



**MONTHLY
MONITORING
REPORT**

JANUARY

2020



**ZIMBABWE
PEACE
PROJECT**



“As we remember January... Everything remains the same”

Executive Summary

The economy remained in dire straits with inflation recorded at 521% for December 2019¹. Prices of commodities are above the reach of the majority of citizens. This has negative effects on the enjoyment of human rights, particularly the right to food, the right to health, the right to education, among others.

The month of January 2020 saw an increase in reported human rights violations from 119 to 185. Harassment and intimidation were the highest recorded violations at 96. Mashonaland Central province recorded the highest violations at 34. Machete gangs continued to terrorise citizens with ZPP receiving reports of three murders deaths at the hands of these gangs. Police and machete gangs contributed the most to the profile of perpetrators, followed by Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu PF).

The culture of selective application of the law by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) remains a mainstay of the Zimbabwean landscape. Some opposition party public events were barred by the police during the course of the month.

The social, political and economic environment prevailing in Zimbabwe is breeding ground for human rights violations and regrettably being perpetrated with impunity. It also creates hotbeds for violent conflict.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) urges the ZRP to intensify their targeted efforts to deal with the machete gangs and all and sundry in particular the government to respect the constitution.

Introduction

January marked a year since the 2019 January national stay away violence that resulted in at least 17 people losing their lives. The violence that was meted out indiscriminately against citizens is an indication that citizens are not safe in their own country. The triggers of the 14-16 January 2019 national stay away remain unresolved; a year later. The economy continued to deteriorate with prices of commodities, including fuel, increasing and remaining out of reach for many. Fuel prices were hiked from ZWL17.44/litre to



People queuing for mealie meal at OK supermarket in St Mary's Chitungwiza: PC- ZPP

¹ <https://tradingeconomics.com/zimbabwe/indicators>

ZWL18.28/litre for petrol and ZWL17.90/litre to ZWL19.55/litre for diesel in January. The consequence of fuel hikes is a spiral rise in prices of goods and services as business entities seek to cushion themselves. Shortages of mealie meal continued in January with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce putting together a Roller Meal 'task force' to ensure the transparent and equitable distribution of subsidised mealie meal. Even with a 'task force' the commodity is still unaffordable for most people as there seems to be crevices in the system that allow some individuals access to the commodity at the prescribed subsidised price, after which the price is increased two if not three fold.

The changes in the rainfall patterns and the persistent dry spells are exacerbating the situation as some crops had already suffered from heat stress; in the midst of a debilitating drought. Ironically, some parts of Zimbabwe such as Hwange, Gweru, Chegutu and Silobela experienced flash floods which decimated the few crops that had survived the heat. The mismanagement of drainage systems in urban areas has always posed a risk of flash floods; drains are usually clogged with refuse and when it rains there will be limited channels through which the rain can flow.

The collapsing economy did not spare school children and college students as tuition fees went up in leaps in the majority of schools and institutions of higher learning. In Bulawayo, students at Njube High School demonstrated after a 478% increase was effected to their school fees. They also raised concern about the low remuneration for teachers which was negatively impacting on their education. ZPP recorded numerous cases of school children being turned away from school for non-payment of school fees.

Zimbabwe's economic woes are going to persist compounded by the drought and foreign currency shortages². The economy continues to self -re-dollarise despite efforts by the government to encourage the use of the Zimbabwean dollar as the preferred currency of transaction. In his efforts to stabilise the economy, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Professor Mthuli Ncube indicated that government would introduce higher denominations of ZWL10, ZWL20 and ZWL50. This, however, is likely to fuel inflation as has happened in the past.

² Financial Gazette, 30 January 2020

Zimbabwe remains in a constitutional crisis with the proposal of 27 amendments to a Constitution that is less than seven years old. A Constitutional Amendment Bill was gazetted on 31 December 2019 and the gazetting corrected on 17 January 2020, much to the surprise of citizens who are unaware of consultations regardless of their being stakeholders to the Constitution making process.

The ZRP continued to act in a selective manner evidenced by the initial ban of the MDC Alliance State of the Nation Address (SONA) that was scheduled for the 15th of January 2020. The police later overturned the ban and the SONA took place on 21 January 2020. The police also raided MDC party headquarters, (Morgan Richard Tsvangirai House) in search of machetes and other subversive material. They confiscated laptops and party documents; contrary to the specifics stated in the search warrant. On 31 January 2020, police also prevented the MDC president, Advocate Nelson Chamisa from launching a clean -up campaign advising that he should join the one initiated by the president of Zimbabwe.

