

Mastering Patience...

...or Mastered by Apathy?

*An Update on the Zimbabwe Situation*  
July/August 2003



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## **What is the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition?**

Crisis in Zimbabwe is a coalition of more than 350 civil society organisations. It was originally conceived in August 2001 as a collective response by Zimbabwean civics to the multi-faceted crisis facing the nation.

The vision of the Coalition is a democratic Zimbabwe. The Coalition addresses Zimbabwe's twin crises of governance and legitimacy.

### **Aims of the Coalition:**

- To enhance Civil Society's capacity to deal with socio-economic and political crises, through encouraging well coordinated strategic planning and action.
- To promote freedom and democratic values through encouraging dialogue, tolerance and the shaping of ideas by Zimbabweans from all walks of life.

### **Objectives of the Coalition:**

To this end, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition:

- Strives to respond timeously to government positions regarding various key policy areas;
- Strives to share ideas and information for use by CSO's in the articulation of credible, alternative and practical views;
- Seeks to ensure the rapid development of a participatory democracy in Zimbabwe;
- Is determined to amplify the collective voice of Civil Society in Zimbabwe.
- Aims to cover issues which would otherwise not fall within the mandate of the major CSO's.
- Encourages the input of Zimbabweans into policy formulation and governance generally, and
- Highlights, debates, researches and proposes solutions to the various dimensions of the multi-layered national crisis.

The Coalition is comprised of five semi-autonomous committees. These are Advocacy, Finance, Human Rights, Information and Civic Education and Peace Building. Each committee organises its own campaigns and events, but also works in collaboration with the entire Coalition.

The Coalition is currently organising around campaigns including:

- Zvakwana—Enough is enough!
- A Time for Peace
- Leadership for Transformation
- Freedom from Hunger
- Repeal Unjust Laws

The crisis facing Zimbabwe continues to eat away at the nation's economic and social fabric. While political party actors debate the possibilities for negotiations, the standard of living for the vast majority of Zimbabweans continues to decline drastically. This update outlines the critical concerns currently facing the Zimbabwean population, and then discusses scenarios for transition and prospects for settlement.

## **Economy**

In four years, Zimbabwe has lost a third of its Gross Domestic Product<sup>1</sup>. Increasingly, the economic implications of the political crisis are the most apparent. They translate into soaring prices, endless queues for every imaginable commodity, and a thriving parallel market.

### *Indicators*

The statistics of Zimbabwe's economic decline are startling:

- Annualised inflation was officially pegged at 399.5% in August 2003. This, however, is based on officially gazetted prices of many goods, which are not a reflection of reality. Many economists estimate that real inflation is above 500% per year.
- Following an unbudgeted 1000% salary increment for civil servants awarded in July this year, inflation is expected to rise even further.
- Unemployment continues to rise, and it is estimated at over 75%. As businesses close down and owners move away, unable or unwilling to operate in the present climate this rate is expected to rise
- Over 80% of the population lives under the poverty datum line, and
- 50% of the population lives under the food datum line, unable to secure even the most basic survival without assistance<sup>2</sup>.

### *Cash Shortage*

In the face of rampant inflation, Zimbabwe needs three times more cash in circulation than it needed this time last year. However, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) has not been printing cash for months, claiming that it does not have the resources to import the inks and paper needed for the notes. The printing of money has been drastically reduced. The total print capacity in \$500 notes is \$700 million per day, significantly less than what the country now needs to print on a daily basis, just to keep up with inflation. It is therefore estimated that, if money had been printed at full \$500 note capacity since May this year, there would still be a \$145 billion dollar shortfall<sup>3</sup>. Even after it caught up with the deficit, the Reserve bank would still need to print at least \$70 billion per month, just to keep up with inflation and the natural course of money going out of circulation. This figure will only increase as inflation rises.

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1 Andrew Meldrum, "Cash crisis threatens to unseat Mugabe." The Observer, 3 August 2003.

