DUMPS THEM AT JAIROS JIRI

Government rounded up street kids and dumped them at the Jairos Jiri Craft Centre in Bulawayo as a COVID-19 preventive measure.

The Jairos Jiri Association is a philanthropic organisation that was set up in 1950 in Bulawayo to support and train disadvantaged people. The 40 boys were housed in a dormitory and situated close to the perimeter fence of the Jairos Jiri Association centre, it is equipped with a couple of bunk beds, a single shower and toilet. Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare permanent secretary Simon Masanga on 10 April confirmed that the ministry has been rounding up street kids:

"Yes, it's very true we are engaging in such a task rounding up all the children living in the streets. They can no longer survive because no one is allowed to be in the city centre, hence we want to provide them with food and a very safe environment," Masanga said.

However, according to a social worker at Jairos Jiri who refused to be named, the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare rounded street kids and dumped them at Jairos Jiri without an elaborate plan of providing services to them.

"The street kids were just rounded up from the city centre and brought to the Jairos Jiri Association centre, without a clear plan on how issues to do with (their) withdrawal symptoms will be dealt with," the social worker explained.

RETURNEES DETAINED MORE THAN PRESCRIBED PERIOD

COVID-19 quarantine inmates at the Bulawayo Polytechnic on 14 June protested at the centre accusing authorities of detaining them beyond the mandatory 21 days.

They are part of hundreds of returning residents who are being placed on a compulsory 21-day quarantine as part of government's measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

However, the residents, mostly from South Africa, UK and Botswana, complained over what they described as the "appalling" living conditions at the isolation centre.

"I have been detained at this place since 10 May when I arrived from Botswana. Since my arrival, I was only tested on the 22nd of May and my results were negative. Following the outcome of our results as well as the expiry of the mandatory 21 days, we were supposed to have been released, but the process was further delayed because one of the residents tested positive," said one resident at the quarantine centre who refused to be named for fear of victimisation.

The resident also complained about the inhumane living conditions at the facility. "Conditions here are not fit for a normal human being. The food is horrible and inadequate. Last time, I had to call my brother from Harare to bring me food because I was starving. Whenever we try to raise a complaint, we are threatened," the resident added.

Other residents at the quarantine centre who also refused to be named have also raised similar sentiments.

Bulawayo Metropolitan Province Minister, Judith Ncube, confirmed that some residents have been over detained.

"The Provincial Medical Director (PMD) has briefed me that there are residents who have spent 28 days in the quarantine facilities because when they were about to be released, one of their colleagues tested positive, so they were told to remain there for another eight days," she said.



POLICE CLEARS CITY, TURNS AWAY ESSENTIAL SERVICES WORKERS

Police and soldiers on 16 June in Bulawayo forced residents in the central business district to go back home amid fears of protests over the worsening economic situation.

According to residents, armed soldiers and members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police also detained several people and beat up those who questioned their motive in blocking them from accessing cash in banks and buying food supplies.

"I was in a bank queue to collect money from Mukuru.com but the police at the roadblock did not buy my story and chased me away," said Moreen Moyo.

The clergy condemned the clampdown as worrisome.

"The clampdown this morning and closure of the central business district is another worrying example of how civil liberties are being trampled upon under the cover of COVID-19 measures," Reverend Useni Sibanda of the Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe commented.

"Poor and desperate people who had come to collect cash from the banks were chased away. If the government is now shutting down surely this should be communicated."

MDC Alliance activist Edwin Ndlovu confirmed the development.

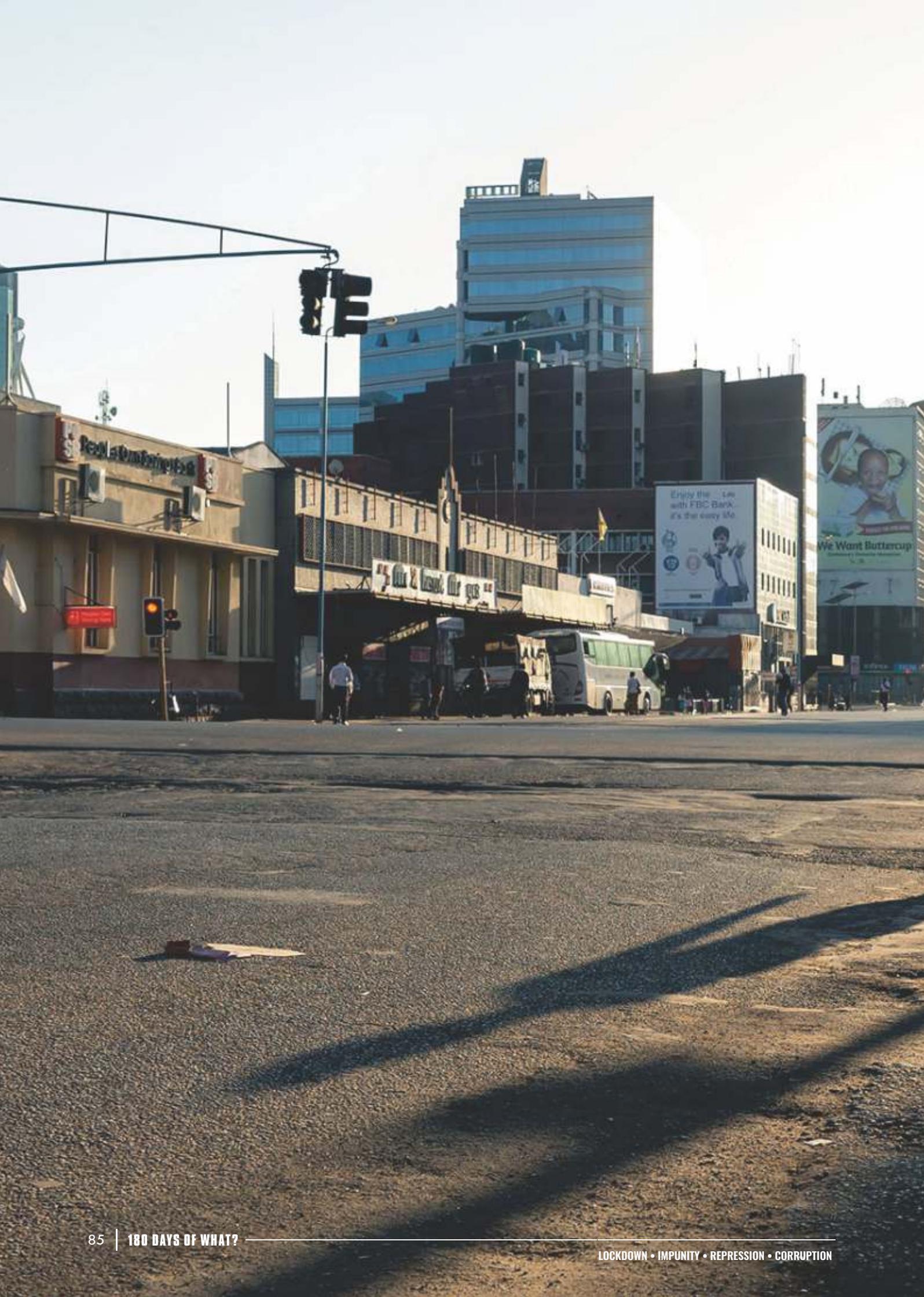
"Today in Bulawayo, the army and the police were chasing people away from the city telling them that they were not earning enough to go to work therefore business was closed in Bulawayo. Those who asked why they were being chased away from the city were assaulted and some detained by the army at Matshobana, Mzilikazi and near Amakhosi," Ndlovu said.

POLICE ON A RAMPAGE, ASSAULT VIC FALLS RESIDENTS

Police in Victoria Falls, on 3 April went on a rampage, beating up residents of Mkhosana suburb in the resort town and leaving one man unconscious.

The officers, all in uniform, are alleged to have been visibly drunk as they stormed into people's homes and began assaulting them.

The Victoria Falls Combined Residents Association, in a strongly-worded statement, condemned the actions of the police officers as barbaric.



“They were spotted drinking alcohol around Mkhosana High-Density Suburb during the day while on duty and upon finishing work decided not to go home but went around, still in their uniforms, assaulting residents found hanging around or seated in their homes, One 30-year-old male resident was beaten until unconscious after being found in his house with his mother. Neighbours called the Residents Association to come and intervene in what they perceived as police brutality. When the four criminals realised that their victim had fallen unconscious, they fled from the scene,” the residents’ association Chairperson Morgen Dube said in a statement.

Dube appealed to police authorities to launch a probe into the actions of officers accused of brutalising residents.

“I call upon the law to show no mercy on such members of this key service area and that they be treated with a heavy hand like any other criminal abusing the trust of both the residents and the authorities,” Dube said.

WATER SHORTAGES TRIGGER COVID-19 INFECTIONS

Gwanda, Plumtree and Matobo districts are emerging as fertile breeding grounds for COVID-19 outbreak owing to water shortages in the province. However, stalling shortages of water in pockets of Matabeleland South is seen as comprising a key preventive measure against the deadly COVID-19 which entails the constant washing of hands.

“Without water, this lockdown in the district will be a futile exercise as it will be hard for families to observe lockdown guidelines. One would advise authorities to make sure water is available during this difficult period,” Norman Mpofo, a former legislator for Bulilima East said on 3 April. Sichasisile Ndlovu, the coordinator of the Gwanda based civic Community Youth Development Trust (CYDT) stated:

“Residents are resorting to a few boreholes when there is no water; there is always a scramble as demand will be high. Such a scenario will spell disaster for Plumtree. Social distancing and hygiene is impossible under the circumstances. While the provision of water for washing hands is critical, residents have no access to it; most rural clinics have no piped water hence those coming for their routine health check-ups need to bring a bottle of water, for example at Mzimuni Clinic in rural Gwanda.”

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SPIKE DURING COVID-19

Bulawayo has recorded an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) cases since the beginning of the national lockdown.

“The social and psychological strain which is being exerted by the COVID-19 pandemic on numerous households is leading to the emergence of COVID-19 motivated GBV cases which has since seen some women and children being chased from their homes,” Emthonjeni Women's' Forum programs manager Melissa Ndlovu said.

“Emthonjeni Women's forum has attended to 23 GBV cases over the phone since the nationwide lockdown was put into effect on 30 March. Of these 23 cases, six were directly related to COVID-19 which included two women who were chased away from their homes by their spouses citing fear of COVID-19 infections.” According to Ndlovu, the organisation first recorded GBV cases within the first two weeks of the lockdown.

“Of the 23 cases recorded, 10 cases reported were of physical abuse, 5 of emotional abuse and 2 cases of rape. Six of these clients were referred to rapid response emergency personnel as they were COVID-19 related. Four were referred to the ZRP and the Chief's kraal as places of safety and two were referred to the District Public Prosecutors office as case follow-ups since they were rape cases. 4 went for trauma counselling and 5 conference calls for counselling and the last 2 were referred to Opportunistic Infection Clinics (OI),” said Ndlovu.

FAMILY SUFFERS COVID-19 STIGMATISATION

A Bulawayo family suffered stigmatisation from neighbours and other community members despite having recovered from COVID-19.

The family were one of the first reported cases of COVID-19 after being infected by their mother popularly known as case 16, who is also a health worker.

Speaking out during a women's round table COVID-19 media training seminar on 11 September, Case 16's daughter who also prefers to be called Case 21, said the family is finding it hard to have a normal life on account of the stigmatisation.

“On 24 May we were all confirmed as recovered and though that was supposed to bring us relief, the situation worsened. My mother almost lost her sanity and

despite our ordeal, we have tried to move on,” says Case 21.

“Our neighbours still do not buy from us which means we cannot easily make a living like before. Recently, we attended my mother’s friend’s funeral. Although we kept our distance, people, including church members chose to stand as far away from us as possible, preferring to expose themselves to rain rather than to come near us because to them, we are still the spreaders.”

According to her, COVID-19 has left deep wounds in their lives which will outlive the virus.

“Despite the fact that we are fine now, I wonder if I will be able to stand in front of children and teach them confidently once schools open. My 10-year-old daughter is still traumatised as she does not understand what was going on and I hope that one day we will get over this and lead normal lives again,” she said.

HUNGER STALKS COMMUNITY

Hunger stalks the San communities of Tsholotsho and Plumtree, and the situation is expected to get worse following the extension of the country’s COVID-19 lockdown.

According to the San, humanitarian aid from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and non-governmental organisations were abruptly cut in their communities during the initial phase of the lockdown, leaving them to starve.

According to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), the statutory body has received complaints of COVID-19 induced hunger amongst the San communities.

“In relation to the right to food as provided for in section 77 of the Constitution, on 14 April the Commission received complaints of limited access to food from the San communities of Tsholotsho and Plumtree, who are one of the ethnic minority groups in Zimbabwe,” the ZHRC said in a statement made on 22 April.

“They indicated that they are facing starvation due to the stoppage of food aid distribution in their areas as a result of the difficulties in enforcing social distancing at distribution points.”



“They also highlighted that they cannot fend for themselves through the usual performance of menial jobs for fellow villagers due to movement restrictions imposed by the national lockdown.”

Formerly inhabitants of the “Wankie Game Reserve”, now “Hwange National Park” in the 1920s, the San have, thanks to stringent anti-poaching laws promulgated by present-day Zimbabwean administration, been forced to abandon their hunting and gathering culture and tradition.

However, they still face marginalisation to date as they also struggle with government-mandated modernization programs.

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN TAKES TOLL ON VENDORS

The national lockdown measures have turned curio and fresh flower vendors into paupers, with many now struggling to put food on the table.

The curio and fresh flower vendors were a common sight at the Bulawayo City Hall before the lockdown period started. In separate interviews conducted on 11 April, the curio and fresh flower vendors said the COVID-19 lockdown measures have shattered their lives.