During the month, ZPP recorded violence targeting suspected MDC supporters by Zanu PF supporters at Magaba home industry in Mbare. Property including furniture, warehouse structures and other goods were destroyed.

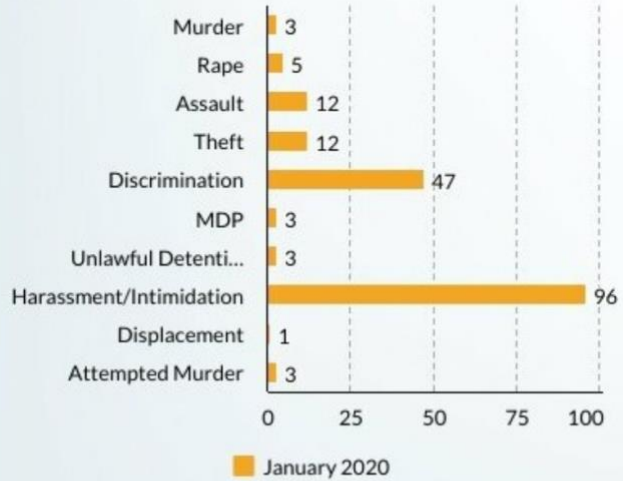
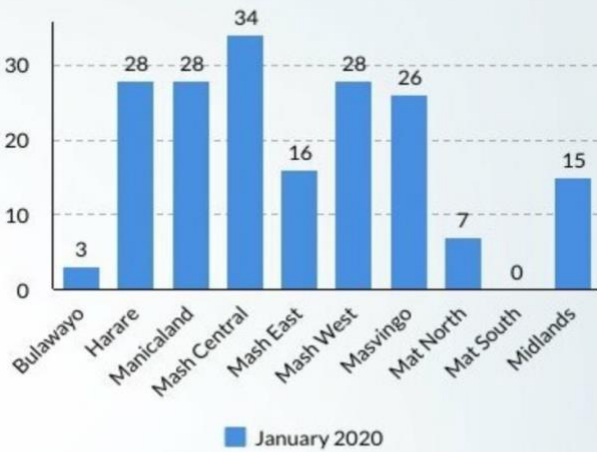
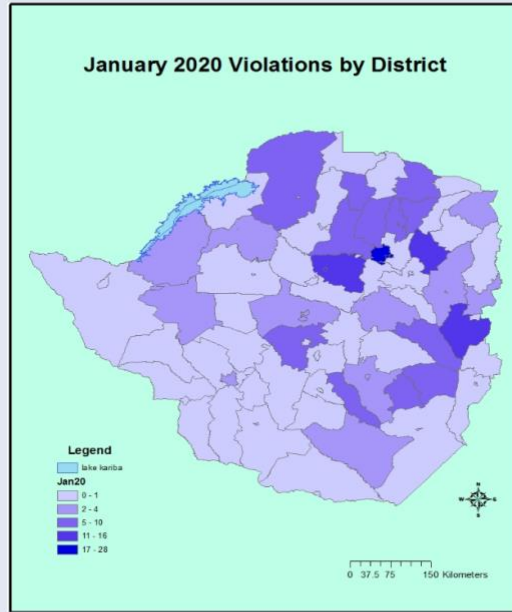
The machete wielding gangs continued with their acts of terror, extending into urban areas where they robbed unsuspecting citizens of valuables, in broad daylight. The majority of these cases were recorded in Chegutu, Kadoma and Chakari. In a tragic case reported in Chegutu, a family of five women were raped and hacked with machetes resulting in the killing of two related women (aged 80 years and 16 years). On 19 January 2020 a well-known gold dealer was stabbed to death by a gang of artisanal miners in Chiadzwa, Mutare West. The brazen lawlessness of the mining gangs was also revealed in an incident where 50 machete wielding artisanal miners besieged a police base in Gokwe North demanding the release of their colleagues who had been arrested for robbing a local miner.