2 See Daily News, 6 August 2003.

3 Eddie Cross, 13 August 2003.

The technical limitations of Zimbabwe's capacity to print notes as quickly as inflation rises would have invariably resulted in a sense of progressively reduced cash availability. However, the present cash shortage was largely precipitated by a decision by the banks to ration cash in early June. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) called for a mass stay away from 2-6 June. In anticipation of bank closure and non-availability of cash, banks began to limit withdrawals. As individuals experienced limitations in their capacity to withdraw their money, people lost confidence in the banking system, and began to withdraw what ever cash they could get access to. This panic further heightened the crisis, as individuals and businesses stopped depositing their cash into banks.

As the shortage became more apparent, those businesses doing cash business stopped banking their cash, preferring to keep it on hand. As the weeks have progressed, cash has become a scare commodity. Businesses and individuals now sell their cash, offering it to those in need for a 10-20% mark up. At the end of July, queues stretched from bank to bank in Zimbabwe's cities and towns, as workers queued for hours in the hopes of accessing their monthly salaries. However, most



*Harare residents queue for cash.*

Photo by Crisis Coalition

banks limited withdrawals to \$5000 per person, a paltry sum when one considers that it cannot buy five loaves of bread and the return transport from home to town. Other banks had no cash at all, and could only cater for withdrawals if and when cash deposits came to the bank. Frustration mounted as workers queued to access their salaries, and in Harare, Mutare and Bulawayo riot police were deployed to maintain some order in the queues<sup>4</sup>. The queues continue to stretch with no relief in sight.

While banks and the government have tried to manage the situation, running large advertisements encouraging the use of cheques and "plastic money<sup>5</sup>," these are options available only to the wealthiest of Zimbabweans. The majority of people do not have chequing accounts, and most smaller shops, and those outside of the major cities, do not have point of sale facilities even for those consumers who do have banking cards. The cash crisis has mostly hit; urban commuters, informal sector operators, small businesses and most poor people generally. In short, the cash shortage, like other elements of the current Zimbabwe crisis, is disproportionately affects the most vulnerable populations, while the more privileged Zimbabweans are able to adapt to the difficulties, or even thrive by devising schemes to profit from this crisis.

While the root cause of the current shortages is the Reserve Bank's failure to print a sufficient amount of cash to keep up with inflation, the RBZ has chosen to blame individuals and operators

4 See *The Standard*, 27 July, 2003.

5 See, for example, advertisements in *the Herald* 30 July, *Daily News* 7 August 2003, and most local papers during that period.

who are allegedly hoarding cash. The central bank has introduced measures aimed at encouraging businesses to return their cash to the banks. Minister of Finance Herbert Murerwa recently announced that in 60 days, the current \$500 note, (the largest denomination), would be replaced by a different \$500 note<sup>6</sup>, and the current note would “no longer be legal tender<sup>7</sup>.”

If it goes ahead with this plan, the Reserve Bank will effectively be withdrawing \$130 billion in \$500 notes out of circulation, drastically impacting the already tight monetary supply<sup>8</sup>. The RBZ has also introduced “travellers cheques” in larger denominations, which they promise will be accepted like cash at all government offices and most major retail outlets in the country. The long touted \$1000 note is now expected to be in circulation by October or November this year. Economists argue that the Reserve Bank should introduce a \$5000 note while they are at it.

A poor woman from Chitungwiza’s child fell desperately ill. She did not have medical aid. When she went to the public hospital—Chitungwiza general—he was referred to Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare. She did not have cash to pay the ambulance, nor did she have any money to hire private transport. The hospital advised her to go and get her son’s blood tested and to have x-rays done, all by a private doctor who needed cash. By the time she had borrowed and scrounged around her child was dead. The woman walked three kilometres to report the death to the police. The police indicated that they did not have any petrol to come and certify the death and carry the body to a mortuary. The woman had to use the money she had borrowed to transport the police to her house, buy a coffin, buy a burial plot, and she had to even borrow more for the funeral expenses. The woman is in even more debt and financial crisis than before. But her child is dead—perhaps from an illness that could have been cured.

