



*It's the few against us the rest!
The few are chauffeured, us the rest got no transport
It aint a joke, for us the rest can't express ourselves,
Free expression, gathering & campaigning is for the few,
We can't even ask HOW FAR with their promises, it's a crime
In the end, we feel hard done!*

HARD

DONE

**The Zimbabwe Peace Project
Monthly Monitoring Report for
August 2021**

SPECC

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*The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.
Maya Angelou*



[Photograph: Eileen Agar](#)

1.0 Executive Summary

August 2021 was a politically charged month in Zimbabwe. The social media buzz over the opposition victory in neighbouring Zambia translated into more campaigns and increased political activity by the ruling Zanu PF and the MDC Alliance parties in Zimbabwe.

Despite the COVID-19 lockdown in place, Zanu PF continued with its campaigns and restructuring like it was business as usual.

As a result of being politically active, Zanu PF contributed to over 21 percent of perpetrators of human rights violations in August 2021. This was mostly due to the fact that party officials and activists coerced citizens to be part of the party's activities, in the process infringing their freedom to associate.

The main opposition party, the MDC Alliance and its breakaway, the MDC-T, both contributed to just under 0.2 percent of the perpetrators.

All this happened as Zimbabweans experienced an increase in the cost of living and the worsening of the public transport crisis.

The unavailability of safe and reliable public transportation has become a major human rights issue in Zimbabwe as government continues to maintain a ban on public transport operators at a time when the government owned Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) has not managed to build its capacity to cater for the huge demand for its services.

Members of the public therefore end up resorting to using trucks and other vehicles, popularly known as mushikashika as public transport, or spend hours queuing for ZUPCO buses, exposing themselves to COVID-19 and losing productive time.



We take a look at the issues affecting the public transport system.

We also delve into the story behind the forcing of young girls into marriage scandal at the Johane Marange apostolic sect and focus on how the sect, which enjoys political protection, uses various means of suppressing the rights of children and women.

Charged with the responsibility to enforce COVID-19 lockdown measures, the police contributed to just over 50 percent of the human rights violations.

This is mainly because the officers used brute methods, or simply did not follow arrest procedures while enforcing measures such as the 6.30 pm curfew.

In one of the cases, some commercial sex workers who were found loitering after the curfew in Marondera alleged that police officers demanded sexual favours in return for freedom.

The police were also responsible for the ten cases of unlawful detention. We also look at the human rights issue around government's failure to avail national registration documents considering that for one to write public exams, vote in national elections, or access aid and some financial and government services, they need to either have national identity card or birth certificate.

During the month of August, ZPP hosted a webinar on enforced disappearances and part of the panelist was Aua Balde, who is a member of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances

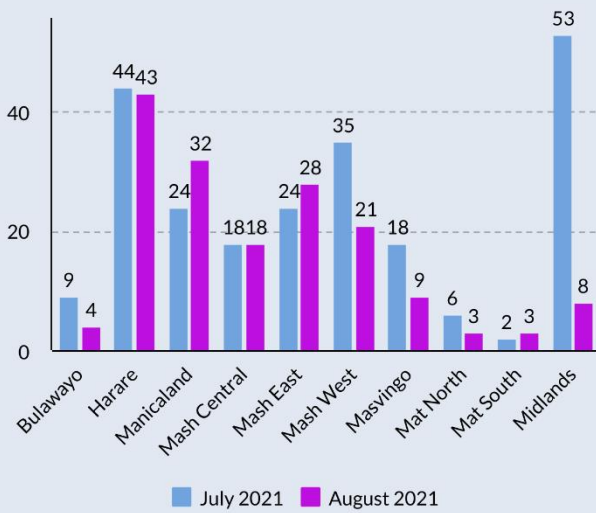
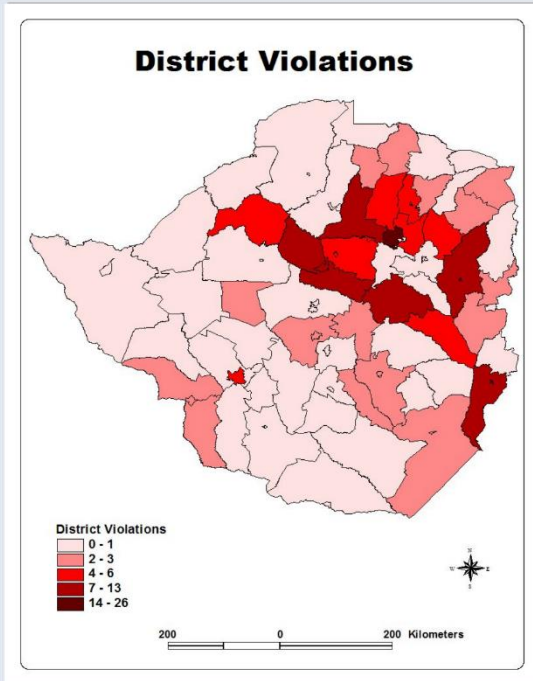
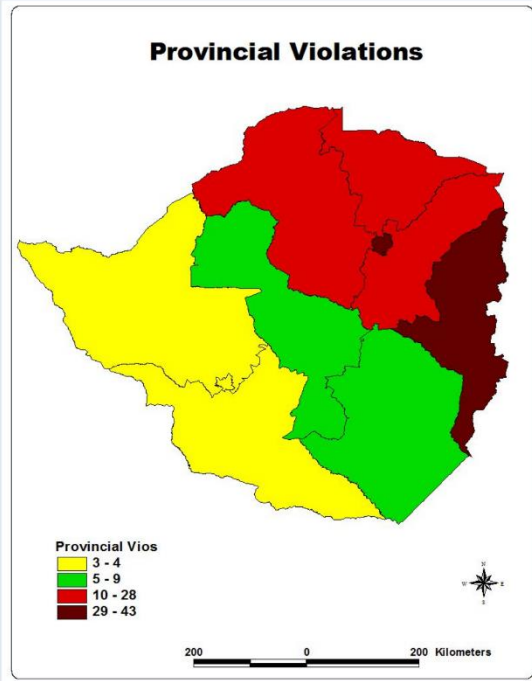


2.0 Violations Infographics

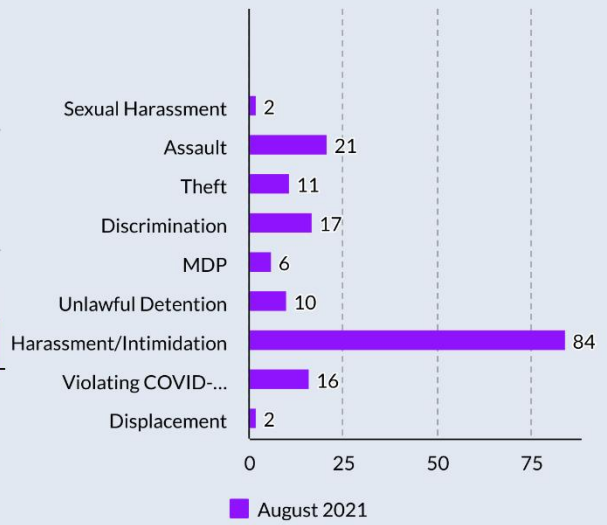
Human Rights Violations Monthly Dashboard