“When the President (Emmerson Mnangagwa) announced the lockdown, I had prepared numerous flower bouquets for my clients. Each bouquet costs USD40. All the flowers have gone bad and I have lost almost USD700. I have nowhere to turn to and staying at home without food is now a big challenge for me,” said Spiwe Mpala, a florist.

A curio seller, Jimmy Chigondore added:

“For us curio sellers, I do not think we will be able to recover from this setback considering that the bulk of our clients are international holidaymakers from countries such as Germany, USA, France, United Kingdom and China who buy our curios as souvenirs. The vendors said they were not sure if they qualified for the USD600 million funds announced by the government to cushion those running small businesses from the impact of the unprecedented business break.

“Our biggest challenge is how to get information about the fund because it was announced when the country was already under lockdown. Our members have been greatly affected,” Chigondore said.



GOVERNMENT NEGLECTS PWDS

Government has been accused of neglecting people with disabilities in its COVID-19 response plans.

To date, there is still no COVID-19 information in formats that people with disabilities could access.

The Zimbabwe Down Syndrome Association director Sibonisiwe Mazula said most PWDs are facing challenges in accessing critical information especially related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“People with disabilities are facing challenges in getting information in the right format, especially the visually and hearing impaired who are being deprived of their right to get or receive information like every citizen. Those with physical disabilities are having challenges with public transport. I know of someone whose relatives sent some money from the diaspora, he had to hire someone to go and collect his money,” said Mazula.

The Rare Diseases and Disabilities Africa (RaDDA) Foundation, a local non-profit making organisation that represents people with rare diseases and disabilities, said it was disappointing that authorities fail to pass the test on the right to access to information for the disabled in the fight against COVID-19.

“Even before the onset of COVID-19, our country has been facing challenges when it comes to addressing the needs of the visually impaired through the use of Braille. Most visually impaired people, therefore, depend almost entirely on their caregivers, family and friends for the dissemination of information and in this case, on issues to do with COVID-19,” Jullian Nyarota, the RaDDA media liaison stated.

The RaDDA accused authorities of failing the disabled in the COVID-19 fight by failing to observe Article 21 of the United Nations Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities which calls on state parties to take all measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to “receive and impart” information through all forms of communication of their choice.



POLICE ASSAULT VILLAGERS IN MATOBO

Anti-riot police on 13 September descended on Domboshaba village in Matobo district, indiscriminately beating up villagers for daring to chase away “Amakorokoza” who had invaded their area.

A number of villagers had to sleep in the mountains where they sought refuge from the police’s brutal attack.

The illegal miners recently invaded the village due to COVID-19 induced hardships which is part of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, to prospect for gold, angering villagers enough to drive them away.

One of the villagers, an elderly woman, who slept in a cave in the mountains, said that they were afraid of being shot or taken away to be killed as happened during the “Gukurahundi” era.

She also expressed fear that the illegal miners that they had evicted might have poisoned a key water source that also caters for their livestock in the area.

“Two villagers, Martin Khumalo and Thembelani Sibindi were taken by the police and we don’t know where they are. We had to flee to the mountains for safety,” she said.

Thousands were tortured, killed and dumped at disused mine shafts in the district during the Gukurahundi era.

The woman said that the illegal gold panners first came to the village in January, and sought permission to mine from the village head but villagers refused.

Matabeleland South Police Spokesperson, Chief Inspector Philisani Ndebele, who professed ignorance of the incident said that the police do not condone violence, even amongst members of its rank.

“You must tell those villagers to phone me. I cannot comment first without a report, as the villagers must file a report of an assault. Assault by another person, whether it is by a soldier or police officer is a crime because they would have committed an offence. Everyone must be able to report,” Ndebele said.



POLICE SET DOGS ON BEITBRIDGE RESIDENT

A 40-year-old Beitbridge man was hospitalised on 1 August after police officers reportedly set dogs on him whilst enforcing lockdown regulations. Edmond Chimusoro Zeyazeya passed out on arrival at the Beitbridge district but he later came to, after the vicious dog assault.

“I begged the police officer, Constable Edison Utete, to stop his dog, a German shepherd, from further hurting me. The dog did not take his order and he had to forcibly remove it, only to set it on another man that I later learnt was Ben Tavengwa,” said Zeyazeya as he narrated his ordeal. Zeyazeya was on his way to the supermarkets to buy food for his family when the incident happened. His sister in law Eugenia Makura stated:

“He left home in the morning around 8 to buy food for the children at the Engen garage because one of the children had said they wanted Chicken Inn. He said when he got to Engen garage, he met police officers who were evidently in operation. When he saw them, he was fearful and he tried to move away. However, the police officers reportedly ordered him to stop and he obliged and they set their dogs on him. As if that was not enough, police spent nearly two hours with him in their van as they continued with their raids against illegal foreign currency traders and other COVID-19 lockdown violators before taking him to the hospital for medical attention.”

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) have approached the courts demanding a refund of the ZWL1 000 that Zeyazeya and Tavengwa were made to pay as fines. Through a court application by Patrick Tererai of Tererai Legal Practice, a member of ZLHR said that the fines obtained from the two victims were paid under duress and should be refunded.

Tererai cited the State and Beitbridge Urban Police officer-in-charge Kenneth Mushongahande as the first and second respondents, respectively.

“This is an application to set aside a conviction and sentence wherein the two were charged by the respondent’s subordinates for contravening section 4(1)(a) of Statutory Instrument 83 of 2020, ‘Unnecessary Movement During National Lockdown’ and sentenced to pay a fine of ZWL500 on August 1, 2020,” said Tererai in his joint application for the two.

Tererai further argues that his clients were left with no option but to pay after being told it was the only way they could access medical treatment.



PWDS LEFT OUT IN GOVT BAILOUT PROGRAMMES

People with Disabilities (PWD's) have been left out in the government's COVID-19 bailout programs, it has been learnt.

The government announced that vulnerable citizens will receive ZWL200 to cushion them against the effects of the national lockdown which has resulted in many people losing their income.

Watson Khupe, a Senator representing PWD's, on 4 May, however, said that the majority of PWD's however risk losing out on the programme as they are not inclusive.

"Some of the PWDs live in areas without mobile networks, so the idea of sending the cushioning funds through mobile services is not possible as most of them would not receive the funds," said Khupe.

He added that the government should consider working with Headmen and Chiefs to make sure that everyone receives the funds.

"Government should consider involving Chiefs, Councillors and Headmen in the disbursement of funds to PWDs as they know who they are. Most of the PWDs do not even have mobile phones," said the Senator.

He also implored local authorities to work with PWDs in ensuring that they get adequate water supply. Khupe concluded by stating:

"Most major cities especially Harare, Bulawayo and Gweru go for up to five days without water supplies and this troubles an ordinary citizen who is able-bodied. What more someone with a disability?"

COURT DEALS DEADLY BLOW TO VENDORS

It never rains but pours for Bulawayo informal traders after a High Court Judge dismissed their application challenging a decision by the Council to destroy their bays at the Fifth Avenue market place amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In April, Council destroyed vending stalls in the central business district as a means to put a stop to informal trading in the city. This left hundreds of informal traders with no other source of income.

The vendors operating under the banner “Bulawayo Upcoming Traders' Association (Buta)”, through their lawyers, R Ndlovu and Company, filed an urgent chamber application at the Bulawayo High Court citing Bulawayo City Council (BCC) and Local Government and Public Works Minister, July Moyo as respondents.

The informal traders and residents argued that Council had not complied with section 199 (3) of the Urban Councils Act, which requires proper notice of any proposed demolition of illegal structures to be given to the owner of said structure. The section provides for an appeal against the notice to be filed with the Administrative Court within 28 days, during which period, no action may be taken based on the notice until the appeal is either determined or abandoned.

However, Bulawayo High Court’s Justice Martin Makonese ruled that the application failed to meet the requirements of urgency.

“In this matter, there is no single allegation that the applicant will suffer irreparable harm, let alone proof or detail of the perceived irreparable harm. The applicant had full knowledge of the fate of the vending bays from April 26, 2020. The applicant deliberately approached the court on a falsehood. It was within the knowledge of the applicant that all vending bays had been dismantled and in reality, there are no vending bays. In the result, I am satisfied that the order sought is incompetent at law. This application should never have seen the door of this court and accordingly, it is hereby dismissed with costs,” Makonese said in his ruling dated July 10.

TEACHER UNION LEADER RAIDED, WIFE KIDNAPPED

Armed men broke into Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe president Obert Masaraure’s house on July 17 at 01:00am and kidnapped his wife and detained her in a car for an hour to force her to disclose the whereabouts of her husband.

The assailants, who were driving a silver Fortuner without registration plates and a double cab with concealed plates, threatened Masaraure’s wife with death if she refused to disclose the whereabouts of her husband.

“We are now living in fear as trade unionists. We urge the President of Zimbabwe, E. D Mnangagwa, to heed our call for a Zimbabwe where our rights to protection,



fair wage, freedom of speech and after speech are guaranteed. This thuggish behaviour of state security agents is destroying the international relations of our country, as well as killing the future of many Zimbabweans,” ARTUZ said in a statement.

ARMED MEN ABDUCT MASARAURE’S COUSIN

Armed men who introduced themselves as State security agents abducted Obert Masaraure’s cousin demanding that he disclose the whereabouts of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe president who went into hiding after police listed him among people on the wanted list over the July 31 polls.

On July 13, the armed men raided Masaraure’s uncle’s place of residence in Kuwadzana and abducted the teacher union leader’s cousin demanding the whereabouts of the union leader.

MDC ALLIANCE SPOKESPERSON ARRESTED OVER PROTESTS

MDC Alliance spokesperson Fadzayi Mahere was arrested for protesting against the government on July 31.

She was arrested at Groombridge, alongside six others and spent a night in jail, to be released on August 1 on ZWL5,000 bail each. They were charged for ‘unnecessary movement’ in violation of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

“We had written placards that read ‘No Violence, I am protesting peacefully, Babies’ Lives Matter, COVID Kills, So does corruption, FreeZimbabwe, I have a dream, and EndHunger,” Mahere said, adding they were wearing face masks, had hand sanitizer and respecting social distancing, apart from staying in the prescribed radius.

“Moments, after we left the house, a vehicle without a number plate, was following us and taking pictures. We continued walking. Courage does not mean you’re not afraid. It means that you face your fears and choose to act in spite of them.”

“We continued walking. As we walked down the road, people stared at us in

shock. As we passed the vendors' flower market, everybody stopped talking. Some looked to the side. One could slice through the thick fog of fear with a knife."

She said she continued with the protest until they were arrested because she believed in the constitution that guarantees the right to peaceful protests.

I THOUGHT CITIZENS HAD SPACE – DANGAREMBWA

Author and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembwa, who was arrested for demonstrating on July 31, told the Mail and Guardian that despite threats from ZANU-PF to descend on protestors ahead of the proposed protest, she was not a politician and thought citizens still had space

"There had been a call out for a demonstration on social media for weeks, and people were excited. You could feel the energy," she says.

"I had expected there would be protesters with placards lining the streets but there was absolutely nobody, because a couple of weeks earlier the government had declared it an insurrection, and by the time the announcement was made the army had been deployed."

She added: "We were treated well, but yes I am afraid. There were increased abductions leading up to the demonstration, but these were mainly opposition politicians and activists and I'm neither: I'm a writer and a film-maker but I'm also a responsible citizen of Zimbabwe, and I thought, even if there was a crackdown, the citizen still has space in law."

She said the COVID-19 curfew was now more of a power grab and wondered how a health emergency needed a military solution.

STATE SECURITY AGENTS RAID TSENENGAMU'S HOME

Suspected State security agents raided former ZANU-PF youth leader Godfrey Tsenengamu home in Waterfalls as well as Bindura and harassed family members demanding to know the whereabouts of the youth leader.

"They have been going to my house harassing my family members. They are

demanding to know about my whereabouts. They even went to the stage of breaking into my yard wanting to plant guns so that they can press treason charges on me. Fortunately, there were some people,” Tsenengamu said.

He was among many organizers of the July 31 protests who were forced into hiding ahead of the proposed protest date.

“We have indeed been forced to move out of our homes because they (State security agents) are looking for us. We are living outside the comfort of our homes because they want to intimidate and to harm us ... so that they can instil fear in everyone.”

MDC ALLIANCE YOUTH LEADER ARRESTED OVER PROTESTS

MDC Alliance Youth Assembly Chairperson Obey Sithole was on June 2 arrested for participating in a flash demonstration in Warren Park during the COVID -19 lockdown.

Represented by Obey Shava and Jeremiah Bhamu, lawyers from the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Sithole was charged with violating lockdown regulations.

Three opposition youth leaders, Harare West MP Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova were allegedly abducted and tortured over the same demonstration. The three have already been charged with participating in an unsanctioned demonstration.

The Constitution provides for the right to demonstrate.

FEMALE DOMBOSHAVA TEACHER BEAR BRUNT OF ARMY BRUTALITY

An Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) senior official based in Domboshava was on May 18 tortured by six men believed to be State over a video she posted on social media.

In the video she that is on social media giant Facebook, Moreblessing Nyambara appears protesting the abduction of three MDC Alliance members- Harare West MP Joanah Mamombe and two-party youth leaders Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova were allegedly abducted and tortured in the second week of May for

organizing an anti-government protest.

Nyambara is the ARTUZ national secretary for gender and social welfare and she suffered severe injuries from the incident which happened at around 9pm.

Her medical report reveals that she sustained a fractured right arm, bruises all over her body, while two of her teeth have loosened up. Her police report was handled at Chinhamhora Police Station under case number RRB 4326701.

Nyambara said on the day of the incident, a man in military uniform approached her, while she was at a shopping centre in Domboshava waiting for her turn to buy subsidized mealie-meal.