The gripping cash shortage translates into drastically declining productivity, as workers spend countless hours queuing for food, queuing for transport, and even queuing for the cash they need to feed their families and commute to work.

### *Fuel Shortages*

Since December 2002, Zimbabwe has experienced crippling fuel shortages. Realising its own inability to source sufficient fuel, the government agreed to allow private importation of diesel and petrol. In recent months, the fuel queues have all but disappeared. Not because government has suddenly been able to resolve the crisis, but because service stations have stopped even serving fuel at “pump price.” Instead, there is a flourishing parallel market for fuel, where it is readily available, particularly if one can pay in foreign currency, or is prepared to pay a premium over the gazetted

6 *The Herald*, 30 July 2003.

7 While this declaration was made in an effort to force businesses to remit their cash, it is doubtful if this threat will be enforceable. Currently, even old Zimbabwe dollars which are no longer in circulation are still considered legal tender, even if they are withheld by the Reserve Bank when ever they are submitted. It is further questionable because, if the government has the capacity to launch a new \$500 note, why does it not invest some of those resources into printing more of the existing \$500 notes.

8 Eddie Cross, 13 August 2003.

price. On any given day, both state-run and private newspapers feature classified ads promising fuel supplies to any willing buyer. Companies across the country have entered the private fuel business, some requiring payment in foreign currency only. Prices range from Z\$1 500 a litre to Z\$3 000.

Once again it is the poor and marginalised who have borne the brunt of the fuel shortage; crowded and erratic public transport have become the order of the day; increased commuter transport fares, and general rise in prices of all things dependent on fuel continue to hit the vulnerable.

#### *Parallel Markets*

The fuel market is only one example of Zimbabwe's thriving parallel market. Government attempts at imposing price controls in order to manage Zimbabwe's spiralling inflation have only resulted in nation-wide shortages, and a burgeoning parallel market for any and all goods and services.

#### *Exchange Rate*

The Zimbabwe dollar has been fixed at US \$ 1 : ZW \$826 since March this year. However, on the parallel market where most people find their foreign currency, this rate has steadily declined. It hovered around US \$ 1: ZW \$2700 in July, but plummeted to as low as US \$ 1: ZW \$6000 in the beginning of August<sup>9</sup>. In that week, tobacco growers twice cancelled sales of their crops at the auction, because they were going to be paid at the official rate, thus further jeopardising foreign currency revenue opportunities for the country.

### **Land Reform and Food Security**

The food security situation had improved since May 2003, when the summer harvests trickled in to the rural areas. The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that 5.5 million Zimbabweans are currently in need of food aid<sup>10</sup>, reduced from an estimated 7 million at the beginning of the year. However, it is estimated that reduced harvests, due to a combination of drought and poor management, mean that most food stocks for rural families will last approximately four months. Thus, it is anticipated, by October 2003 an increased number of Zimbabweans will need food aid. While many Zimbabweans are better able to provide for themselves, Matabeleland South continues to be hard hit, particularly as World Vision and The Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) withdrew food aid in May this year. There are concerns that up to 100,000 people may die from famine-induced deaths in areas like Tsholotsho and Bulilimamangwe<sup>11</sup>. In Bulawayo, health workers report that 179 people, most of them children, died from malnutrition in the first four months of the year<sup>12</sup>. A delayed donor appeal submitted by the government has further compromised the potential of food aid to continue to go where it is most needed.

Aware of the impending food needs for 2003-4, the international donor community was unable to source aid for Zimbabwe until late July, when the government belatedly filed its formal appeal for

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9 Voice of America News, 7 August 2003.

10 "WFP food stocks to run out by month end," *The Daily News*, 6 August, 2003.

11 "100,000 may die," *The Daily News*, 19 July 2003.