Report time frame: August, 2021

Zimbabwe Peace Project

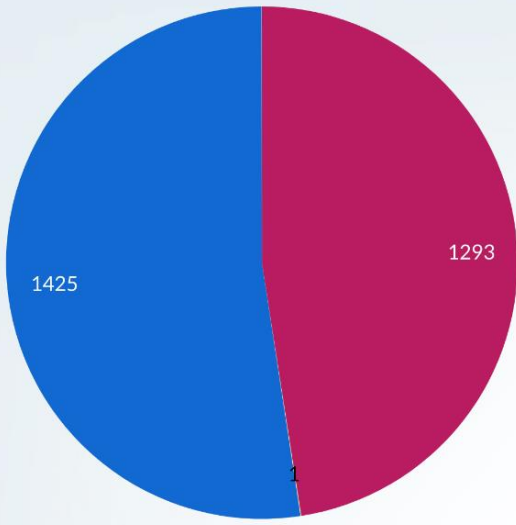


Provincial Violations

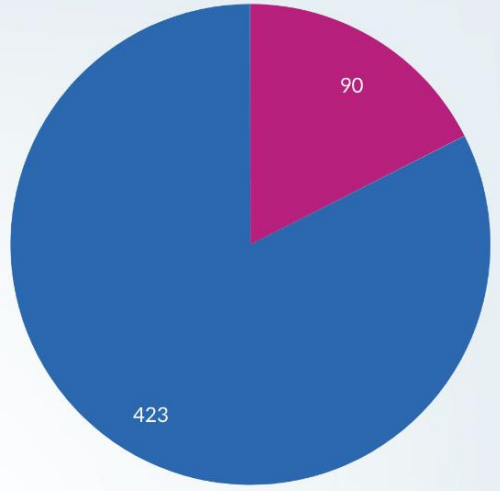


Types of Violations

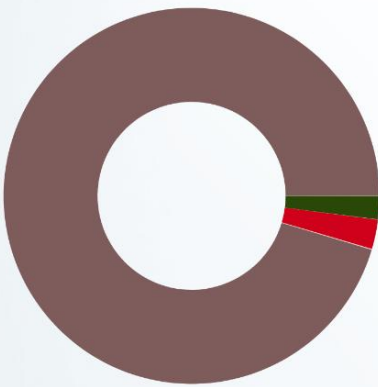
2.0 Violations Infographics



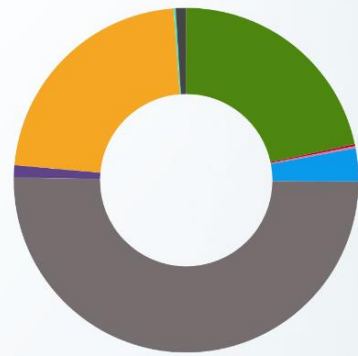
Gender of Victims



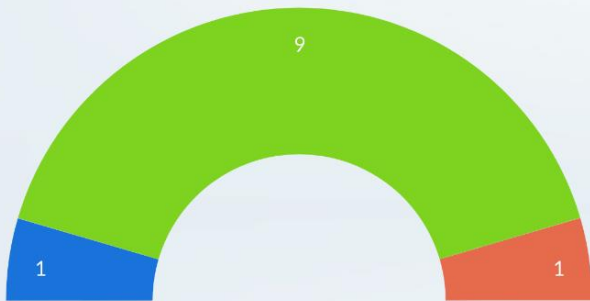
Gender of Perpetrators



Victims Affiliation



Perpetrators Affiliation



Food & Other Aid Violations



Intra Party Violence

3.0 RRRV2023 | National Outlook

We are monitoring the situation across the country and political activities have already begun. As part of our campaign to monitor the electoral environment, we have launched our #RRRV2023 campaign to ensure Zimbabweans are able to Resist, Reject and Report political Violence.

When opposition presidential candidate Hakainde Hichemba won the presidential election in Zambia, and the incumbent, Edgar Lungu immediately conceded defeat, the development sent tremors across the Zambezi.

Before long, the Harare administration was making responses to the effect that if ZanuPF and particularly President Emmerson Mnangagwa, lost the 2023 election, they would not concede.

President Mnangagwa's spokesperson George Charamba, using his pseudonym, [@Jamwanda2](#), tweeted that Zanu PF would not hand over power to MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa if he were to win the next election.

Tweeted Charamba,

"Kwaa kufunga kuti madhara ehondo anongopfeka hovhorosi kuti Chamisa agotonga hake??? Imika imi, ityai Mwari!!!!"

Loosely translated, this meant, 'do you think these war veterans just wear overalls so that Chamisa can govern? Come on, revere God!!!!'

As if that was not enough, President Mnangagwa repeated the same sentiments while he was officiating the opening of an oxygen plant in Mutare.

"Let me tell you even before you ask me, if anyone ever dreams of what happened in Zambia happening in Zimbabwe, come back to your senses and brew some beer"

Early on, main opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa of the MDC Alliance, spurred on by the opposition victory in Zambia, declared that he had a 'sweet smell of victory in his nostrils'

The history of Zanu PF not conceding defeat is well documented.

In 2008, Morgan Tsvangirai, now late, won the first round of the presidential election ahead of long-time ruler Robert Mugabe.

As Tsvangirai and Mugabe went for their second round, Zanu PF, the military and intelligence began an orgy of political violence targeting opposition supporters, leaving over 200 dead and thousands injured and displaced.

President Mnangagwa has admitted to having been behind the idea of the 2008 election run-off, which, as is documented, turned out to be one of the bloodiest phases in Zimbabwe's electoral history.

It is within the context of such history that the statements by Mnangagwa and Charamba cannot be taken lightly.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project therefore joins other pro-democracy actors in calling for the respect of the will of the people.