“He asked me what I was up to at the shops and I told him I wanted to buy mealie-meal,” Nyambara said. “He then said he wanted to know why I was inciting people to turn against the government by posting a video on social media about the abducted MDC Alliance MP Joanah Mamombe and two other party youths. “Before I could explain, he dragged me out of my car and started assaulting me with fists and booted feet all over my body.”

Nyambara also revealed that five men who were dressed in dark suits arrived at the scene and joined in assaulting her. She claimed the men took turns to assault her, destroying her spectacles.

GWERU JOURNALIST DETAINED FOR DOING HIS WORK

The Midlands Newsday reporter Brenna Matendere was on August 16 unfairly arrested and detained allegedly for flouting lockdown regulations before being freed without a charge.

Matendere was detained inside filthy police cells at Gweru Central police station despite having produced his accreditation card to prove he was allowed to do his work as the media belong to the exempted essential services sector. The police denied him the right to seek a lawyer or inform a next of kin of the arrest before being locked up.

“It was a case of being targeted by the police who were irked by numerous stories I have written exposing their corruption and wrongdoing. A truck full of riot



police officers stormed me while I was interviewing a source in town around 2pm on the day. They forced me into their truck and upon arrival at the police station there were no statements taken from me and I was just pushed into a holding cell."

"In the morning my family and media colleagues filed a missing person report at the police station and that is when I was later released without charge as the officers took turns to refuse responsibility for my arrest. Inside the police cell, I was placed in there where 10 hardcore criminals who did not have PPEs and there was no social distancing. We shared a single toilet without running water for 17 hours and no food was provided to me as is required by the law," he said.

TEACHERS LEADER TORTURED BY STATE SECURITY AGENTS

Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe president was on March 3 abducted from his home and tortured by suspected state security agents. Masaraure's tormentors have since been identified by exiled former cabinet minister Jonathan Moyo as a specialized section of the military known as the Ferret Force.

"I was severely tortured and today I have scars both emotionally and physically. After the ordeal, I was dumped at Harare Central police station and what irked me was that instead of the police officers arresting the people who had tortured me, they actually joked together and mocked me," he said.

The ARTUZ leader said his assailants used electricity switch codes to hit him all over his body while others resorted to clenched fists and open boots.

"Right now my family is very devastated by that ordeal. Even though I took medical help, I can feel that I am not fit and have permanent injuries," said Masaraure.

GWERU MOTORIST HIT BY THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD

The military Presidential Guard details deployed to cover President Emmerson Mnangagwa during his visit to the Midlands Provincial Coordinating Committee of ZANU-PF assaulted a Mvuma motorist for parking his vehicle on the road-turn off leading into the party conference centre in Gweru on September 13.



“On my way to Mvuma, my car developed a fault as I approached the conference centre just after Thornhill Air Base. Two soldiers came running and said it was a no-parking zone on that day. They said I must drive off but my car could not start,” he explained.

“Just as I tried to check my car, two other soldiers came fast and asked me to roll on the ground while butting me with their guns. I have asthma and suddenly I got an attack that is when they dispersed. If it was not for a good Samaritan who came over to help me the worst could have happened,” said Tafirenyika Bhamusi (38).

POLICE SEIZE GOLD, ATTACK SHURUGWI MINER

On August 19 police from Gweru Central station unlawfully seized gold nuggets from a 28-year-old miner Tawanda Mhiko at Gweru Cathedral bus stop before assaulting him severely.

It was around 19:30 pm.

“I was on my way from the mine and when I disembarked from a private vehicle at the Cathedral, six officers stopped and searched me pretending to be checking my COVID-19 exemption letter. They found some three pieces of gold nuggets in my right back pocket and accused me of smuggling. I produced all my papers but they took the metals amounting to about 60 grammes saying my crime was moving at night but it was before curfew time,” he said.

“I tried to protest, that is when they said I was stubborn and started beating me. I lost balance during the ordeal and tripped down headfirst into the tarmac. They had no mercy and did not stop beating me. These days I have a terrible headache and my doctor advised me to go for a head extract but I am yet to raise the money because it’s almost USD 1000 needed,” he said.

MONEY CHANGER ATTACKED BY POLICE DOGS

On 1 August in Bulawayo central an illegal money changer was severely attacked by police dogs after the cops ordered the vicious animals to attack.

Michael Ncube was with other money changers at their usual spot when the

police raided them. His colleagues managed to escape after being chased by the police but Ncube was unfortunate enough to be caught.

"I was with my colleagues at our usual spot where we find customers who need our services. The policemen left their dogs to come towards us ready for attack. Some of my friends managed to escape from the dogs but I failed to run and was caught," said Ncube.

"I was badly injured as a result of the biting and the police left me lying on the ground until I was assisted by onlookers who carried me."

Ncube said his life will be the same again as the scars left on his body will always remind him of the horrible attack.

ARMY DETAILS BATTER CHINHOYI JUVENILES OVER FACE MASKS

On 17 July in Chinhoyi three boys were severely beaten by soldiers after they were not wearing face masks. The three boys were going to town when the incident happened. They forgot to wear the masks due to the emergency nature of their visit to town.

"We were going to town with my friends and we forgot to put on our masks before going out. Instead of ordering us to follow the COVID-19 rules, the soldiers started beating us very hard," Blessing Kavhura narrated the trio's ordeal.

"There were three of us in the vehicle so we just wanted to wear masks when we reached public spaces but we were not given time to explain."

"We were rushing to receive the body of our brother who died in South Africa's Eastern Cape. My back was injured after the attack and up to now, I can't do heavy jobs. I am the breadwinner and my family looks upon me as their provider despite the fact that I am only 17. My life has been shuttered as a result of the attack," he said.



DOCTORS TAKE GOVERNMENT TO COURT OVER PPE

Doctors under the banner of Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) in May took the government to court over its failure to provide personal protective clothing to the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ZADHR was seeking an order to compel the authorities to urgently provide personal protective equipment for medical practitioners. The doctors argued it was a violation of their rights to be deployed to deal with the pandemic without protective clothing, challenging the government to provide the PPE to save the lives of the health practitioners.

"There are simply no adequate PPE for health personnel working at public and private health facilities in the country. We attest to the shortages because we work there," read the court application.

"If no urgent steps are taken to address the shortcomings, the country will be caught unprepared to handle a possible escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic and many lives will be lost, sadly including the lives of those at the frontline."

RETURNEES FORCED TO MEET THE COST FOR COVID-19 TESTS

Returnees housed at the Belvedere Teacher's College protested on May 24 over the government's decision to compel them to finance their own COVID-19 mandatory tests because the government had run out of the test kits.

The returnees demanded answers from government authorities on why they were being forced to pay for their COVID -19 screening when the tests were supposed to be done at the government cost.

Government had announced returnees would be required to pay US\$65 for COVID-19 screening for them to be released from the holding centres. The protests were later called off after government officials went to assure the returnees that the government would meet the cost. Government was later climbed down on the measure, with Information secretary Nick Mangwana the new order only affected some returnees in a hurry where an option for testing at private facilities was allowed.

"This (protests) happened for a short while and as I am speaking everything has been sorted out and testing is being undertaken at no cost in line with the government's position," Mangwana said.

LAWYER, 3 MDC ALLIANCES ACTIVISTS ARRESTED

Police arrested opposition activists MP Joana Mamombe and youth leaders, Cecilia Chimbiru and Netsai Marova, on their way to report at Central police station as part of their bail conditions.

Together with their lawyer from the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Obey Shava, the three were arrested near ZANU-PF headquarters on their way to the Central Police Station to report as a fulfilment of their bail condition. Chimbiru was also assaulted by a soldier during the arrest on July 31 when the police locked up cities to foil planned anti-government protests.

The three are accused of faking their own abduction in May, a charge they are denying. The three were abducted in May by suspected state agents and dumped in Bindura after being tortured including being sexually assaulted.

Confirming the arrest, ZLHR said: "Detention of our lawyer Obey Mashava is strongly condemned, he must be released forthwith together with his clients on their way to fulfil their bail conditions. We also strongly condemn the wanton assault of Chimbiru by a soldier."

JOURNALISTS ASSAULTED

Journalists Munashe Chokodza and Leopold Munhende were assaulted at Warren Park shopping centre by soldiers on the evening of 24 June on their way home from work.

Chakodza works for online news site 263Chat while Munhende works for NewZimbabwe.com.

The two were assaulted with military whips at a shopping centre in Harare, despite media being classified as an essential service.

Soldiers were beating up people to disperse them from the shops when the two journalists were stopped and asked why they were not respecting lockdown restrictions. They told the soldiers they were coming from work, produced their press cards but the soldier would have none of it.

But the soldiers remarked: "You journalists think you are special in this country", before ordering them to roll on the ground and went on to assault the two who sustained injuries in the process.

ARMED POLICE STALK HOSPITALIZED MDC ALLIANCE ACTIVISTS

On May 30, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights revealed that armed State security agents were stalking the three MDC Alliance activists, Harare West MP Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova, who were detained at a private hospital.

The three were supposed to be in the custody of the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services after being granted ZWL1 000 bail each by a Harare magistrate at their hospital beds where they were being attended to after being tortured after their alleged abduction.

They have been charged for contravening lockdown regulations by engaging a flash protest during COVID-19 restrictions which prohibited gatherings above 50 people.

“We have been advised that the police officers in uniform and civilian clothes and other suspicious-looking people in civilian clothes who look and act like State security agents and who have not identified themselves to our clients or to us as the legal representatives have continued to have a domineering presence at the hospital where our clients are receiving treatment following their abduction, enforced disappearance and torture on May 13-14 2020,” Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights director Roselyn Hanzi said in a letter directed to the officer-in-charge, CID Harare.

“Due to the conduct of the police officers at the hospital, we are of the view that they are now contravening section 219(d) of the Constitution that states that the police service, yourselves, are established to maintain law and order,” Hanzi said.

JOURNALISTS ARRESTED FOR CONTRAVENING LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

Journalists Frank Chikowore (40) of Voice of America’s Studio 7 and Samuel Takawira (29) of 263Chat were arrested for contravening lockdown restrictions and refusing to obey a lawful order when they “sneaked” into a private hospital and arrested MDC Alliance activists.

Police alleged the two journalists violating COVID-19 regulations after sneaking into Parktown Medical Private Hospital in Waterfalls to interview three MDC-Alliance members, Joanna Mamombe, Netsai Marova and Cecelia Chimhiri undergoing treatment from the medical facility after being tortured after their alleged abduction.

They were also charged with refusing to accept instructions from an enforcement officer.

National police spokesperson Assistant Commissioner Paul Nyathi on May 23 confirmed the arrest of the two journalists.

“Circumstances leading to their arrests are that the two went to the hospital at around 8am and it is believed that they sneaked into the hospital after conniving with a security guard at the hospital,” Nyathi said.

“They had intended to interview the three MDC-Alliance members who are admitted at the hospital and they had laid their equipment down when they were seen by security at the premises, who alerted the police.”

MDC Alliance vice-president Tendai Biti condemned the arrest of journalists doing their work.

“The arrest of journalists doing their work is unlawful and ridiculous.”

JOURNALISTS ATTACKED AT PRESS CONFERENCE

On September 18, several journalists were attacked by unknown assailants while covering a press conference addressed by Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) president Takudzwa Ngadziore.

Some unidentified men violently disrupted the press conference held next to Impala Car Rentals in Harare, beating up the Zinasu leadership and journalists as well as destroying gadgets used by the scribe to record the proceedings.

The press conference was meant to push the car rental company to disclose details of the person who hired the car used to abduct student journalist Tawanda Muchehiwa in Bulawayo on July 30. Muchehiwa is also the nephew to ZimLive editor, Mduduzi Mathuthu, who also fled his home after police wanted to arrest him over the July 31 protests.

Ngadziore, who is on ZWL2000 bail after he was arrested for protesting against Impala Car Rentals, was arrested soon after the attack.



MDC ALLIANCE MP FORCIBLY DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL

MDC Alliance Harare West MP Joanna Mamombe was on September 15 forcibly discharged from a private hospital in Borrowdale by eight anti-riot police officers after a Harare magistrate issued her with a warrant of arrest for absconding court earlier in the day.

Mamombe was issued with a warrant of arrest after she failed to appear in court to answer charges of “faking her own abduction” because she was in hospital receiving treatment. The warrant was issued despite representations by her lawyers that she is in hospital.

Police stormed the hospital and took her away to court where prosecutor Michael Reza wanted to show a video of the MP recorded on September 4 doing shopping at Avondale shopping centre as a way of proving that she was faking illness.

MAMOMBE, NGARIVHUME ARRESTED

Police in July 2020 arrested journalist Hopewell Chin'ono after forcibly getting entry into his house in Chisipite.

The police also arrested opposition Transform Zimbabwe leader Jacob Ngarivhume, accusing the two “of incitement to participate in a gathering with intent to promote public violence, breaches of peace or bigotry as defined in section 187(1)(a) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act as read with section 37(1)(a)(i) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act.”

The two were accused of inciting a revolt against President Emmerson Mnangagwa by calling on people to participate in a planned anti-government protest on July 31.

The police claimed Chin'ono posted various messages on his Twitter account using the handle @daddyhope between May 2020 and July 2020 calling upon Zimbabweans across the country to engage in acts of public violence against the Mnangagwa government on 31 July 2020.

Ngarivhume was accused of spearheading the #ZanuPFMustGo campaign and the posts by the two, therefore, were intended to disturb the peace, security or order of the public. The police also raided Chin'ono's home to confiscate electronic gadgets which they claimed were used to commit the crime.

NGARIVHUME, CHIN'ONO GRANTED BAIL AFTER SPENDING 45 DAYS IN PRISON

Journalist Hopewell Chin'ono and opposition Transform Zimbabwe leader Jacob Ngarivhume were denied bail and finally released after spending 45 days in remand prison on charges of inciting people to rise against President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Ngarivhume and Chin'ono were released by the High Court on September 3 on ZWL50 000 and ZWL10 000 bail respectively, with stringent bail conditions. The two were arrested on July 20 and made four unsuccessful attempts for freedom, appearing before different judges.