12 Ibid.

assistance<sup>13</sup>. In this appeal, the government cites drought and difficulty in accessing inputs as the main factors contributing to reduced production. It advises donors that the country anticipates a deficit of 711,385 metric tonnes of maize requirements<sup>14</sup>. As there is currently 120,000 mt of aid in the pipeline from WFP, government is appealing for 600 000 metric tonnes, (mt), of food aid “given the tight foreign currency situation in the country<sup>15</sup>.” Further, it advises donors that; “Whatever the Government of Zimbabwe is able to procure is to ensure that there is some reserve and that the country does not feed from hand to mouth.” While it is understandable that, given the shortages of the past few years, the government wants to expand its reserves and seeks some sort of savings, it is difficult to imagine donor countries willingly sourcing the entirety of Zimbabwe’s food deficit, while the government is absolved from any responsibility for making up the shortage.

Farm workers, long a vulnerable sector, have become increasingly marginalized through the fast track land resettlement programme. Many of these workers have been displaced, and more are unemployed. In many cases, the resettled large scale farmers lack the resources to adequately develop the land, and therefore do not hire workers. Efforts by the farm workers, through organisations such as the General Agriculture Workers’ Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ), to secure higher wages or greater stability from the new farmers have been largely ignored<sup>16</sup>. In its recent report, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare examined farm communities in Mashonaland East, West and Central<sup>17</sup>. They found that both resettled farmers and former farm workers alike were facing severe hardships, including food shortages, lack of clean drinking water, shortages of medicines and equipment at farm clinics. In the rare instance that the workers are employed by the new farmers, wages are appallingly low. Many displaced or unemployed farm workers have resorted to gold panning as a survival strategy, which further jeopardises both the safety of these individuals and contributes to land degradation.

Facing mounting criticism for its land reform programme, and allegations of corruption and inequitable redistribution, the ruling party has attempted to take a hard-line on farm allocations. Robert Mugabe recently reaffirmed the “one man one farm” limit, declaring that even party stalwarts would be limited to one farm per person<sup>18</sup>. However, there is scepticism that these may be hollow promises, given the extent to which party patronage has thus far guided the land reform process.

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13 The Government of Zimbabwe Appeal for UN Humanitarian Assistance: July 2003. Available on request from ZWNews.

14 This is higher than the 610 000 mt indicated in the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe report, 19 June 2003.

15 Ibid.

16 “The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe.” Lloyd M Sachikonye, May 2003, Section 4.4.

17 “Second Report of the Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare on the Plight of Farm Workers and Newly Resettled Farmers,” Parliament of Zimbabwe, 16 May 2003.

18 *The Herald*, 31 July 2003.

## **Health/HIV**

As discussed in previous updates, the impact of Zimbabwe's economic decline is even more keenly felt by the very large population of people living with HIV/AIDS. The 2002 report on Zimbabwe indicates that 33.7% of the adult population is HIV positive. It further estimates that at least 3800 people die from HIV related illness each week. The Ministry of Health estimates that AIDS accounts for 60% of child deaths, and that two thirds of all hospital beds are occupied by patients with AIDS related illness.

It is estimated that in marginalized areas, such as on commercial farms, the rate is even higher, with nearly one in two women infected. These are the women who have the least access to antenatal care, and therefore at the greatest risk of further spreading infection to their children.

Three factors have compounded the HIV/AIDS pandemic; First is the increasing number of women and girls who have been raped by organised youth militias and the armed forces. The impact of this violation of human rights is yet to unfold, but already indications are that the women would have been infected because the rapists did not use protection and they fell in the most infected age group.

Secondly, the link between HIV/AIDS and access to food has come into sharper focus within the current crisis. It is now commonly acknowledged that good food and nutrition enhances the health of people that are infected. Again the impact of the food shortages and economic crisis is yet to be fully assessed.

Finally, as government concentrates more on maintaining its hold on power, very few national resources and focus are on HIV/AIDS. The political instability in the country does not augur well for any serious policy and programmatic focus on the pandemic.

Thus, there is all the more reason to speedily resolve the political crisis, so that attention can be diverted to the more pressing issues facing the majority of the population.