Opposition politics is not a crime, and it is within the right of every Zimbabwean to participate in any political activity of their choice.

3.0 RRRV2023 | Provincial Highlights

In Marondera and Mutoko commercial sex workers operating after the curfew time accused male police officers of asking for bribes and in some cases, the police officers allegedly demanding sexual favours from the commercial sex workers in return for freedom.

Mashonaland East

In Mashonaland East, ZPP recorded mostly cases of intimidation, harassment, unlawful arrests and extortion. Murehwa and Mudzi had numerous cases of intimidation and in most cases Zanu PF aligned persons were behind these violations.

In Marondera and Mutoko commercial sex workers operating after the curfew time accused male police officers of asking for bribes and in some cases, the police officers allegedly demanding sexual favours from the commercial sex workers in return for freedom.

Meanwhile, citizens pin-pointed Zanu PF aligned traditional leaders and Zanu PF activists (Ward Councillors and Ward Chairpersons) for violating citizens' freedom of association as they forced villagers to be part of Zanu PF party processes.

On 22 August close to 30 villagers were forced to convene at Nyamuyaruka Business Centre Ward 10 in Mudzi North. It is alleged that, Zanu PF activists Portia Chijaka and John Sarafunga forced villagers to convene before forcing them to contribute money to assist local war veterans and war collaborators. Villagers with no cash were told that they could support the process through providing maize grain and ground nuts. It was also reported that during the meeting villagers were forced to chant Zanu PF slogans and sing revolutionary songs.

In Murehwa, vendors were told that only Zanu PF supporters would be allowed to sell their wares at the Murehwa vegetable market.

Mashonaland West

As the country prepares for elections, artisanal mining syndicates are slowly realigning themselves to the ruling Zanu PF. The realigning exercise is for artisanal miners to use terror under the guise that they belong to the ruling Zanu PF.

In Chegutu an artisanal miner clad in Zanu PF regalia terrorized citizens while in Muzvezve, artisanal miners are now digging some of their tunnels in residential areas, risking the lives of ordinary citizens, whose houses may collapse.

ZPP has observed that in some parts of the area, newly built houses are developing cracks, and yet the activities of the artisanal miners continue simply because some of them have political protection from Zanu PF, and they are a strategic tool for coercion as campaigns heat up.

A Zanu PF aligned artisanal mining syndicate led by Denboy Makombe is reported to be harassing, intimidating and assaulting villagers in Chegutu West at Muchakata Gold mill Pick-stone and they use dangerous weapons such as knives, machetes and knobkerries.



Image: Reuters

3.0 RRRV2023 | Provincial Highlights

In the month of August, there was no food aid distribution and the government has not paid out any COVID-19 allowances in the past three months, leaving citizens more vulnerable.



Harare

Leaders of the #31JulyMovement, Jacob Ngarivhume and Job Sikhala, have reported that they have received threats from suspected state security agents.

Speaking during an interview with NewZimbabwe.com 5 August 2021, Ngarivhume said the aggressors used South African cellphone numbers to issue threats against any attempt to organize another protest.

The #31JulyMovement is a convergence of Zimbabweans who, last year, organized a protest on 31 July, and several civil and political activists, including Ngarivhume and Sikhala, were arrested. In the run up to the protests, some activists were abducted as the State went on an overdrive to stop the protest.

Said Ngarivhume

“I am now receiving threats on a daily basis from state security agents who are simply against citizens enjoying their basic rights. They do not want people to express themselves, they do not want people to criticise (President) Emmerson Mnangagwa, and they do not want people to speak against corruption because that is how they survive and are too eager to abuse those that are brave enough to do that.”



Mashonaland Central

It was business as usual despite the COVID-19 lockdown being in place in Mashonaland Central.

Zanu PF was in full campaign mode and in one incident, a Zanu PF Councillor Machisi of Bindura Ward 12 convened a meeting and promised to distribute 1000 Tsotso stoves and solar panels to citizens in the area, and he also went around the ward compiling names of prospective beneficiaries in Garikai Township.

Machisi allegedly indicated that in order for one to be a beneficiary, they had to exhibit allegiance to the ruling party, which is on a campaign to have a record and ambitious five million votes in 2023 and has begun using different ways of collecting names of people onto its party roll.

In the month of August, there was no food aid distribution and the government has not paid out any COVID-19 allowances in the past three months, leaving citizens more vulnerable.