CHIN'ONO'S RIGHT FOR LEGAL REPRESENTATION OF CHOICE VIOLATED

On August 18, Harare magistrate Ngoni Nduna top human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa from incarcerated journalist Hopewell Chin'ono accusing her of disrespecting the court by making derogatory remarks about the court through her Facebook page: Beatrice Mtetwa and the Rule of Law.

The order came after an application by the State, represented by prosecutors Whisper Mabhaudhi and Tendai Shonhayi, that Mtetwa is disqualified from representing Chin'ono because she had shown lack of respect for the courts.

Despite Mtetwa denying and highlighting that she was not the owner of the alleged account, Nduna disqualified Mtetwa from representing Chin'ono, who has the right to legal representation of choice. Mtetwa has since appealed against Nduna's ruling.



CHIN'ONO, NGARIVHUME EXPOSED TO INHUMANE PRISON TREATMENT

Journalist Hopewell Chin'ono has disclosed appalling conditions at the prison where he remained in leg irons, being denied food, water as well as warm clothes.

This was heard in court on August 13 when a Harare magistrate ordered prison authorities to unchain him, but ruling that journalists and the public be barred from the court when Chin'ono gives testimony of poor prison conditions.

Chin'ono's lawyer had already sued the prison authorities to stop the "blatant and malicious stripping away" of his rights. That included being removed from the chains as well as being denied adequate food and warm clothing.

This was after Chin'ono appeared at the magistrates' court in leg irons, a month after his arrest.

"It is an anathema to any justice system to have someone in chains being tried, what sort of justice that will be?" said Chin'ono's lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa.

The magistrate then granted Mtetwa's appeal but ordered that the journalist's testimony of harsh conditions be heard under camera.

Chin'ono claimed he was denied a sweater in the cold weather, no food and was forced to survive on biscuits.

SOLDIERS, POLICE OFFICERS BEAT UP CIVILIANS

On April 13, a video of soldiers from the Zimbabwe National Army beating up civilians with the help of the police went.

In the video, whose date could not be ascertained, a group of soldiers and police officers were whipping at least five civilians who were being forced to lie on the ground. The citizens were reportedly out to buy food, but assaulted for violating lockdown regulations.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa's lockdown restrictions allowed citizens to go out and buy food within a five-kilometre radius. People have also been going out to queue for subsidized mealie meal at shops where no social distancing was being practised.



POLICE BLOCK CITIES, PEOPLE FORCED TO GO BACK HOME

On June 16, police and soldiers blocked motorists from entering the central business districts in Harare and Bulawayo and other cities only allowing health workers and members of the security agents while the rest were turned back home.

Motorists were turned back home at police checkpoints, while dozens were arrested for not respecting the order. Most of the people were going to work and had exemption letters to show that they were essential service workers. Furthermore, the government had relaxed the restrictions and allowed formal companies to operate, with the exception of the informal industry.

The police said it was enforcing lockdown restrictions. By midday, all cities were deserted after the early morning sweep. Police and soldiers ordered the few people who had managed to get into town to go back home, with some people including the elderly on bank queues being assaulted.

Some soldiers also tore apart some workers' exemption letters while the banks were forced to close with Standard Chartered Bank sending messages to its customers saying it closed doors on reasons to "circumstances beyond our control."

Fadzayi Mahere, MDC Alliance spokesperson accused the government of being "at war with its citizens."

RESIDENTS FAIL TO ACCESS WATER

In August, the water situation deteriorated and Harare City Council disclosed it has run out of water treatment chemicals to be able to provide potable water across the city, a constitutional right to citizens.

Harare City Council spokesperson Michael Chideme said the council needed \$3 million to import water treatment chemicals.

Lack of water has forced charities to deploy water bowsers to most vulnerable areas where most residents are forced to spend the whole day queuing for the precious liquid. Social distancing is not respected at the boreholes, posing a huge risk to the spread of the virus.

"So we end up buying very little and also treating restricted amounts of water so

that we can last longer with the amounts that we have,” said Chideme.

A resident, Florence Phiri said: “But my appeal to the city council is; it must increase the number of bowsers that bring water here because sometimes some people go home with no water. That results in them looking for water in open sources like wells. Our troubles are less when they come.”

POLICE BEAT, ARREST STRIKING NURSES

Police in Harare on June 6 arrested over a dozen nurses who were protesting against poor salaries and working conditions outside Sally Mugabe Hospital.

“At least 13 of our members and union leaders were arrested during the demonstrations,” Enoch Dongo, the Zimbabwe Nurses Association president said.

“They are in the cells; we don’t know what charges they are facing.”

The nurses were also protesting against the government’s failure to provide personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation that has resulted in many health workers being infected.

Videos of police officers beating up the nurses during the protests also went viral. The right to protest is provided for in the Constitution.



SIKHALA FORCED TO STAY IN CELLS RESERVED FOR CONVICTED INMATES

MDC Alliance vice national chairman, who is also Zengeza West MP Job Sikhala is being kept in a cell reserved for convicted inmates at the Chikurubi Maximum Prison, the court heard on August 24.

Sikahala also revealed the sorry state of affairs at the prison where inmates who contract the COVID-19 were condemned to death.

Sikhala, who was arrested on 21 for inciting public violence, is detained in the D class section at Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison. The wing is reserved for convicted inmates serving their prison sentences.

He disclosed that he was being ill-treated with some prison officers telling him that he will die in prison and should immediately advise prison officers of his next of kin.

He was being detained handcuffed and in leg irons and without personal protective equipment.

Through his lawyers Jeremiah Bamu, Advocate Eric Matinenga and Harrison Nkomo of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Sikhala said ill-treatment was a violation of human rights.

RETURNEES DETAINED LONGER THAN THE PRESCRIBED TIME

On May 31, returnees quarantined at Mkoba Teachers College in Gweru, protested over the delay in receiving COVID-19 test results so that they could be cleared to leave the holding centre.

They claimed that results for only 34 inmates out of the 200 tests conducted were accounted for, forcing most of them to stay in the quarantine centre longer than the World Health Organization mandated period.

Without testing, the government would not be able to clear inmates from the quarantine facilities, a move that forced repatriates to accumulate without others being released, raising fears of the spread of the virus in the holding centres. The government was also failing to feed the growing number of returnees, forcing the inmates to go for a whole day with only one meal.

UK RETURNEES PAINT A GORY PICTURE OF QUARANTINE CENTRES

Returnees from the UK disclosed how the government was forcing citizens returning back from other countries to be quarantined under inhuman conditions that could cause the spread of the COVID-19.

On April 13, the government, through Information permanent secretary Nick Mangwana, claimed that 65 returnees from the UK had demanded hotel quarantine as opposed to Belvedere Teachers' College.

The returnees were roundly condemned, but in response, denied they wanted hotel accommodation, but were simply demanding basic facilities where they don't risk contracting the virus.

The returnees disclosed that they were being made to live in hostels without running water, sharing toilets and bathrooms. They claimed the government was forcing its citizens to stay like animals, also revealing that they were threatened with the deployment of police to force them to stay in the hostels with inadequate basic facilities.

One of the returnees claimed the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare threatened them: "If you don't comply we will ask the police to enforce our commands. You can't choose where to stay, we chose for you."

WE WERE ARRESTED FOR BEING MDC ALLIANCE

One of the MDC Alliance youth chair arrested for convening a district meeting at the party headquarters on June 10 says they were targeted simply for being members of the opposition.

Amos Hungwe was arrested with eight other district chairs at a meeting they convened, despite observing COVID-19 safety regulations. They were less than 50, which is the cap required for a gathering under COVID-19 guidelines.

The meeting failed to proceed after police stormed the party headquarters in Rhodene low-density suburb.

"We had observed social distancing, had face masks, had sanitised and we were less than fifty. Funny enough, the police rounded us up and we spent the greater part of the day with no charges laid against us before a lawyer dispatched by the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Martin Mureri, came to our rescue.

“We were then told we had violated COVID-19 regulations and were made to pay ZWL\$600 each. But we feel we were just being punished for belonging to the opposition party,” he said.

I WAS TOLD TO PAY A \$50 BRIBE FOR PASSAGE TO TAKE MY SICK MOTHER TO HOSPITAL

A Masvingo businessman told the court how he was forced to pay a USD50 bribe to a cop manning a roadblock during the lockdown period in order to gain entry to go to the hospital with his sick mother. Ranagirai Chikozho, who has some shops at Mhandamabwe Business Center, said on 29 April, he approached the Masvingo-Mbalabala road where he was stopped by one constable Tatenda Mtigwa while driving an unregistered vehicle.

He was asked to produce a travelling pass, but he said he did not have any as he was faced with an emergency since his mother was not feeling well and needed to go to the hospital.

The Court heard that Mtigwa told him to either return from where he was coming from or pay a USD50 bribe. Chikozho said he had no option as his mother was gravely ill.

Unfortunately for Mtigwa, his seniors, Superintendents Boyce and Mubwere who were driving a marked police vehicle coming from the opposite direction saw the crime.

On seeing the senior officers approaching him, Mtigwa quickly threw back the money into Chikozho’s car, but he had already been seen.

Mtigwa was then arrested and taken to court, where he is facing a charge of abuse of public office. He is out on ZWL100 bail.

COP THREATENS TO SHOOT JOURNALIST AT COVID-19 ROADBLOCK

An AK-rifle wielding cop threatened to shoot TellZim journalist, Hupenyu Chaota, on 21 July, while blocking him from getting into the city for work.

In a tweet that day, TellZim said the cop said no-one-including journalists who were classified as an essential service-were allowed into town.

“Brandishing an assault rifle, the officer refused to accept Chaota’s press card saying he was illiterate and could not read,” TellZimbabwe said on its Twitter handle.

Another senior journalist and publisher, Mathew Takaona was also denied entry into town at the police checkpoint at Craft Center. He, however, phoned the officer commanding Masvingo Province, Assistant Commissioner Taonei Nyazema, who later ordered his juniors to give him entry.

JOURNALIST ARRESTED DURING LOCKDOWN FOR UNDERMINING THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRESIDENT

Seasoned Masvingo Freelance journalist Godfrey Mtimba was on 29 July arrested for undermining the authority of or insulting the president after he took videos of police chasing after and arresting some MDC Alliance activists.

Mtimba was arrested in Masvingo’s Mucheke high-density suburb where he got a tip-off that police and members of the secret service were pursuing MDC Alliance councillor Godfrey Kurauone and Ephraim Mtombeni.

The two were involved in a high-speed chase from town to Mucheke where they abandoned their car and took to their heels.

Mtombeni and Kurauone were being sought after for allegedly addressing commuters queuing for transport that their problems were because of corruption by the President Emmerson Mnangagwa administration. They denied the charges and Kurauone has since been acquitted of the charges.

Mtimba’s lawyer, Philip Shumba, said the police recorded a warned and cautioned statement before saying they will summon him to court. Up to now, he has not yet been taken to court.

Shumba said Mtimba’s arrest was misguided as he was simply doing his job and was nowhere in town that day.

MASVINGO'S TOP COP THREATENS LECTURER OVER NEWS COLUMN

Assistant Commissioner Tawoneyi Nyazema, the officer commanding Masvingo district, summoned and threatened a lecturer and media trainer, as well as a journalist from the city over a satirical column in their newspaper.

The two, Golden Maunganidze, of the Great Zimbabwe University and director of TellZim, and Passmore Kuzipa, editor of the publication, were summoned by Nyazema to Masvingo Central on 11 April, where the top cop demanded to know who authored an article in the column, Mapombi Adonha (Things Fall Apart).

The two refused to divulge the author and were threatened with unspecified action by Nyazema, who ordered them out of his office hastily.

Kuzipa and Maunganidze then sought the services of their lawyer Dereck Charamba, of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, who tried to have an audience with Nyazema, but they were told off.

POPULAR MASVINGO PREACHER ARRESTED OVER LOCKDOWN VIOLATIONS

Masvingo based-flamboyant preacher, Isaac Makomichi, was on 18 May arrested for violating lockdown rules even though he had a letter exempting him from getting into town.

Makomichi, leader of Calvary Prayer Group, posted on his Facebook page: "Fellow believers, I have been arrested for what they say is unnecessary movement. They did not bother to ask for a letter of approval. We urge the police to respect people's rights," Makomichi posted.

MASVINGO SOLDIERS, COPS FORCE HIV+ PATIENTS TO DISCLOSE THEIR STATUS AT ROADBLOCKS

Cops at COVID-19 roadblocks here have been accused of violating the privacy of HIV positive patients getting into town to collect their medication to show them their cards, a leading organisation representing the constituency has said.

According to Batanai HIV Aids Support Group (BHASO) programmes officer, Kumbirai Mahaso, their members raised the alarm to them and they held a meeting with the cops over the issue.

“Our members came complaining saying they were being told to display their cards to the police in front of other travellers in commuter omnibuses. They said the cops were stigmatising them and also feared they would move around telling everyone of their status. We then organised a meeting between stakeholders and the Police. The Police acknowledged and apologised for the behaviour of their details and assured stakeholders that the forced disclosure of information will not happen again,” Mahaso said.

She said the stakeholders at the meeting-among them the Ministry of Health and other HIV and AIDS support organisations-also heard that a soldier at a roadblock torn into pieces a medical card for an HIV positive patient and told him to go back home ahead of the planned July 31, 2020 demonstrations at the Masvingo-Mashava Highway.

GWERU MUNICIPAL POLICE LOOT WARES OF WIDOW VENDOR

On April 23 this year, 58-year-old Gweru wholesale vendor Mirriam Vunganayi who plied her trade at old TM market stall received the shock of life when she arrived at her bay to find empty and desecrated.