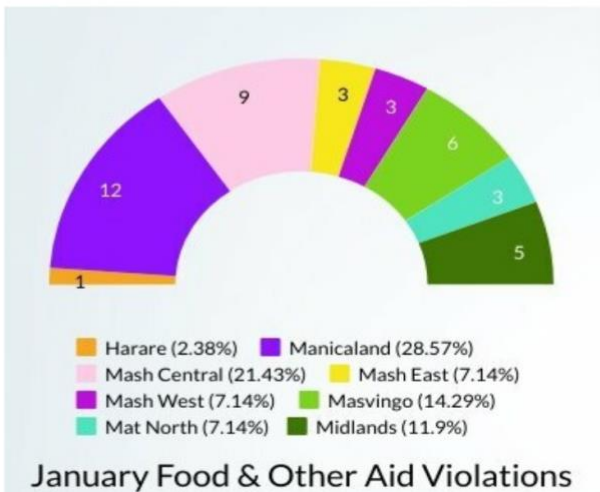
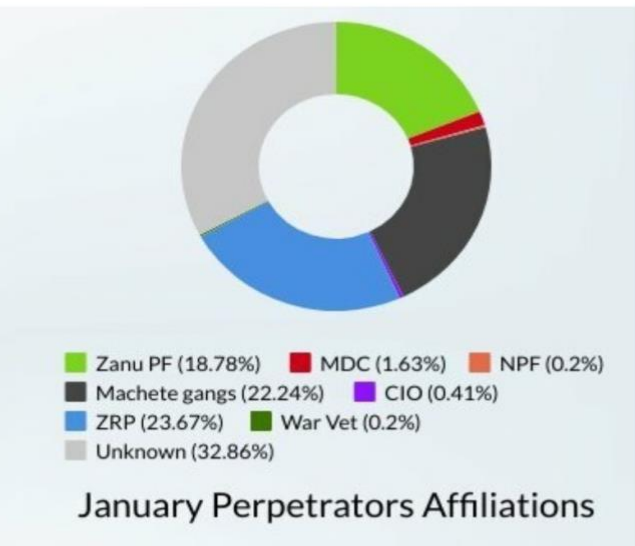
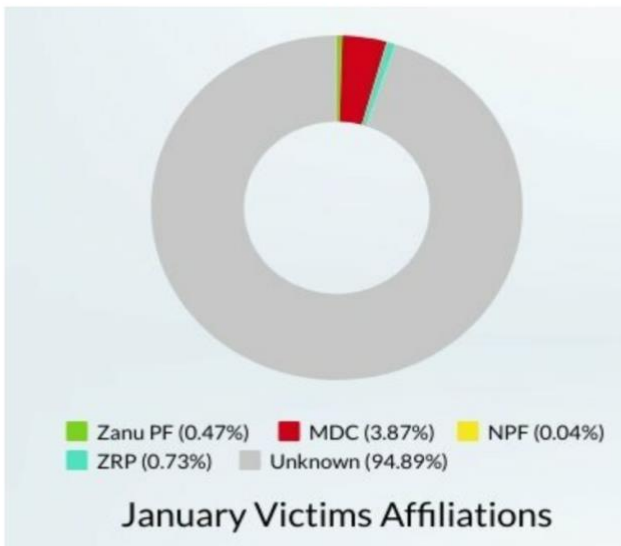
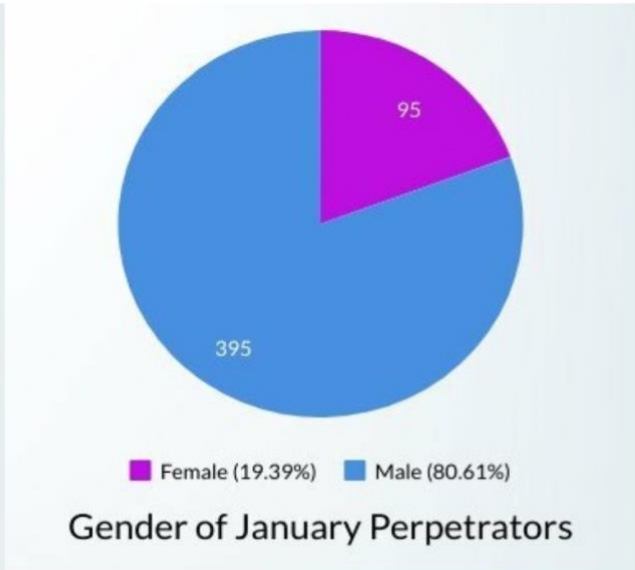
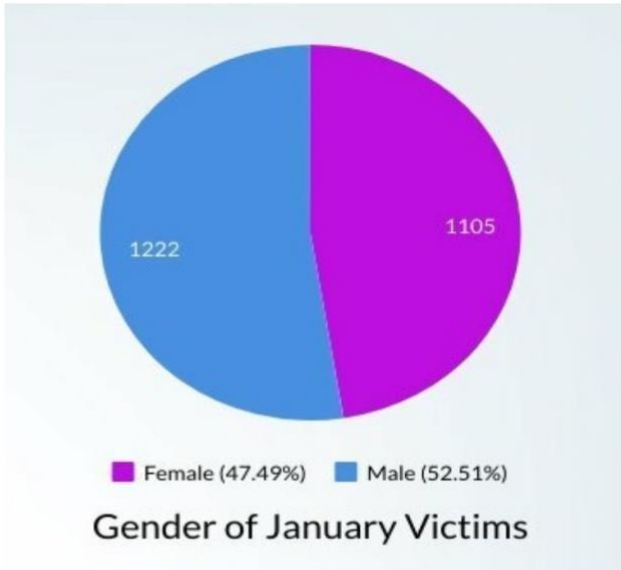
During the month of January 2020, ZPP recorded a total of 185 human rights violations up from 119 recorded in December 2019.