Asked about the issue, leader of government business in Parliament Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi said the money was no longer available for those who are able-bodied and that it was no longer necessary as the country had a bumper harvest in the last farming season.

ZPP however noted that there was no evidence that persons with disability received any COVID-19 related support.

In Muzarabani, police allegedly continued to deny the MDC Alliance clearance to hold meetings due to lockdown regulations but Zanu PF was holding its meetings regularly without disturbances.



In Nkayi, it was reported that police officers assaulted three women (names supplied) who suffered significant injuries on allegations that they violated lockdown regulations.

Bulawayo

The highlight of the month was President Mnangagwa's visit to Matabeleland where he met chiefs in what was seen as an attempt by the president to use the backdoor to deal with the Gukurahundi killings of the 1980s.

Mnangagwa was State Security minister when the killings happened, and since he came into power in 2017, he has attempted to clear his name on the killings.

ZPP and other pro-healing groups have continued to urge Mnangagwa to initiate a genuine, inclusive healing and reconciliation process.

Voter registration has begun in the province with very few individuals registering to vote. The general public perception is that Zanu PF has already won the elections as the party is enjoying the opportunity to gather people and conduct its business undisturbed and yet other political parties, especially the MDC Alliance, are being denied that chance.

Matabeleland North

Chief Saba of Binga North Ward 9 continued intimidating opposition supporters instructing all village heads to report any meeting convened by the members of the opposition. It is said that Saba has instructed village heads to draw up a list of any opposition members carrying out any political activities and threatened that they would be 'dealt with'

In Nkayi, it was reported that police officers assaulted three women (names supplied) who suffered significant injuries on allegations that they violated lockdown regulations. The police first accused the women of stealing livestock but they later changed the charge and accused the three of disregarding safe practices of preventing the COVID 19.

Conflict and politically motivated rivalries among artisanal miners are on the rise in Umguza and in the month under review one Justin Moyo allegedly shot three people in an ownership wrangle over a newly discovered gold claim. The conflict erupted when Moyo remarked that it was his family's land that they bought from the government and yet others argued that the land had been repossessed and parceled out by Zanu PF for artisanal processes. This resulted in Moyo shooting and injuring the three.

Matabeleland South Province

In Silozwana village, Matobo North, a Zanu PF activist identified as Martin Sibindi allegedly intimidated villagers telling them that they shall be monitored if they vote for the MDC Alliance. It is said that Sibindi made these remarks during a community meeting as he was encouraging people to register to vote. It is reported that Sibindi warned that a mechanism had been drawn up to monitor and punish those that might vote for other MDC Alliance and other parties.

3.0 RRRV2023 | Provincial Highlights

In Chingwizi there is still no nearby source of potable water and the relocated villagers walk for several kilometres to the nearest water source.

Manicaland

Zanu PF continued with its activities and even went on to conduct internal elections in some of the wards to choose branch members. The activities happened in defiance of the COVID-19 lockdown measures and ZPP noted that there was no social distancing, masking up properly and sanitizing of hands by those who participated.

Intra-party conflict within ZanuPF continued in the province and ZanuPF went on to continue to conduct meetings despite the lockdown being in place. In one of the meetings reported by NewsDay, party provincial chairman Mike Madiro exchanging harsh words with Mutare district co-ordination committee (DCC) chairperson Benali Tard.

The meeting was meant to prepare for this year's Zanu PF national conference to be held in Bindura, Mashonaland Central province.

Masvingo

Similar to other provinces, Zanu PF continued conducting political activities and in one incident in Masvingo West, King Mine area, one Lydia Sigauke called for a physical meeting claiming that the top leadership of the Zanu PF party was scheduled to visit the area. Sigauke then gathered over 150 people at King Mine Hall where no COVID-19 safety protocols were observed.

The meeting was allegedly for purposes of putting together a Zanu PF district committee and the event went ahead undisturbed by the police.

In Chingwizi there is still no nearby source of potable water and the relocated villagers walk for several kilometres to the nearest water source. There are no proper schools after government officials allegedly announced to the villagers that they were to be relocated to another place. The villagers are living in abject poverty and the COVID-19 situation has left them more vulnerable. Some of the villagers told ZPP that they intend to return to their ancestral land, from where they got evicted to pave way for the Tokwe Mukosi Dam, claiming that it was better to 'die from floods than hunger'.



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4.0

Marange sect's political worth helps members get away with murder, abuse

We go deep into the story behind the Johane Marange sect's political significance, its doctrine of coercion and abuse and its history.