She had last visited the stall two weeks back and found the bay intact as all vendors had been pushed home by the lockdown regulations. However, on this day, she was forced to count losses. A quick enquiry from a newspaper vendor who operates nearby made him aware that municipal officers had looted her wares.

“I was actually shocked because I had left goods worth about USD3 200, being clothing and kitchen utensils. But I learnt that municipal police had arrived at my stall and looted everything taking advantage of our prolonged absence due to the lockdown. I followed up with them but all I get are stories with nothing useful,” she said.

“I rue the day I trusted the council officials. Now I am at loss and even if we are allowed back to trade, I will have nowhere to start from. It’s a complete waste and being a widow this will impact heavily on my children because that is all we had.”



VICTIM OF DESTRUCTION OF GWERU VENDING STALLS CRY OUT

25-year old Maria Makombe is one of the many vendors whose stalls were destroyed by the Gweru City Council on May 16 this year. The destruction happened when all the vendors were away after the announcement of the national lockdown. She says the future of all these vendors is yet to be defined while she and many others may be subjected to abject poverty for the entirety of their lives.

“The move to destroy our stalls on the basis of cleaning the city was with no basis. We had valid permits and licenses to operate from those places especially inside Kudzanayi bus terminus where I was based. We had paid our money to be there. However, overnight a decision to destroy the stalls was made and that has plunged us all into hopelessness. We are in a fix,” she said.

Makombe added that she had used her personal money to buy timber and roofing sheets of her trading bay that was destroyed.

“We have been informed that there will not be any compensation whatsoever for us. It is very sad and painful for me because I have a big family that has been affected by that move,” she added.

BULAWAYO POULTRY FARMER LEFT COUNTING LOSSES

On the 5th of July 2020 in Bulawayo, poultry farmers who came to collect day-old chicks at Pro-Feeds main branch in the city centre were caught in running battles between illegal vendors and police on horses.

Mandlenkosi Ndlovu (33) was hard-hit by the incident as the officers vented their anger on him and took away all his chicks before ordering him to flee the scene without looking back. Others who were on their way to board commuter omnibuses also lost their chicks in the same manner. In narrating the incident, Ndlovu said the police on horsebacks showed utmost hatred to him and other ordinary struggling poultry farmers. “The situation was horrible with many dropping their chicks while fleeing. Those who were affected included the elderly as well as people living with disabilities,” he said.

“After they forcibly took my box of 100 chicks, I ran towards a nearby toilet with others and hid inside for some time to avoid more trouble from the police on horseback. The toilet was very filthy and dirty and we risked catching other diseases,” he added.

POLICE POUNCE ON PENSIONERS

On 29 July this year poverty-stricken pensioners who were queued at Gweru POSB branch looking forward to withdrawing their monthly wages were pounced upon by police enforcing lockdown regulations who accused them of “unnecessary gathering”.

The aged pensioners were accused of not following COVID-19 regulations of staying at home and avoiding overcrowding.

“We came as early as 3am to get our money from the bank because it is difficult to do transactions using Ecocash these days due to their high charges on Bank to wallet transactions. I was amongst those who were beaten and I fell to the ground after I lost balance. While on the ground eight officers took turns to beat me up all over the body until I passed out. That is when they disappeared,” said John Mleya, a former prisons officer.

“Our government is so heartless we are getting very little money which is not enough to buy food or medicines and now they send police to chase us away from the bank. I cannot return home without the money because I have to buy a few food items from my family,” he added.

Some of the pensioners beaten up came from as far as Lower Gweru and Gokwe.

BRUTAL COPS BREAK UNKI MINE EMPLOYEE'S FOREARM

On 23 June this year, a 48-year-old employee of platinum mining giant Unki Mines employee had his forearm broken by brutal police in Gweru while he queued to access cash at a local bank.

Amos Siska, a rock support assistant at the Anglo American-owned company, has not been to work for the past four months due to a broken forearm.

“About 20 police officers enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown regulations descended on us at Stanbic bank on April 28 as we waited to withdraw cash,” Siska said

“They then started beating up people and when I tried to flee, I unfortunately fell down and the riot police assaulted me with baton sticks while I lay on the ground.”

"I suffered a broken forearm during the incident."

"I have been to several hospitals trying to get medical attention but it's been difficult."

"I now risk being laid off at work due to my condition and the future of my family is at stake right now."

Siska reported the case at Gweru Central Police Station under case number CR 53/5/20, but he believes the cops are not keen to bring his tormentors to book.

"The police keep saying they are investigating the case up to now and no one has been arrested," he said.

KADOMA RESIDENT BEAR BRUNT OF ARMY BRUTALITY

Restive army personnel and soldiers on May 18 indiscriminately beat up Kadoma residents ahead of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's tour of the town to assess compliance to lockdown measures put in place to slow down the spread of COVID-19.

Godknows Nyika, a Kadoma resident, said the state security agents harassed and assaulted anyone seen outside gates or on the streets of Rimuka and Waverly suburbs. Kadoma Progressive Residents Association chairperson Wilbert Murambiwa said security agents also assaulted vendors at the local market.

"The police and army came into my homestead in Rimuka saying some people who were on the streets had sought refuge in our home. When we professed ignorance about that, they started beating everyone in the house. There were two children and three adults and everyone was assaulted," he said.

"The incident was heart-wrenching. Just imagine being beaten up when your children who call you father are watching. It is something that will stick in my mind for a long time," he added.



DISABLED WOMEN ATTACKED BY SECURITY AGENTS

On May 18 Merjiry Wenyika who is partially blind, was pounced upon by security services in Kadoma's Waverly area who accused her of flouting lockdown rules.

Wenyika who is a mother of four boys said she had just disembarked a vehicle from Chakari in Mashonaland West on her way to Waverly to check on a relative who had fallen sick when she came across four uniformed police officers who took turns to assault her with batons.

"They refused to listen to the reasons why I was outdoors and beat me up before ordering me to run to where I was going without looking back," she said. Another resident, who only identified himself as Ras Pompi, said a truck with police and army personnel stopped at Waverly shopping complex, where the security agents indiscriminately assaulted shoppers. "They also followed those who were running away and tripped them before beating them up. I was at a distance and that is what saved me from the beatings," she explained.

COPS INHUMANELY TREAT SEX WORKER

On April 2 this year, a 29-year-old sex worker in Gweru was forced to strip naked by police officers enforcing lockdown regulations during the dead of the night along the city's red-light zone in Seventh Street.

Nomathemba Hlabano (not real name) said she was caught while soliciting for clients at Musopero bar pavement near Econet building in Gweru.

"The police officers were five and two were ladies. Three were men. It was around 8:30 pm when they approached from the northern part of seventh street while I was standing outside Musopero bar waiting for clients. Upon arrival, they asked why I was wearing a short skirt and others asked if I was aware there was a lockdown. I was terrified because I was alone. Other girls were yet to arrive. So the female officers asked me to strip naked saying that was my punishment. The male officers just laughed off during the incident which lasted about 12 minutes. It was very cold on the day and before they left me, one officer slapped me several times and they asked me to run home," she narrated.

Several sex workers have previously complained about abuse by security services agents.

KWEKWE NURSE, ESSENTIAL SERVICE WORKERS BLOCKED FROM REPORTING FOR WORK

Armed soldiers and police officers in the early hours of July 13 placed Kwekwe central business district under total lockdown restricting essential services workers their right to report for work as they enforced a blanket ban on travel into the city centre.

A 33-year-old nurse who works at Kwekwe General Hospital said he was restricted from proceeding to the health institution to attend to critical patients. "We were told to disembark from a ZUPCO bus just before the Redcliff turn-off. We thought as per norm, the soldiers and police would ask for exemption letters or even notice that I was a nurse since I had my uniform in my hand-bag." a disappointed nurse said.

"We were however shocked when we were ordered to return home without any explanation. They told us only the police and the army were allowed to get into the CBD. We were taking shift duties and I also heard that several of my colleagues could not report for work to attend to critical patients because as you know the doctor-patient ratio is too high and we do most of the work. Two men from Zhombe died on the day at the hospital due to the staff shortages. That could have been avoided," she said.

Thousands of residents who work in the CBD and others seeking various critical services like procurement of food and medicines in the city centre were left stranded on the same day after being turned away at security checkpoints leading into the central business district.

AFZ PERSONNEL ATTACK GWERU REVELLERS OVER WOMAN

Airforce of Zimbabwe personnel from Josiah Tungamirai Air Base in Gweru on June 29 assaulted two revellers at a local bar over a woman.

Nomore Masunda, who was one of the attacked, said the army personnel dragged him and his colleague from Station bar on the outskirts of the city to Six Maint barracks after a dispute involving a woman the soldiers claimed was their girlfriend.

"It was around 5pm and when the AFZ took us to Six Maint barracks they were assisted by three civilians to bundle us into a Toyota Wish car that was parked nearby. Upon arrival at the barracks, they asked a military police officer manning

the boom gate to take us inside. While inside; we were forced to roll on wet ground.”

“The assaults then followed until about 8pm when we were released. Up to this day, my left side jaw gives me serious pain especially at night or when it is cold. I failed to get enough money for full medical attention,” he narrated.

KOMBI DRIVER HARASSED BY POLICE ON WAY TO FUNERAL

On the 15th of September this year desperate commuter omnibus operators were forced to pay bribes by roadblock police officers at Mvuma shopping Centre.

Government has previously banned local commuters which were not registered with ZUPCO to operate on their routes.

Sam Muyambo who is in the Zupco scheme but on this day was ferrying relatives to a funeral, narrated how he was forced to pay bribes by the police.

“My Kombi is in good condition since it is already in the Zupco scheme. Besides, we were following the COVID-19 rules of wearing masks and sanitizing passengers but we were forced to pay bribes in order to pass,” he said.

“The police officers were using force and they damaged the window of my commuter omnibus. These people are heartless; they don't even care about others. We explained that we were heading for a funeral and there were only six family members on board but they wanted bribes. We ended up paying USD30 but that was very unfair,” said Muyambo.

YOUNG GIRL FORCED INTO EARLY MARRIAGE TO CUSHION FAMILY AGAINST LOCKDOWN

On April 29, a 14-year-old girl from Tamuka Secondary in Zhombe was forced into early marriage by parents desperately looking for a source of livelihood after their small cocktail bar business was affected by the lockdown regulations.

Letina Mahlatini, from Makepesi village, has already fallen pregnant.

The girl was in form two at Zhombe Secondary School but was married off by her

parents to a rich man who promised to support them financially.

“My parents are of mean means and they were facing challenges in paying my school fees before the lockdown. Their small cocktail bar was not bringing brisk business. That’s why they married me off. I still want to get back to school but the challenge is that my parents accepted money from the man who married me and they are happy with the assistance they are getting from him,” Letina said.

The girl is now facing psycho-social challenges.

“The pregnancy is very heavy on me because I have a small body. I have talked to relatives to assist me but they say nothing can be done at this stage. I feel embarrassed each time I meet my school mates and friends,” she said before breaking down.

MDC YOUTH LEADER TORTURED OVER FLASH DEMO

MDC Alliance Midlands youths assembly provincial chairperson Sekai Marashe on June 18 this year was severely tortured by suspected ZANU-PF goons after leading a flash demo at Mbizo 4 Shopping Centre in Kwekwe.

Also tortured was Kwekwe ward 5 councilor Melody Chingarande and MDC Alliance activist Lovemore Savanh.

After the torture by the youths, they were then jointly picked by Central Intelligence Organisation operatives and later handed over to Kwekwe Central Police Station’s law and order section where they were detained. Marasha said the experience will stick in her mind for a long time.

“At a house in Mbizo, we were made to drink a liquid substance that looked like urine. We were severely tortured with logs and being women, the experience was horrendous. The youths said we wanted to turn the country into a state of lawlessness so as to fuel regime change. They kept beating us up until one of us fell unconscious. That is when the torture ended because they thought she had died,” said Marasha.

As if that was not enough, the youths were later arrested by police over the demo and spent a night in police cells despite having open wounds.



OPPOSITION LEADER THREATENED WITH DEATH IN REMAND PRISON

A top MDC Alliance official, who was incarcerated together with 11 party youths in connection with protests in Warren Park, was threatened with death while in remand prison.

Stephen Sarkozy Chuma, the MDC Alliance youth assembly spokesperson and his colleagues were jailed at the Harare Remand Prison for 25 days before they were released on bail.

Chuma claimed a security detail threatened them with death while in remand prison.

“From every facet, the institution (Harare Remand Prison) which is located along Enterprise Road has become a symbol of military dictatorship where dissenting political voices are subjected to torture, which defiles and defies local and international statutes on rights of detainees,” he said.

“At the centre of persecution of political detainees is one boastful Ronald Chiwakaya, who is the officer-in-charge at the torture institution.

“In one instance, he called me and 11 other co-accused MDC Alliance activists to his office whereupon he pulled his 9mm gun and pointed at us.”

Chuma added: “He uttered all sorts of polemic attacks on our party and its leadership, which he branded as agents of the West.

“Chiwakaya, who is a self-proclaimed participant of the Gukurahundi killings, threatened us with death and disappearance, citing the suspicious death of fallen MDC leader Learnmore Jongwe and activist Hilton Tamangani at the hands of the state.”

The MDC activist claimed inmates were being forced to support ZANU-PF

FREELANCE JOURNALIST ARRESTED

The national COVID-19 lockdown kicked off with uncertainties, lack of clarity from law enforcement agencies on how journalists could operate.

Zimbabwe Media Commission was supposed to issue new press cards to journalists when SI 83 barred people from travelling.

Voice of America provincial correspondent for Mashonaland West Nunurayi Jena was arrested along Chinhoyi- Murombedzi highway on 2 April with the police charging him for using an expired press card for 2019.