## **Displacement**

In addition to the economic uncertainty which most Zimbabweans live in, a proportion of the population has also been subject to displacement, either as a result of the land reform programme, which left an estimated 300,000 farm workers unemployed, and their families homeless<sup>19</sup>, or as a result of politically motivated harassment and intimidation.

A recent study by the Global IDP Project of the Norwegian Refugee Council indicates that, while it is difficult to quantify the number of Zimbabweans internally displaced due to politically motivated violence, as many as 50,000 people temporarily fled their homes and sought shelter in major cities such as Bulawayo and Harare, due to violence before the Presidential Election in March 2002<sup>20</sup>.

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19 Global IDP Database, Norwegian Refugee Council, Profile of International Displacement: Zimbabwe, 15 July 2003, page 6.

20 Ibid, page 5.



However, more recent reports indicate that many of those displaced last year have either returned to their rural areas (in the case of families from areas which have since stabilised) or moved from one rural area to another (e.g. teachers, who have been reassigned to new districts.)<sup>21</sup>

The number of displaced farm-workers is even greater. Reports indicate that as many as 270,000 farm workers are now unemployed due to the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme<sup>22</sup>. In many cases, the nature of the resettlement was violent and intimidatory, meaning that many farm workers have fled these farms with their families, going either to a rural home when they have one, or fleeing to resettlement areas or major towns to form part of the increasing number of people living on the streets. While some of these workers have remained on the farms where they were working, in many cases those who remain live in poverty even deeper than when they were farm workers. When a farm has been designated for smaller scale A1 resettlement, it has been rare to find a farm worker being given access to one of these plots<sup>23</sup>.

The impact of these displacements on the social and economic fabric of the country is severe. Any transition process or new government will have to carefully consider the issue of internally displaced persons (IDP's) and their needs.

## **Brain Drain**

The brain drain represents another aspect of the continued crisis in Zimbabwe with devastating long term implications. While it is again difficult to quantify the exact number of Zimbabweans who have emigrated, a recent study by SIRDC indicates that at least 175 000 Zimbabweans may have relocated to the United Kingdom alone<sup>24</sup>. The report acknowledges the underreporting which is likely given its study methods, and states that unconfirmed newspaper sources have speculated that there are as many as 6-900,000 Zimbabweans living in the UK<sup>25</sup>. The study cites further difficulties in estimating the number of Zimbabweans in South Africa and Botswana, due to the frequency of illegal immigration to these locations. The research suggests that there are as many as 165,000 Zimbabweans in Botswana, and 22,000 in South Africa<sup>26</sup>. However, independent estimates and press reports put the figures at closer to 2 million for South Africa<sup>27</sup> and 300,000 for Botswana<sup>28</sup>. Recently, there have been press reports of a crack down in Botswana on Zimbabwean immigrants, with 170 Zimbabweans being deported in various police raids in July alone<sup>29</sup>.

Despite its limitations the SIRDC study has some very useful indicators;

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21 Ibid, page 6.

22 Ibid, page 8.

23 "Second Report of the Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare on the Plight of Farm Workers and Newly Resettled Farmers," Parliament of Zimbabwe, 16 May 2003, Section 2.1.

24 Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre (SIRDC), "An Analysis of the cause and effect of the brain drain in Zimbabwe." July, 2003, Section 8.1.a.

25 Ibid. (See also "The Exile Files," *The Observer* 10 August 2003.)

26 SIRDC Section 8.1.a.

27 Mail and Guardian Census supplement.

28 Source and confirm.

29 "Botswana to cane foreign criminals," *The Daily News* 3 August, 2003.

- 86.5% of the Zimbabweans settled abroad hold a polytechnic qualification or higher<sup>30</sup>.
- Approximately 75% of immigrants are trained professions, including doctors, teachers, nurses, pharmacists, engineers and scientists<sup>31</sup>.

This data indicates that Zimbabwe is losing its most trained citizens to other countries, thus depleting the pool of skilled educated professionals able to provide essential services within the country. A very clear gap is the shortage of doctors in the public health sector.