The story of a 15 year old girl who died of pregnancy complications in Marange east opened a discussion around religion, human rights and political will to end the culture of forcing girls into marriage. Most advocates of children's rights have argued that the culprits should be charged with rape and murder in the case of the late Anna.

According to the police, Anna Machaya who had been married off to one Hatirarami Momberume, died while giving birth and her parents, who are members of the Johane Marange apostolic sect, attempted to cover up the crime as it was some kind of a normal practice that young girls get married as part of the sect's doctrine.

The United Nations and many rights groups expressed disquiet over the prevalence of these forced marriages within the sect.

The story of the Johane Marange sect is one that is more than what meets the eye. The sect has been receiving preferential treatment over the years from the ruling party resulting in their side swipes with the law being ignored. The Johane Marange sect is believed to boost Zanu PF's votes as seen by the frequency with which Zanu PF leaders visit the shrine. In this edition, we expose some of the social and political dynamics behind one of the mysterious religious groups in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Formed in the 1930s, the Johane Marange sect is one of the most popular apostolic sects in Zimbabwe and is known for its strict rules that members have to adhere to.

For its popularity and large following of hundreds of thousands, as well as its ability to control its members, the sect is of political significance to Zanu PF and any other political party.

This is why political leaders such as former President Robert Mugabe, President Emmerson Mnangagwa, former Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, among many others, have visited the sect's headquarters in Bocha, Marange.



Because of its strict rules and doctrines, the sect has a loyal following, and the sect's high priest and leader, Noah Taguta, is referred to as a "god" who is sometimes likened to Jesus, and messages from him, including those that seek to suppress the role of women in sect, are said to be directly from God.

So, whatever Taguta says goes, and for political leaders, this has worked well in their favour as the sect members interviewed by ZPP confirmed that the sect has used some Bible verses to compel its members to support Zanu PF.

One of the Bible verses that has been used is Romans 13:1, which says, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."

There is also a fear of the power associated with the sect prophets' ability to get messages from God and to foresee things, a situation that leaves ordinary members with one choice, and that is to follow what they are told.

This level of indoctrination can never be underestimated.

Among the rules all members of the sect — including women — must keep bald heads and that the women are expected to submit to men always, whether at home or within the sect.

The father is the sole authority in the house. Women do not contribute anything either by way of preaching or being part of decision-making in the running of the sect.

Women cannot stand and preach to a congregation, it is a sign of disrespect and education for girls in the sect is not a priority.

They are, instead, groomed to be housewives and are not supposed to get access to any culture or platforms that may be seen to be contrary to the sect doctrines and parents are not encouraged to send their children to visit relatives who are not members of the sect.

The sect is also one of the few remaining that gets girls tested for virginity and those certified to be virgins are made to sit on the front row, facing sect elders who use that opportunity to pick out potential wives.



To add to the woes of the girls and women, the sect has powerful internal disciplinary platforms that are closely presided over by the sect leaders.

With much of the rules and regulations of the sect being enforced far from the eyes of the state law enforcers, abuse of girls and women often goes unreported, and is dealt with, if at all, within the sect's internal courts, which are often biased against girls and women.

Apart from the observed high number of cases where girls below 18 are married off — often to older and polygamous sect members — there are also many incidents of birth-related deaths as the sect forbids its members from using the formal health institutions and prefers its own midwives and spiritual healers.

The sect also bars its members from taking medication, and women are not allowed to take contraceptives.

Defying the rules can lead to automatic expulsion from the sect and members of the sect normally live in large communities together, so being expelled from the sect is like being banished from the whole community.

The sect also uses —whether by design or coincidence — psychological indoctrination to make young girls believe the only way is to get married.

Preachers use derogatory words for things that they believe are not in conformity with their practices. For example, when one fails to attend sect, it is defined as “kun’ora” (dirty and sinful) and non-members are called “vanhu vekunyika vakan’ora” (sinful outsiders).

The Johane Marange sect’s strategic importance to ZanuPF means that the sect leaders will get away with leading a cult-like sect that is known for abusing the rights of women and children.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

ZPP strongly calls on government to do the right thing, and that is to call out the sect’s abusive doctrines, and to publicly engage the sect leaders to make sweeping changes to the practices.

Police should be empowered and capacitated to deal with any cases of abuse of women and children.