Jena, a human rights defender and investigative journalist, is also Alpha Media Holdings for the same province was arrested and was represented by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the case is still pending.

ABDUCTED BY AGENCIES, RELEASED WITHOUT CHARGES

MDC Alliance provincial director of elections Kudakwashe Chigumo was abducted by State security agents ahead of the 31 July 2020 demonstrations against corruption and a failed economy.

Chigumo is Karoi town councillor for Ward 6.

Among the suspects who abducted him were members of the army, police. Chigumo was bundled up in an unmarked car.

A concerned citizen followed the abductors from the moment Chigumo was bundled in the car around 4 pm. He was using a motorbike and he kept vigil on the abductors movement. He even alerted his party members and relatives.

They were forced to surrender him at Karoi charge office where Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights representative Unite Saize asked the State to lay charges on his client.

'I was engaged by the suspect relatives and when I arrived at the charge office where we found him, the police could explain how he was at the charge office and did not prefer any charges against him,' said Saize in an interview.

CHEGUTU'S MDC ALLIANCE COUNCILOR ARRESTED

Edward Dzeka, MDC Alliance councilor for Ward 9 was arrested after they demonstrated against the government for not acting to end corruption.

He was arrested together with Sheunesu Chimunyemba on 1 August following the clampdown on the 31 July demos when the Government deployed military in major towns. The Constitution provides for the right to protest.

NUST STUDENTS ARRESTED OVER WHATSAPP CHATS

Heather Rujeko Mupambwa (22), a National University of Science and Technology (NUST) student and MDC Alliance member in the resort town of Kariba was arrested on 4 August, in Kariba. Mpambwa was arrested for allegedly insulting President Mnangagwa by posting a message on a WhatsApp group criticising him for lacking patriotism over his televised address to the nation. Mpambwa appeared at Kariba Magistrates court on 7 August, where she was granted ZWL5000 bail.

She faces charges of undermining the authority of the President.

She spent days in prison but was later released on bail.

The Constitution provides for the right to freedom of expression.

MDC ALLIANCE MEMBERS IN SAFE-HOUSES AHEAD OF 31 JULY PROTESTS

MDC Alliance members were forced to go into hiding after armed officers using unmarked cars visited their homes ahead of the 31 July protests.

Majority claimed that they had uninvited visitors a few days before the protests and raised security concerns for them and families. Among these were senior provincial members, parliamentarians within Mashonaland West.

In Kariba, MDC Alliance youth executive member Ralph Nyasha Maone was forced to go into hiding on 28 July 2020 after armed officers came to his lodging looking for him.

They continued to ask for his whereabouts as they believed he was the key strategist in the 31 July protest in the resort town who could mobilize youths to go into the streets.

Also Kariba Mayor George Masendu was forced to stay indoors after security officers warned him against any movements during the day of the protest.

'I was approached by state security agencies and told me not to move out of my yard during the 31 July protest. It was like I was under house arrest but what can I do if I am unarmed,' said Masenda.

KAROI TOP MDC ALLIANCE FORCED TO FLEE

In Karoi, MDC Alliance provincial Women chairlady Abigail Usavi, district youth leader Collin Mapfumo, Tichaona Mungwariri were forced to go into hiding on 30 July after their leader Kudakwashe Chigumo was abducted by State agencies.

They all claimed armed officers had visited them at their places of residence looking for them. However, the MDC Alliance activists had to spend the night in the bush together with their children in fear of being abducted.

DEPUTY ORGANIZING SECRETARY FLEES

In July, MDC Alliance Mashonaland West deputy organizing secretary Mukudzei Chigumbura was forced to flee after armed men with unmarked vehicle came after her.

State agents were tracking down all people suspected to be organizing the July 31 protests after the arrest of journalist Hopewell Chin'ono and Transform Zimbabwe leader Jacob Ngarivhume.

HARASSMENT

Not even MDC Alliance senior MP Concilia Chinanzvavana was spared from the harassment. However, ahead of the 31 July protest where concerned citizens were demonstrating against corruption, Honorable Chinanzvavana was haunted together with her husband Emmanuel Chinanzvavana as well as Mrs Kutandika. The trio is from Banket, Zvimba district.

MDC Alliance provincial spokesperson Blessing Mandava said that all the affected members were forced to flee before the 31 July protest but reality is that the Government is failing to address the challenges the country is undergoing.

Mandava added, 'We call upon the ZANU-PF party to separate party and government which is a national cause. We want to rebuild our country as patriotic citizens and the best thing is to deal with ZANU-PF induced corruption that has seen our economy being on its knees. We have no healthcare, food security, education to talk about but sheer propaganda that is retrogressive for the nation once regarded as the breadbasket of Southern Africa but shameless to say we are a begging nation. This must stop,'

ZIMBABWE NATIONAL STUDENTS UNION LEADER ARRESTED

Twenty-two-year old Takudzwa Ngadziore made a one-man demo against Impala Car Rental accused of allowing State agencies to use their cars implicated in a series of abductions of civilians. He was arrested on 10 September 2020.

He stands accused of inciting public violence. This has seen the security services on high alert.

He was later released on ZWL2000 bail and ordered to stay at least 100 m from Impala Car Rental premises.

NINE STUDENTS ARRESTED FOR SOLIDARITY WITH THE LEADER

Nine students were arrested on Monday 15 September in Harare after they staged a demonstration outside Harare Magistrate Court. They were at the courts where their leader is facing charges of inciting public violence and was granted bail.

The nine face charges of demonstrating with intent to promote public violence, breaching peace or bigotry.

They are Nancy Njenge, Donald Marevanhema, Talent Jinga, Arnold Mazonde, Mitchell Lieto, Zvikomborero Mumbirimi, Takudzwa Gwaze and John Ncobo.

They were picked up at the court premises and were being represented by Obey Shava who confirmed that they will spend the night in police cells.

WOMEN VENDORS, SPENT SEVERAL HOURS AT POLICE CELLS AND FINED

Five villagers who cheered MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa, on September 1, 2020 after he passed through Murehwa Business Centre were arrested by the police.

Villagers who are mostly vendors cheered at the youthful opposition leader and called, "President! President! President!" Chamisa was coming from the burial of late human rights defender Patison Dzamara.

This did not go well with the authorities.

WOMEN VENDORS, SPENT SEVERAL HOURS AT POLICE CELLS AND FINED

MDC Alliance national spokesperson Fadzayi Mahere said police in Murehwa arrested and detained 15 vendors suspected of having cheered on MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa when he passed through the area on 29 August. The vendors, mostly women, were detained for over 4 hours before being fined between ZWL200 to ZWL500 under charges ranging from defying COVID-19 physical distancing regulations and obstructing the free movement of traffic and persons on the Harare-Nyamapanda Road.

The arrested persons were interrogated by police if they did not know who the real president was. Some were charged for 'obstructing free movement of traffic and persons,'

They paid as much as ZWL500 cash.

TORTURED OVER FACEBOOK

Nickson Mpfu is one of the men who have tried to expose how corruption has affected the economy and the government's response to COVID-19.

On 1 September 2020 he posted on his Facebook page exposing how some senior Government officials use Impala Car Hire to loot. Soon after the post, he was abducted by five men.

He asked if they wanted to kill him and they said 'Yes we want to see you dead over your social media expose,'

He was abducted from his house and was thoroughly beaten the whole night. Mpfu was never given access to any police station or have any charges preferred against him.

SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS ROB CHIDAMOYO HOSPITAL

Twelve suspects including seven senior army officers robbed Chidamoyo mission hospital in July.

The seven are Ishmael Neboet Zibula (29) of Mabutheni Bulawayo (ZNA Parachute Regiment Inkomo Barracks), Spencer Chingondo, Ruwa at ZNA Commando Regiment in Harare), Ruka Bitone of Chitungwiza ZNA Commando, James Bhebhe, ZNA 2,2 Infantry Battalion, Mighty Nyoni ZNA Regiment,

Chadmore Chakangeisu ZNA Regiment.

They were armed and stole USD1 500 and ZWL3000 which was donated to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The incident occurred on 7 July around 4 am under Chief Dandawa in Hurungwe.

Chidamoyo mission hospital is raising hope for many people who are accessing medication as they normally get it from abroad.

The gang was armed with two CZ pistols with eight rounds each and two AK47 assault rifles loaded with 30 rounds and were driving in a blue Ford Ranger.

They had threatened to kill Sister MaCathy who is in charge of the hospital.

The suspects' luck ran out when they were intercepted at a roadblock in Chinhoyi the following morning and the guns, as well as cash, were recovered.

PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS FAIL TO GET MEDICATION DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

Mutare patients with chronic illness during the COVID-19 lockdown have been struggling to travel to health facilities where they usually get medication due to transport challenges and being turned away by police at roadblocks for using treatment cards.

Concern has been raised over the way in which they have been turned away and risking their health and even if they have provided proof that they have chronic illness.

William Mazonde from Chigodora (20 kilometres from Mutare) who is a diabetic patient said during the lockdown he struggled to restock his medication due to transport problems and being blocked by police at roadblocks.

Mazonde said at the beginning of the 21-day lockdown he was turned away at a police roadblock.





"I am a diabetic patient but I faced challenges in restocking my medication. I have restrictions in movement due to transport challenges," he said

"Also one day I was at a police roadblock when I was turned, I was asked to produce an exemption letter to show that I have cleared to travel to various destinations," he said

"I had all my medical cards but the police officers refused to accept that," he said
An HIV patient who preferred anonymity weighed in: "During the first days of the 21 Day Lockdown I had no access to go to collect my Antiretroviral drugs in Mutare from Odzi because of transport issues."

MP ARRESTED FOR DISTRIBUTING MEALIE MEAL TO THE VULNERABLE

Mutasa Member of Parliament Honorable Regai Tsunga of MDC Alliance party was arrested together with ward 11 councillor Farai Bhiza and some other residents. They were arrested for unnecessary movement on April 21 and they were fined ZWL500 each.

On the fateful day, Honorable Tsunga was arrested while distributing mealie meal to the vulnerable members of his constituency.

Tsunga said his arrest was vulnerable as he was only helping the vulnerable members of his constituency.

"My arrest was unreasonable since I was helping the vulnerable members of my community since the government had not offered them with food," he said.

"They abused me because I did not stray out of my constituency, we were arrested in the morning when we were just about to distribute the mealie meal and it was very unfortunate the vulnerable residents were denied their access to have food on the table," he said.

"Together with my ward 11 councillor Farai Bhiza and other residents we were taken to Mutare Central Police Station where we were fined ZWL500 each.



NURSES ARRESTED FOR STRIKING AFTER DEMANDING COVID-19 ALLOWANCES

Not less than 35 nurses were arrested by State security agents for taking part in a strike over poor salaries and for demanding COVID-19 allowances during the lockdown.

The disgruntled nurses were, however, released without charge following the intervention of the hospital leadership.

The striking nurses were rounded up at Mutare General Hospital on June 19 and taken to Mutare Central Police Station.

“We were rounded up and arrested early in the morning at the hospital as we were on strike demanding a COVID-19 allowance in USD and an improved salary. We were then taken to Mutare Central Police Station where we were detained,” said a nurse on condition of anonymity.

“However we were released around midday without any charge following the intervention of our superiors,” she added.

However, MDC-Alliance spokesperson David Panganai said it was their constitutional right to strike.

“I don’t know why they were arrested because it is a constitutional right to strike in the country,” he said.

GOVERNMENT FAILS TO PROVIDE-DOOR-TO-DOOR SUBSIDISED ROLLER MEAL DURING THE LOCKDOWN

During the COVID-19 lockdown, most people were forced to stay indoors by the government to control the spread of the deadly virus.

However, the government failed to provide door to door subsidised roller meal to residents in Dangamvura/Chikanga constituency.

Most residents in the constituency had no exemption letters hence they were not allowed to access the CBD except for those providing essential services.

A resident Tatenda Chimiro said food was a basic human right.

“We almost died of hunger as we had no exemption letters to go shopping in

town. The government failed to provide door to door subsidised roller meal," he said

"In fact, the government just failed to provide the subsidised roller to us," he said

MP Honorable Prosper Mutseyami who was recalled recently in Parliament also accused the government of failing to provide subsidised roller meal in the constituency.

"Food is a basic human right and the government failed to provide subsidised roller meal during the lockdown. As you are aware some people had no exemption letters to go shopping and they had to stay indoors," he said

"The government was supposed to distribute the subsidised roller meal door to door to solve issues to do with hunger," he said

ESSENTIAL WORKERS FRUSTRATED BY POLICE AND SOLDIERS

Mutare Residents including those providing essential services were left frustrated due to the security forces tightening of police roadblocks as some were sent back home by police and soldiers.

On the morning of May 6, 2020, scores of people failed to report for duty in Mutare after police and soldiers manning roadblocks ordered them to return home.

Scores of people had to walk home after being dropped off at different entry points manned by both police and soldiers as they had no transport to take them home.

The Central Business Centre in Mutare was almost deserted with only a few retail shops open.

Some people who were in bank queues were ordered to go back home, a development which left residents demanding answers.

Pharmacists Tatenda Zimuto said he was not happy after he was blocked at a roadblock.



“As you are aware we provide essential service to the public, I was supposed to go to work but I was blocked at a roadblock. At our Pharmacy, we help almost 20 patients on a daily basis and unfortunately we cannot access our Pharmacy today,” he said

Another resident Timothy Sigauke said his basic human right to health was violated as he was blocked from going to the hospital.

“My right to health was violated as I was blocked from going to the hospital to seek medication,” he said

MUTARE MAN BEATEN BY SOLDIERS FORCED TO LIE PRONE TO THE GROUND

A Mutare man was left with trauma after he was assaulted by soldiers and forced to lie on the ground as they were enforcing COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

Timothy Mareya (45) was left with permanent injuries and now suffers from depression.