While there may be benefits to families with a relative in the Diaspora, particularly in terms of foreign currency remittances sent back to family members remaining behind<sup>32</sup>, government, banks and formal institutions do not benefit from the majority of these remittances, as they are largely done outside of these networks. There are also severe social consequences such as the damage to family bonds from extended separation, an increase in juvenile delinquency among youths whose parents live and work abroad, and an increased likelihood of HIV transmission between spouses after they are reunited<sup>33</sup>.

In addition, there is the issue of the “internal brain drain,” those Zimbabweans who have remained in the country, but have been retrenched from work or have resigned due to the economic hardships<sup>34</sup>. With estimated job losses at over 800,000 since 2000, increasing numbers of Zimbabweans are forced to make a living outside of the formal sector. These entrepreneurs now sell their skills, vend crafts or foods, or join the parallel market traders. These workers now face greater economic uncertainty, and in many cases they no longer do the jobs they were trained for. Instead, they will lose some skills and enter a field with no security or potential for advancement. At the lower end of the economic spectrum some of the poor are seeking survival from hazardous activities such as gold panning and for women, commercial sex work. The health and human rights implications of these developments are quite obvious.

## **Human Rights and Constitutional Freedoms**

The most recent report by the Human Rights NGO Forum indicates that in June alone there were three murders, 39 incidents of assault, 113 reports of torture, 130 reports of intimidation, harassment or violation of Constitutionally guaranteed freedoms such as expression, movement and assembly<sup>35</sup>. An MDC activist was killed in Kuwadzana on 2 August, in what is suspected to be politically motivated violence<sup>36</sup>. The home of an MDC candidate in the Chitungwiza council elections was attacked in the run up to the council elections<sup>37</sup>.

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30 SIRDC Section 8.2.4

31 Ibid, Section 8.2.5

32 Ibid, Section 8.4.

33 Ibid.

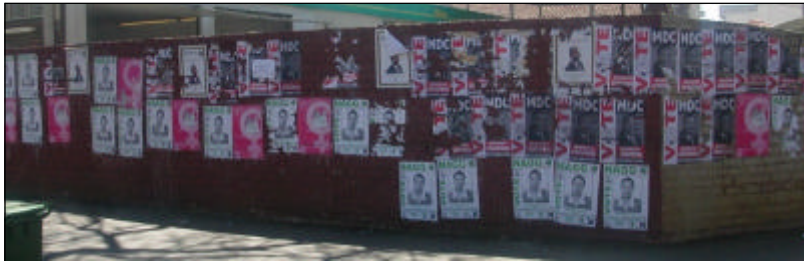
34 “Skills lost in ‘internal’ brain drain,” IRIN 13 August 2003.

35 Human Rights NGO Forum, Political Violence Report June 2003, 17 July 2003. HR Forum Reports can be found on [. See Appendix 1 for monthly and cumulative statistics.](#)

36 See *The Daily News on Sunday*, 3 August, 2003.

37 See *The Daily News*, 12 August 2003.

There are concerns that politically motivated attacks will increase towards the end of August as campaigns for rural council elections and the Makonde and Harare Central Parliamentary By-Elections heat up. The nomination period for these by-elections was marred by reports of intimidation of MDC candidates and a failure by the opposition to nominate candidates in a number of wards in Bindura, Chegutu and Rusape. While the MDC is currently filing court challenges against this fact, it is unlikely that the matter will be heard. This means that voters in these wards



*Election posters for a variety of posters decorate this Harare wall.*

Photo by Crisis Coalition

will not be able to choose freely between various candidates, a fact which is of concern for civil society.<sup>38</sup> Governance in smaller towns like Chegutu has been marred by corruption, intimidation and violence both during the nomination process and before<sup>39</sup>. Ruling party militia members have already become more active in some of

the campaign areas<sup>40</sup>. Indications therefore are that this election period will be similar to many others in Zimbabwe, plagued by violence and intimidation.