Human Rights Violations Monthly Dashboard

Zimbabwe Peace Project

Report time frame: January, 2020





Harassment and intimidation recorded the highest number of violations at 96, up from 60 recorded in December 2019. Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Manicaland and Harare provinces recorded the highest number of violations. Police disturbingly occupied the second highest percentage of perpetrators, at 23.67%, after the perpetrators whose affiliation is unknown. The machete wielding gangs made up 22.2% of the perpetrators, an indication of the pervasive nature of the gangs.

Overall Analysis

ZPP notes with concern the continued perpetration of violence by the artisanal mining terror gangs. Although the police has managed to arrest some of the gangs, including an eight member gang popularly known in Kwekwe as the “Maketo brothers”, there is need to increase the efforts so as to ensure these gangs are dealt with, once and for all.

Criminals are capitalising on the fear that citizens have of the machete gangs to carry out robberies using the same modus operandi. As security personnel scale up efforts to bring these mining gangs to book by sealing off their havens such as Jumbo mine in Mazowe, the gangs have begun to move into non mining areas including urban areas. On 16 January, a gang wielding machetes and guns invaded a house in Emerald Hill in Harare where they robbed the occupants of USD11, 500.

Reports have been received from Jumbo mine where police manning the area have been accused of carrying out their own mining activities and in some cases allowing some individuals to continue with mining activities. Such a scenario indicates the absence of proper accountability mechanisms in the fight against the terror gangs.

The kraal head of Gwenyaya Village Jairos Gwenyaya of Ward 16, Chivi Central was assaulted by Saratiel Tasarira at his homestead after Tasarira's wife Felistas Chiwara was removed from the Social Welfare beneficiaries list. Tasarira is said to have assaulted the kraal head accusing him of unfair and nepotistic distribution of government aid. The matter was allegedly reported to police at Chivi Turn-Off Police Base.

Cases of **harassment, intimidation** and **assault** related to distribution of food and other aid were prominent in the reports received by ZPP in the month under review. The drought that the country is currently grappling with has made it very difficult for citizens to provide food for their families. This has rendered them dependent on aid from the government (through the Department of Social Welfare) and from Non -Governmental Organisations. It is regrettable that some citizens who yield political power in

rural communities continue to take advantage of the vulnerable and manipulate the aid to settle political scores and to garner political support. As a result, some citizens have been denied the so much needed aid on the basis of their political persuasion. Some village heads have used their traditional power to benefit unfairly from the availed aid, thereby disadvantaging some community members.

Unfortunately, in some cases, community members have taken the law into their hands by assaulting such perpetrators who are bent on denying them their basic right to food although assurances have been made that no citizen will go hungry.

Such cases of assault fit well into the adage “*a hungry man is an angry man*”; hunger does not know political affiliation and everyone must access aid regardless of their background and political affiliation.



A Headman aligned to Zanu PF identified as Makisi in Mashuma, Ward 17 Hurungwe West under Chief Nyamhunga was assaulted by villagers on 24 January 2020. It is alleged that, during a social welfare maize grain distribution at Mashuma business centre, Headman Makisi was bashed by an angry mob after he had replaced a female villager from the beneficiaries list with his wife's name. This did not go down well with the woman who then shoved the Headman, when Makisi tried to retaliate other beneficiaries intervened and assaulted him.