Mareya met his fate on April 6, 2020, just a few days after President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced a 21 day COVID-19 lockdown.

Mareya who stays in the suburb of Sakubva in the eastern border city narrated his ordeal saying he sustained permanent injuries due to the beatings from Zimbabwe National Army officers.

“I was coming from work going home when I bumped into a truck with soldiers, it was around 6pm, they stopped the truck and asked me where I was going and I told them,” he said

“They jumped from their truck and asked me to lie down, they then started to assault me using clenched fists and open hands and (truncheons) and I was forced to lie down as they continued to assault me,” he said

“After the beatings, they told me to run for my dear life and that is how I managed to go home, but I have been left with permanent leg injuries,” he said

He said soldiers acted outside their mandate when enforcing National Lockdown Regulations.



POLICE DEFY PUBLIC HEALTH BY CROWDING PEOPLE

Hundreds of arrested people in Mutare during the 21 day COVID-19 lockdown were left exposed to the deadly coronavirus as they were bundled in trucks and holding centres.

The police were breaching the national lockdown measures as no social distancing was being practised, actions which facilitate the passing on of coronavirus.

The police were also defying section 8 of public health COVID-19, prevention, containment and treatment.

A victim Tatenda Chinonzwa was arrested with scores of people at the Mutare Teachers' College roadblock while travelling to town during the first days of the 21 day COVID-19 lockdown.

Chononzwa was forced onto the truck with many others and they were not sitting one metre apart which is recommended by the World Health Organisation to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

"I was arrested at Mutare Teachers college with many other people while going to town. I was arrested for not having an exemption letter to get into town," he said "We were overcrowded in the truck as no social distancing was observed exposing us to coronavirus, we were also put in holding centres where we were overcrowded," he said

Various people also confirmed being detained in overcrowded holding cells after being arrested by Police.

WOMEN HARD HIT BY COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

The 21-day COVID-19 lockdown imposed by President Emmerson Mnangagwa on March 31 hit hard on women as there was a sharp increase in numbers of gender-based violence against women. The violence against women has been attributed to a number of issues and one of it relates to the economic and emotional trauma people are facing during the lockdown. Women have also failed to report cases of gender-based violence because of transport blues during the lockdown.

According to Musasa project cases of gender-based violence have increased from

15 to 49 on a daily basis mostly against women.

Musasa project programmes officer Rotina Mafume Musara said women have suffered more in the COVID-19 lockdown era.

“We are worried about an increase in gender-based violence mostly against women since the beginning of the lockdown in March to stop the spread of COVID-19,” she said.

“We have recorded an increase from 15 to 49 per day of gender-based violence in this current lockdown mostly against women and we have recorded more than 2 500 cases of gender-based violence since March to June.

“This can be attributed to several issues and one of it is because people are in close proximity which means they were staying with perpetrators, that became an incubation hub for gender-based violence.”

She added: “We are also looking at economic and emotional trauma that people are facing this time, this is some of the causes of gender-based violence.”

MUTARE INFORMAL TRADERS IRKED OVER CUSHION ALLOWANCE, ACCUSING ZANU-PF OF POLITICAL GIMMICKING.

In May, delays in the disbursement of the announced cushion allowance irked members of the Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and informal sectors whose income was severely affected by the lockdown restrictions.

Some informal traders were reportedly deliberately left out along political lines.

Government pronounced cushion allowance for informal traders during the first days of the 21 days COVID-19 lockdown.

There was anger among intended beneficiaries in Mutare as their names were not listed with those reportedly aligned to the ruling party ZANU-PF getting favour.

ZANU-PF ward representatives have been moving around in their respective wards in high-density suburbs listing names of their members.

A Murahwa (Green) Market coffin maker Taurai Simango who is part of those



informal traders affected by the lockdown said he was left out of the list of beneficiaries.

"I was left out from the list of people who were supposed to benefit from the COVID-19 cushion allowance, my name was not listed but informal traders who support ZANU-PF were listed as people who should benefit," he said.

Mutare's Ward 2 councillor Elizabeth Tsoro said ZANU-PF ward representatives in her ward started registering supporters shortly after President Emmerson Mnangagwa imposed a 21-day lockdown.

"A lot of people approached me because they were concerned about what the registration was all about and why it was being done for ZANU-PF members only, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

CHIN'ONO DENIED ACCESS TO HIS DOCTOR

Incarcerated journalist Hopewell Chin'ono missed an appointment with his doctor after prison officers dragged him out of his prison cell at Chikurubi Maximum Prison and took him to court on the pretext that they were taking him to his physician.

Chin'ono was manhandled into a prison van on September 1 and whisked to court where he had no court proceedings, simply to facilitate that he missed his appointment with his doctor, the court heard.

"Zimbabwe Prison and Correctional Services (ZPCS) dragged Chin'ono out of his cell on the pretext that his physician wanted to see him only for him to realise that he was misled before they manhandled him into the prison van to court," the scribe's lawyer, Taona Nyamakura said.

"Chin'ono ought not to be in court because he is ill and exhibits symptoms his special physician suspects to be COVID-19. Chin'ono's condition requires him not to be in contact with other people until he is given the green light to do so by his physician."

The State said they wanted Chin'ono to be examined by a government doctor but Nyamakura objected saying section 50(1)(b) and section 50(5)(e) of the Constitution gave his client the right to a doctor of his choice.



MUTARE CITY COUNCIL DESTROYS UNDESIGNATED VENDING SITES AND FLEA MARKETS

In a move to curb COVID-19, Mutare City Council torched a storm after demolishing undesignated vending sites and flea markets just after President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced a 21 day COVID-19 lockdown.

Most vendors who survive on hand to mouth were affected by the council's move claiming that the local municipality should have created an alternative place to sell their wares.

Mutare started its blitz on illegal vending and decongestion of markets in the eastern border city on 2 April purportedly to curb the spread of coronavirus.

The first blitz to decongest marketplaces started at Sakubva Bus Terminus where undesignated vending sites were destroyed.

Other areas which were affected are in Dangamvura, Chikanga, and Hobhouse.

Affected vendor Chipo Magara said she is struggling to make ends meet after Mutare City Council demolished his vending stall.

"My vending stall was destroyed, I survive in buying and selling, so I don't know how Mutare City Council want me to survive, at least they should have provided us with an alternative place to sell our wares," he said

A flea market vendor Jose Gukutikwa said her stall was also destroyed.

"I think Mutare City Council made a wrong move because at least they should have warned us of the demolitions, they just came and destroyed our stalls," she added.

SOLDIERS ATTACK CITIZENS

Five soldiers and two police officers from the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) Support Unit went on a rampage on 19 May, attacking and assaulting eight people at Wengezi Shopping Centre in Manicaland accusing them of violating lockdown orders.

One of the eight sustained a broken leg and was taken to Mutambara Hospital.

"I had gone to buy groceries for my family since we were running out of food. Without warning, police officers mounted an attack on me with baton sticks and sjamboks. After that I remember waking up in a hospital with a plaster on my right leg," lamented the victim.

The police claim the victims were loitering at the shopping centre, violating the COVID-19 partial lockdown in place at the time.

FORCED TO CLEAN TOILETS AS PUNISHMENT FOR VIOLATING LOCKDOWN ORDERS

On May 9, as punishment for failing to adhere to lockdown regulations that required them to have exemption letters in order to be able to travel, some residents from Chinhoyi were forced by soldiers and police officers to clean public toilets.

The residents were not provided with protective clothing to do the job, exposing them to the risk of contracting COVID-19 and other diseases.

One of the victims narrated that "I was on my way to town to get money from Western Union to buy food and medication for my sick mother when one police officer and one soldier requested that I present an exemption letter allowing me to travel. I explained to them that I did not have the exemption letter and showed them the messages that I should collect money from Western Union. However, they threatened me with assault and led me with 3 other people to public toilets nearby and forced us to clean them."

Soldiers and police officers enforcing the national COVID-19 lockdown were fingered for various human rights violations against civilians.



ZANU-PF ATTACKS CHIN'ONO OVER CORRUPTION EXPOSE

Acting ZANU-PF Spokesperson Mr Patrick Chinamasa made a personal attack on journalist Hopewell Chin'ono for exposing corruption in the procurement of COVID-19 drugs.

Chinamasa made the personal attack after Chin'ono implicated President Emmerson Mnangagwa's children in the USD60 million COVID-19 tender scam by Drax International, whose point person, Delish Nguwaya, in the country is a close associate to the First Family.

"ZANU-PF has noted with concern the systematic well-choreographed and sponsored attacks on the integrity of the First Family by unscrupulous characters such as Hopewell Chin'ono this time targeting the President's son (Collins)," Chinamasa said.

After the attack, Chin'ono tweeted: "My life is in danger after ZANU-PF attacked me personally through their spokesperson Patrick Chinamasa. I am a trained journalist, if I have said something that is not true, legal remedies are there."

WAVE OF ABDUCTIONS ON THE EVE OF PROTESTS

Several activists were abducted by State security agents on the night of July 30 while others were forced to flee their homes.

The abductions continued to the morning of July 31 with a heavy deployment of State security agents to foil the protests.

There was a heavy presence of police officers and soldiers armed with guns, sjamboks and all forms of ammunition, at major streets, corners, intersections and junctions across the country.

The MDC Alliance Bulawayo Provincial Spokesperson Swithern Chirowodza said:

"We have so far drawn a list of about 30 cadres who are no longer living at their homes for fear of being abducted, tortured or detained. Some are contemplating moving their children to safer places, while others are bogged down with repairs to damaged premises."

ZANU-PF INCITES VIOLENCE AHEAD OF JULY 31 PROTESTS

ZANU-PF acting spokesperson Patrick Chinamasa and ZANU-PF Youth League Acting Deputy Secretary Tendai Chirau ordered party supporters to resort to violence against protestors on July 31.

“This time, No! Use any means at your disposal to defend yourselves and we are saying this unambiguously,” Chinamasa said.

“People in ZANU ... are also ready to revenge when they are provoked,” Chirau said.

On the same day, there was heavy deployment of soldiers in all cities with reports that Tongai Mhangagwa, Harare South MP was training ZANU-PF youths 'for retaliation' against 31 July protesters.

ZIMBABWE PEACE PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER ASSAULTED FOR DOING HIS JOB

Zimbabwe Peace Project communications officer and human rights journalist Tapiwa Zivira was assaulted by municipal police officers and members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police on July 17 while he was doing his job.

Zivira was attacked along Lyton Road while filming, despite producing his media accreditation card to prove that he is a media practitioner.

“They didn't hear any of that and started punching me with fists and open palms, dragging me all over the place. One of them had already wrestled my phone from my hand. In no time, I was dragged into a waiting municipal vehicle, together with an arrested truck driver. I later learnt that the truck was being chased by municipal police officers, and one of them jumped into the truck, but fell onto the ground and died,” Zivira narrated his ordeal.

NRZ GWERU STAFF ASSAULTED BY SOLDIERS

National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) staff on August 11 were stormed by military personnel at their Raylton Club in Gweru and assaulted on a fake basis of unnecessary gathering during the lockdown.

Staff internal premises are exempted from a list of places slapped with restrictions on accommodating individuals during the lockdown.

However, the military from Six Maint Barracks in Gweru ignored this regulation and stormed the club while about eight employees of the national courier were relaxing. Calvin Mazvido, one of the NRZ employees who work at the Club narrated the demeaning incident.

“It was around 5pm and we were just sitting at the canteen. Suddenly we saw a lady in plain clothes who we later identified to be a soldier approaching alone. She went and stood on the side of a car belonging to a colleague known as John Manyundwa. While we were still trying to find out who she was, we saw three armed soldiers approaching in fast paces.”

“At that moment a few guys who were standing ran away but myself and about three others could not do so because we were seated. So the soldiers ordered us to lie down. They stepped on our foreheads with heavy gumboots while beating us on our backs. There was a 20-litre container which had water and cleaning liquid so they took it and poured all the contents on our bodies. The abuse only stopped when each of us paid USD10 to the soldiers,” he said.

GWERU POLICE STORM HOUSE, ASSAULT TEACHER

A 33-year-old teacher was severely tortured by police from Senga Police Station who stormed his house while he was conducting private lessons for exam class students on July 28.

Schools in Zimbabwe were closed on March 24 but several teachers have been conducting private lessons for students who sit for final examinations in December to make them cover up for lost time of learning. Norest Makoni, a qualified science teacher, on the day of the assault, had gathered eight students preparing for the ZimSec Ordinary Level examination. “The gate was locked and the police used their car to break in. They found us seated under a shed with my students and hailed insults on us for gathering like that saying it was a lockdown and all needed to be self-isolating. It was at that time that I lost my temper and approached them to question how they could break into a private property like that.”

“A female officer slapped me four times on both cheeks and another male officer who is middle-aged shoved me to the ground. My yard is on hard rocks and I suffered a deep cut on the side of the spinal code. Despite the injuries, I was humiliated in front of my students. I still rue that day,” said Makoni.



FAMILIES RUNNING OUT OF FOOD

Several Bulawayo families who rely on relatives based outside the country are going hungry as accessing remittance money is proving difficult owing to harassment by the police and soldiers enforcing the COVID-19 lockdown.



Soldiers and police patrolling the streets of the CBD on April 21 beat up and chased away people queuing to collect money from banks and other foreign remittance outlets in the city. Police and the army chased away people queuing at Western Union and MoneyGram queue at EcoBank at the corner of Fife Street and 9th Avenue where there was a long queue.

“They chased us away after threatening to beat us up. They accused us of spreading Covid-19 before telling us to go back home. My family is in desperate need of money because we need to eat. Our food stocks have run out,” said Nobuhle Matshazi from Saucerstown.