Police can play a leading role in educating the sect members on the rights of children and women and they should be able to apprehend any of those found on the wrong side of the law.

The sect leaders should open up their sect sessions to the police so that they impart education to members on the rights of women and children.

The case of Anna Machaya is neither the first nor will it be the last unless girls are protected and allowed to be the children that they are, and not brides.



A recent research by the Zimbabwe Peace Project found out that a significant number of eligible Zimbabweans may not be able to vote in the 2023 elections if the current challenges in acquiring birth certificates and National ID’s persist.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project implores govt to increase the capacity of the Registrar General’s Department to fulfill its mandate to issue registration documents

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5.0

The political & human rights side of Zimbabwe's public transport crisis

ZPP's in-depth focus on the complexity of the crisis in the public transport sector.



Image: I Makawa herald.co.zw

It has been three hours and Maria is starting to feel dizzy. Standing in a queue while clutching her goods at the bustling 'Copacabana' bus terminus in Harare, she can only hope that the next bus comes in the next few minutes.

It is getting dark and Maria, a vendor, is one of the many Zimbabweans who face crippling public transport challenges every day.

She has two difficult choices.

Either she joins the queue for the government-owned ZUPCO buses, or she goes to 'mushika-shika'.

Mushika-shika is a slang term that refers to pirate transport operators who use undesignated pick up and drop off points, and with the ban on private transport operators, minibuses, small vans and light trucks have come in to fill the gap.

But getting onto a mushika shika is not a safe thing because of the physical jostling that happens when boarding one.

Maria's story is that of every Zimbabwean who uses public transport.



Image: ZPP



Image: JEKESAI NJIKIZANA/AFP/Getty Images

In January 2019, following widespread protests against the rise in the prices of fuel, government – which blamed private commuter operators of fueling the protests - announced that it was re-introducing a subsidized public transport system. At that time, the local commuting passengers in all cities and towns relied purely on private operators and the public entity, The Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) only operated on long-distance routes, but was also very much overshadowed by private players.

Whilst private commuter operators were allowed to continue with their operations, government made it clear that in future, it had the intentions of eventually just having ZUPCO as the only player in the local public transport sector.

Since ZUPCO did not have an adequate fleet to service all local routes in the country, government contracted private bus companies through a subsidy system.

At the same time, President Mnangagwa unveiled batches of new ZUPCO buses to add onto the existing fleet, but these however continued to fall far short of the required numbers and private players who had not joined the ZUPCO subsidy system continued to fill the gap.

At the end of March 2020 when President Mnangagwa announced that Zimbabwe was to go into its first COVID-19 lockdown, one of the measures was to ban the operations of private commuter operators.

This resulted in massive public transport shortages and others that have continued to dog the country to this date.

It is against this background that ZPP presents report on the state of public transport; affordability, accessibility and safety.

ZUPCO chief executive officer Mr Evaristo Madangwa has said the company requires 2 000 buses to run an efficient mass transport system.

Currently, the transport utility owns 262 buses, while the rest are operated through its franchise system.

Combined, there are about 750 to 800 ZUPCO buses operating, leaving a deficit of over about 60 percent.

In addition to this shortage, the safety standards of a considerable number of buses is questionable.

The legal framework and inclusivity

On paper, Zimbabwe is an inclusive society, and has progressive policy frameworks on inclusivity and has ratified international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

However, in practice, the environment is far from inclusive and this is largely seen in the discriminative nature of public transport facilities in Zimbabwe, which are inaccessible to persons with disabilities and this has far-reaching negative consequences that go beyond mobility limitation, and also include social exclusion, isolation and neglect of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities in poor contexts are often deprived of basic services and this in particular, includes a lack of access to adequate healthcare services, transport services and other social services.

With regards to the public transport system the exclusion happens in two ways,

Firstly, the vehicles used largely in the public transport sector are not modified to allow access for persons with disability, especially those with physical disabilities. This is in addition to the unavailability of supporting infrastructure.

Secondly, there is no deliberate awareness raising efforts targeting bus crews to understand the needs of persons with disability. In some instances, wheelchair users in Zimbabwe are sometimes charged double fares so as to accommodate them, and their assistive devices.

COVID-19 and health

ZPP has observed that there has been no effort to sanitise passengers boarding ZUPCO buses and people are still not observing social distancing while on the buses.

The shortages of buses also continue to result in people ending up gathering in large numbers, which further exposes them to COVID-19.