The use of state apparatus such as the police to target opposition party members is a clear indicator for the urgent need for security sector reform. The Zimbabwe Constitution in Section 219 (3) clearly stipulates that the police service must be non- partisan and national in character. The MDC Harare Province Deputy Youth Treasurer and Epworth Councillor Kudakwashe Chatambudza was arrested a day before the State of the Nation Address by the MDC president on allegations of making petrol bombs; only to be released without any charges preferred against him after the intervention of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR).

The complicity and partisan nature of the ZRP continues unabated and is fuelled by the conflation of the party and the state. This was evidenced in the police's lack of procedural action to the destruction of tuck shops and warehouses belonging to MDC supporters. The targeted properties were destroyed by Zanu PF supporters on 22 January at Magaba home industry in Mbare in response to the MDC President's SONA. In a shocking move the police arrested victims who had approached them to report the attack and property destruction.

Furthermore, on 30 January, the MDC president was prevented from launching a clean-up campaign with the police advising him to join the clean-up initiative by the Zimbabwean president. Such bans are a slap on the freedoms of assembly and association provided for in section 58 of the constitution. This is especially unfortunate considering the preliminary findings of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Freedoms of peaceful assembly and of association in September 2019 who emphasised that “...assemblies should be presumed lawful and peaceful”.

The selective application of the law by the police has fostered a culture of impunity and disregard of human rights.



On 14 January 2020 when schools opened, school authorities at Sumbe Secondary, in Gumunyu, Gokwe were turning away pupils for non-payment of school fees. Pupils who did not have proof of payment or the money to pay on the day were not allowed to attend classes. The levy at the school is pegged at ZWL\$200. In addition, pupils were expected to have new books. These books were sold to students by teachers at the school. Failure to purchase books meant that the pupils could not get into class.

Access to the right to education remained a challenge for some children as they were turned away from school following failure by their parents and guardians to pay school fees and levies set up by schools across the country. Although the Ministry of Education received one of the highest budgetary allocations in the budget announced by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development in November 2019, at 16.8% of the total budget, the allocation is not enough to cater for all the Ministry’s needs and continues to be eroded by inflation. Schools are increasingly dependent on school levies to operate; which is an exorbitant cost passed on to parents and guardians. ZPP received reports of several schools across the country who have been turning away learners from school owing to non- payment of fees and levies. This is likely to result in an increase in the rate of school drop outs, making girls even more vulnerable. The government

should speedily put in place measures that protect the right to education; lest accessing this right becomes a privilege for a few. Government should also ensure that all arrears owed to schools under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) are paid as this will assist alleviate financial pressure from schools.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.2) Bill is largely a reversal of the gains that were achieved through the constitution. The amendments will increase the powers of the president at the expense of the judiciary and the legislature. This is a blatant attack on the principles of democracy and the separation of powers. For example the proposed scrapping off of the running mate will only give more power to the president as he will continue appointing vice presidents, without them being given the mandate by the people. The proposed amendment for the president to appoint a sitting judge to a higher court without the judge being subjected to a public interview takes away the transparency of the appointment process and also compromises the independence of the judiciary as the president can appoint at his pleasure.

Watchlist

- Zimbabwe is likely to see an increase in the use of machetes in criminal activities in non-mining areas following the clamp down by the police in mining areas.
- In light of the drought and the strained economy, the country is likely to face shortages of most basic commodities, thereby fuelling the black market.
- As food insecurity increases, so too are the violations related to distribution of food and other aid.
- As the economy continues to self- dollarize, the majority of Zimbabweans who earn Zimbabwean Dollars will be unable to cope with hyperinflation.

ABOUT ZPP

The organisation was founded in 2000 by church-based and human rights organisations. The current members of ZPP are Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET), Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), National Association for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) and Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA).

ZPP was established with the objective of monitoring, documenting and building peace and promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts. The Zimbabwe Peace Project seeks to foster dialogue and political tolerance through non-partisan peace monitoring activities, mainly through monitors who document the violations of rights in the provinces.

The monitors, who at full complement stand at 420, constitute the core pool of volunteers, supported by four Regional Coordinators. The Regional Coordinators relate with the national office headed by the National Director and programme officers in various units.

In light of the above, **ZPP calls for:**

- The ZRP to intensify their targeted efforts to deal with the machete gangs.
- Citizens to continue being alert and vigilant and quick to report cases of machete wielding gangs to the police.
- The respect of the Constitution to foster the democratic principles of separation of powers and other tenets of democracy.
- The immediate stop to selective application of the law by the ZRP