Other clients said they were in desperate need of cash for their day-to-day expenses as commodities were much cheaper when buying in cash as compared to using electronic transactions.

For example, at Oceans Supermarket in the city, bread was going for ZWL21 cash and ZWL30 using other payment options which also attracts additional transaction charges.

“At the end of the day, I will buy five items with cash rather than swiping for only three items at the shops. In Western areas, they charge you ZWL120 for 2kg sugar when swiping but ZWL80 if you are buying in cash.”

“That is why we will just stand in the queue, though unfortunately, I could not access it after soldiers beat us,” said Thembani Ndlovu from Magwegwe North suburb.”

In a statement, Bulawayo police spokesperson Inspector Abednico Ncube justified police action as necessary to decongest the CBD.

“While we understand that people need to restock on food supplies and some people have genuine business in town, we still want to limit the numbers and decongest the CBD. We will continue to work and our teams are still working at the roadblocks,” Ncube said.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV FORCED TO DEFAULT ON TREATMENT

People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV) have not only been forced to default on their medication but are being subjected to stigmatisation at roadblocks after the government announced a total lockdown without notice to allow them to access ARV tablets.

HIV/AIDS activists pleaded with authorities to consider the plight of those on ARV medication so as not to reverse the gains the country has made in the fight against the pandemic.

PLWHIV said police are uncompromising at roadblocks as they refuse to give them a listening ear when they tell them that they do not have exemption but their patients' books.

"They told me that they were only following instructions from the top that only exemption letters will be considered," said Cynthia Mabuza from Pumula suburb who said after failing to travel to the council-run Princess Margaret clinic in the CBD for her ARV supplies.

Dumisani Nkomo an HIV activist and president of Adventist International HIV/AIDS Society pleaded with authorities to allow those needing ARV re-supply safe passage at the roadblocks without discrimination and hindrance.

"We cannot direct how the government fights Coronavirus but we are also saying that the fight against HIV/AIDS should not also be compromised because of the total lockdown without any notice," Nkomo said.

"There has to be a balance in fighting both Coronavirus and HIV/AIDS because as it is we have a problem where people are now defaulting after failing to access their medication."

Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Health Chairperson Ruth Labode said her committee had advised social workers and provincial health ministry authorities to ensure that services were rendered at quarantine centres for all people with special health conditions.

"It is saddening to know that some people have defaulted on special medication due to the pandemic. It is not their fault that they found themselves in these situations, so it is the work of authorities to ensure that people do not default and that they get the right medication wherever they are," Labode said.



VENDORS ARRESTED BEFORE MDC ALLIANCE COUNCILLOR'S BURIAL

The death of MDC Alliance district chairman and Karoi Ward 4 councillor Lavender Chiwaya in August drew a lot of controversy.

His party claimed he was abducted while the State denied the allegations. However, his burial on 20 August saw the deployment of State security agents.

Judah Matara of Chikangwe was among vendors who were arrested during a morning raid. He had farming chemicals, maize seed among others confiscated by the police. He was forced to pay a fine of ZWL500.

"I had just finished setting up my table when police officers raided our market and took everything away. I don't know what to do since they took everything. My family will suffer because of this," lamented Matara.

MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS DISTURB THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF THE CITY

As the burial of MDC Alliance District Chairman and Karoi Ward 4 councillor Lavender Chiwaya was being prepared, both ZRP and ZNA deployed officers within Karoi central business district affecting the smooth movement of traffic. Commuters were barred into town.

ZNA deployed officers at Chikangwe stadium as plans were afoot for mourners to use the stadium for body viewing as hundreds thronged his house. This forced national MDC Alliance organising Secretary Amos Chibaya to use his house as the venue for the funeral together with an open space near the business centre.

One of the affected people narrated his ordeal, "I could not go to work today, police officers turned me away despite showing my exemption letter. It is not fair for me since I am a small business owner if I don't work, I won't get any food."

QUIZZED OVER FUNERAL PROCESSION

Four senior MDC Alliance officials including Provincial Election Director Kudakwashe Chigumo, Provincial Women Chairperson Abigail Usavi, Youth Leaders Collins Mapfumo and Tichaona Mugwariri were summoned by the Deputy Officer Commanding Hurungwe Superintendent Simbarashe Zvidzai four days after the burial of MDC Alliance district chairman and Karoi Ward 4 councillor Lavender Chiwaya on 20 August 2020.

The four were questioned over why they allowed mourners to go through the town centre on their way to the graveyard. They were told that they should have told mourners not to use the CBD route.

According to one of the MDC Alliance activists, “police officers wanted to know why our procession went via the town centre, the police officers threatened to arrest us. We were let go after they failed to raise any charges against us.”

ILLEGAL GOLD PANNER DROWNS AFTER POLICE RAID

In a move to stop the spread of COVID-19 in mining, areas police raided mining areas including Penhalonga in Manicaland.

The move saw a youthful illegal panner John Mabika drowning in a slime dam after attempting to flee the police raid.

The incident happened on May 4, 2020, the deceased was among youths driven by hunger to defy the government's national lockdown to illegally pan gold. Police confirmed the incident. One of the panners Terrence Kuchocha narrated the ordeal.

“We were a group of artisanal miners during the day at Redwing Mine Goldfields near Mutare River when police and Redwing Mine Security officers raided the area,” he said.

“We fled the area towards the river, some of the youths managed to swim across, while others were apprehended by police. My friend Mabika fell into a muddy slime dam, making it difficult for him to be noticed.

“The following morning, his family members visited Penhalonga Police station to make enquiries on the arrested miners, only to be told that the name was on the list.”

He said Mabika’s body was found 5 days later after a search by police and family members. His body was found in an advanced state of decomposition.

He was buried the same day he was found. Area Member of Parliament Honorable Regai Tsunga said police officers must not use brute force against illegal gold miners given the harsh economic conditions.



ZESA DEFIES LOCKDOWN MEASURES

It never rains but pours for Redwing Mineworkers who are grappling with lockdown restrictions when the Zimbabwe Electricity Authority disconnected their power supplies, forcing workers to go without water.

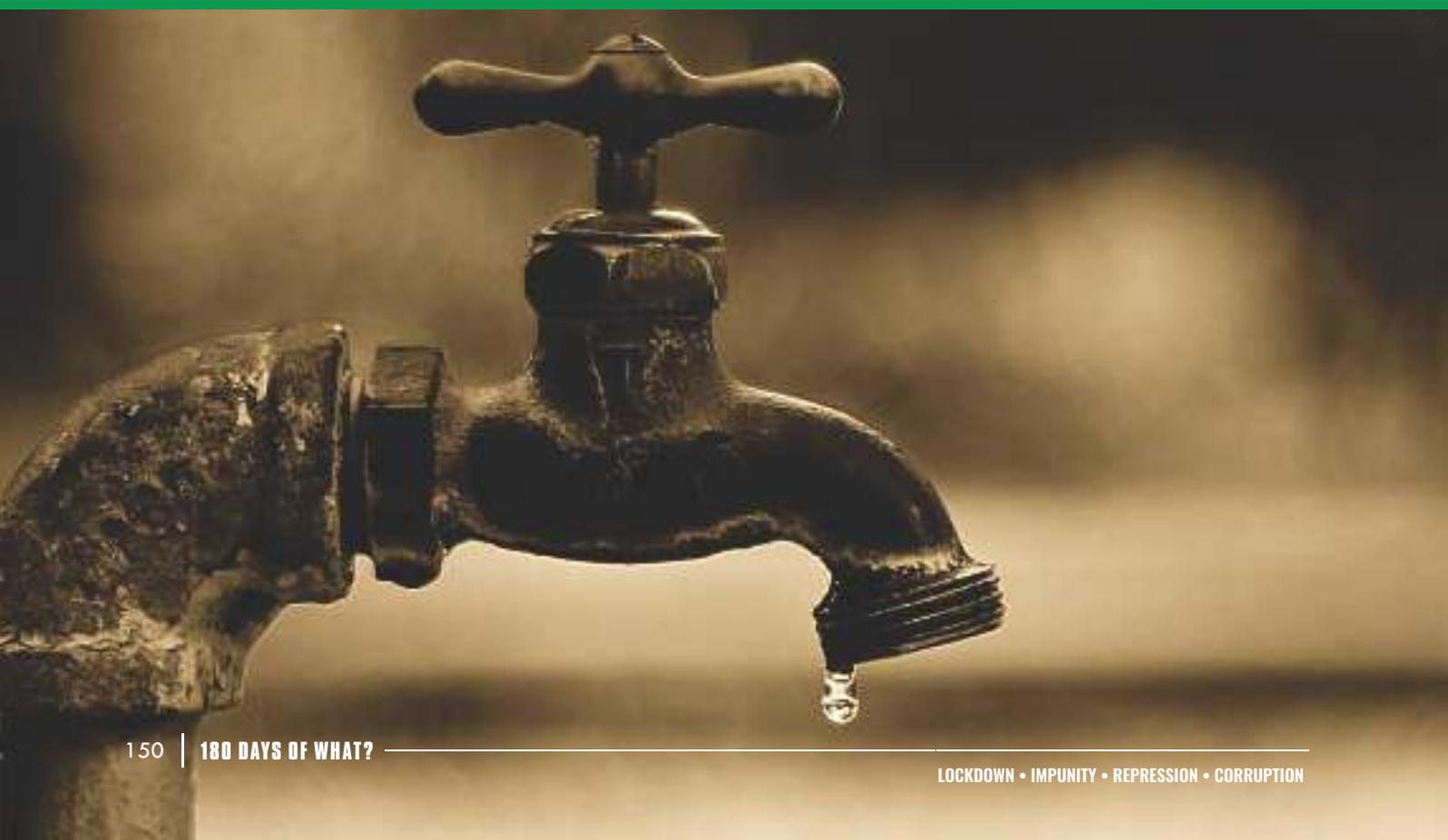
The Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) was unable to pump water to the residence since there was no electricity.

Over 500 Redwing Mineworkers who are staying at the company's premises were affected. This happened in the second week of April. Area Member of Parliament Honorable Regai Tsunga accused the government of failing to fulfil its promises.

"I was called by workers at Redwing Mine that ZESA switched off their power during the lockdown period, I visited the workers at the premises and they told me their challenges," he said.

"They had no electricity and water during the lockdown, and these are basic human rights which the government promised to fulfil," he said.

Tsunga said there was a sharp increase in water-borne diseases in the area as a result of water scarcity.





11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

With the negative implications of the lockdown being evident, the Forum recommends to the government to adopt homegrown strategies that address the ailing economy. Long term and well thought-out solutions are required to improve the livelihoods of Zimbabweans, presently and in the future. The government must, therefore, act urgently to ensure that political, social and economic rights are restored and accessible to all.

11.1. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING LAW ENFORCEMENT

- The Commissioner-General of Police must conduct full and thorough investigations into all outstanding reported cases concerning police excessive use of force and live ammunition on citizens and ensure accountability of perpetrators;
- The Commissioner-General of Police must conduct full and thorough investigations into all outstanding reported cases of abductions and torture, with a view to ensure accountability by perpetrators and access to justice by victims and to break the cycle and trend of abductions and torture that threatens and safety and security of the citizens of Zimbabwe;
- The Commissioner-General of Police and Minister of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage must institute remedial reforms within the Zimbabwe Republic Police to ensure that incidents of unlawful arrests and assault by members of the Police Force do not continue unchecked, including the following:
 - i. Establishing an independent and credible department that monitors and oversees compliance to prevent human rights violations, corruption and malpractice by police officers.
 - ii. Developing a code of conduct for the police which aligns with the minimum standards of conduct in the Luanda Guidelines, which is based on the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPPCO)

Code of Conduct, and which addresses issues of training on crowd control in the event of protests and strengthening of internal disciplinary systems to curb corruption and impunity.

iii. That the Commissioner of Police ensures a standard and uniform implementation of lockdown restrictions which are in line with the gazetted regulations and the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

iv. The Minister of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Commissioner of Police instil in the police force the respect of the rule of law in Zimbabwe through abiding with court judgments pronounced by the courts impacting on standards of law enforcement.

v. The Commander of the Defence Forces to ensure that the army returns to the barracks and that lockdown enforcement is left in the hands of the police. Zimbabwe is not in a state of emergence, but a state of disaster-induced by a health pandemic.

11.2. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

- The Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Finance must work together to ensure that local authorities provide clean and potable water to citizens to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and waterborne diseases.
- The government of Zimbabwe must provide a meaningful monetary subsidy to vulnerable communities in the form of food aid packages, allowances and grants.
- The government of Zimbabwe must fulfil its commitment to rejuvenate, stimulate and grow the economy. A healthy economy will create job opportunities for the unemployed and improve livelihoods.

11.3. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING CORRUPTION

- The government must demonstrate its sincerity in dealing with corruption cases by ensuring that those implicated are brought before the courts, tried and sentenced for their crimes.
- The government must stop persecuting citizens who expose corrupt activities. Instead, the government is urgent to ensure the protection of whistleblowers and those who speak out against corruption.

11.4. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE HEALTH SECTOR

The Forum recommends:

- the capacitation of the health sector particularly the provision of adequate equipment, and the provision of COVID-19 specific requirements and medical resources;
- the speedy resolution of the wage disputes between the Ministry of Health and Child Care and health workers;
- the revamping of medical facilities around the country and for the government to take all necessary measures to ensure that basic medical care, emergency medical care is available to all nationwide;
- the State must take all practical measures to ensure the provision of basic, accessible and adequate health services throughout Zimbabwe;
- the State must take appropriate fair and reasonable measures to ensure that no person is refused emergency medical treatment at any health institution.

A SUMMARY REVIEW OF THE FIRST
180 DAYS OF THE COVID-19 NATIONAL
LOCKDOWN IN ZIMBABWE

SEPTEMBER 2020



Zimbabwe
HUMAN RIGHTS
NGO Forum

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