Image: zimlive.com

The Zimbabwe Peace Project calls on government to attend to the overall challenges affecting the public transport sector in Zimbabwe.

These challenges, which we believe should be attended to with urgency, include - but are not limited to - the unavailability of buses, especially during peak hours, the poor state of the buses, the operators' non-compliance to COVID-19 protocols, the hike in fares and the insensitivity to persons with disability.

These challenges have become the major reasons why the ZUPCO public bus system has become a human rights issue.

ZPP carried out an exploration around Harare and discovered the following issues, which government should urgently attend to.

• **Resuscitating a broke company:** In 2019, when the programme started, ZUPCO was reeling under a debt of US\$16 million, including US\$7 million in salary arrears, US\$5 million owed to trade creditors, and US\$3 million worth of pension arrears. The bus company approached the government to warehouse the debt in order to make it more appealing to potential investors. It was under that dire financial background that ZUPCO was engaged to lead the public transport sector with the aid of private owners contracted to operate under the company's banner. There has been little that has been said about the debt, neither has there been any clarity in how ZUPCO has managed the revenue it has acquired. ZPP therefore calls on government to be transparent in how ZUPCO is being run. This enhances public confidence in the system and enables citizens to understand how the company, which has a long history of being rundown, can be resuscitated to be efficient again.

• **Opaque subsidies:** Government announced in January 2019 that ZUPCO was to engage private operators to be part of its subsidy programme. Under this, private operators were to get subsidized by government in order for them to operate. However, this has happened without any transparency. Firstly, there has not been a clear criterion of who qualifies to be on the programme and this has compromised the quality and standards of ZUPCO buses.

Secondly, government has not publicly disclosed the terms of engagement with the private operators. In December 2019, 11 months after its inception, Parliament heard that the subsidy system had cost the taxpayer ZWL\$51 million. A lack of transparency is the reason why the country has had an unabated, continuous public transport crisis for nearly two years now. Once again, ZPP calls for transparency in the nature of subsidies with private operators. ZPP also urges ZUPCO to ensure they enter into partnership with operators who have roadworthy, disability friendly and COVID-19 compliant vehicles. This is because some of the buses under the ZUPCO program are just but ramshackles that just got dusted up to enable the operators to benefit.

• **Disability unfriendly bus system:** ZPP calls on ZUPCO to effect a disability-friendly public transport system. Persons with disability have continually endured having to pay extra for their assistive devices like wheelchairs and ZUPCO buses and terminuses do not have ramps while the staff have not been trained to be assistive of persons with disability during boarding and alighting of buses. This means persons with disability have to fork out extra money to accommodate their assistive devices, and their movement

• **Abuse of the law:** ZPP urges government to end the inhumane criminalization of stranded citizens who end up hitch hiking when they fail to access ZUPCO buses. This follows the imposition of a ZWL2,000 fine for citizens found to be hitch-hiking .

As part of the commemorations of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, ZPP conducted a webinar.

In the webinar, which had the high level representation at the United Nations level in the form of Aua Balde, who is a member of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances. The following key issues came out:

- The families and friends of the victims, experience slow mental anguish, not knowing whether the victim is still alive and, if so, where he or she is being held, under what conditions, and in what state of health.
- It is important to underscore that for the purposes of redress, the UN Working Group does not differentiate between the direct victim and the indirect victims, that is their families. Those disappeared & those that suffer as a result of the disappearance are entitled to reparations
- It is essential that all States pay specific attention to the multidimensional impact of enforced disappearances on the economic, social and cultural rights of the victims throughout the search process and the investigation.
- States are urged to address the fact that enforced disappearances put family and relatives in a very challenging position, especially when the breadwinner is disappeared. As the family structure is disrupted, spouses and children are impacted economically, socially and psychologically
- All States, Zimbabwe included, are called on to ratify the Convention and accept the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and examine individual and inter-State complaints
- According to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances last annual report, there were over 58k cases of Enforced Disappearances and of these, seven are from Zimbabwe. Five of the seven happened in the last report, meaning they were mainly in 2019 and 2020
- State authorities/state agents derive political benefits from the use of Enforced Disappearances. There is an instrument of control, striking fear in the people, sending message of terror.
- Its not surprising that State authorities like Zimbabwe are reluctant to submit themselves to mechanisms that would decisively deal with enforced disappearances and ensure reparations and support to victims and their families.

[Click here to watch the entire webinar](#)

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