Both state and private media coverage of these upcoming elections has been scarce, and has largely ignored allegations of violence surrounding nomination court and the election period. This limited media coverage further compromises the potential of Zimbabweans to make an informed decision at the polls, and thus constrains Zimbabwe's democratic expression<sup>41</sup>.

State attacks on press freedom and organisational operations continue. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) was recently branded an "illegal" organisation<sup>42</sup>, and Tafataona Mahosa is insisting that according to the provisions of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the organisation must register under the Media Commission which he chairs, or be fined or suffer the imprisonment of its leaders.

Journalists from the private media continue to be targeted for harassment and attack. *Midlands Observer* reporter Flata Kavinga sustained "a deep cut on the head and multiple body injuries"<sup>43</sup>, following an attack by suspected Zanu PF supporters. Kavinga was wearing a MISA t-shirt at the time, and was reportedly accused of promoting anti-government messages. In a separate incident, Fazilla Mohammed, a freelance journalist, was taken by members of the Zimbabwe Republic

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38 See Appendix Two and Three, being a statement from the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, respectively.

39 "Chegutu Urban Council Affairs and Elections: Living in Perpetual Fear," David Coltart, MDC Secretary for Legal Affairs, 31 July 2003.

40 "Zanu PF militias step up violence ahead of polls." *The Daily News*, 7 August 2003.

41 Media Weekly Update 2003-32, Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe. 11-17 August 2003.

42 *The Independent*, 8 August 2003.

43 *The Daily News*, 11 August 2003.

Police (ZRP) from a Harare civil court and detained for several hours before she was released<sup>44</sup>. It is not clear what was the motivation behind this detention.

In his speech to Parliament, Robert Mugabe stated that, “in order to ensure that the operations of NGO’s are consistent with and supportive of Government policies and programmes, the Non-Governmental Organisation Bill will amend the current Act and broaden the definition of NGOs to include Trusts<sup>45</sup>.” Mugabe further explained that “this Bill is also intended to prevent foreign interests from using NGO structures to subvert our sovereignty<sup>46</sup>.” These warnings are clearly meant to threaten organisations whose agenda does not necessarily support government’s. The comments are part of an on going ruling party strategy to target groups—such as students, trade unions, farmers, and now NGOs—perceived as unsympathetic to the ruling party’s consolidation of power.

### **Regional and International Perspective**

Despite some reports that internal and external pressure may be mounting for Robert Mugabe to step down and allow free and fair elections in Zimbabwe, at a government level the SADC region appears to still be firmly behind his continued tenure. The African Union (AU) appointed Mugabe deputy chair for Southern Africa when they met in July. Moreover, Mugabe must have watched the fanfare of Charles Taylor’s departure with certain comfort. If a dictator as ruthless and bloody as Liberia’s Taylor can leave office attended by fellow heads of state, met by a private jet and taken into exile to reside in a mansion, Mugabe may be looking at this as the immunity which he can also hope for when he leaves office. Meanwhile, most Zimbabweans look at these events with despair, wondering what hope there is for justice.

In protest against continued human rights abuses in Swaziland, and in an effort to advocate for a participatory, democratic constitution making process in that country, COSATU recently closed the Swazi border with South Africa. There were riots in response, and one activist was killed, but COMESA/SADC leaders still met, and were silent about the ongoing human rights abuses both in Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

Discussions of solidarity, brotherhood and regional unity casts doubt on any potential for African governments to actively denounce the misgovernance of one leader in favour of the prosperity and security of a region.

However, there is some hope in a regional consensus which is being developed among civil society actors in Southern Africa. Recent civil society consultations in Botswana, South Africa and Tanzania, which combined Zimbabwean human rights activists and civil society actors with their regional counterparts have provided new platforms through which pro-democracy actors and

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44 Media Weekly Update 2003-32, Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe. 11-17 August 2003.

45 Address by Robert Mugabe on the opening of the Fourth Session of the Fifth Parliament of Zimbabwe, 22 July 2003. As reported in *The Herald*, 23 July 2003.

46 Ibid.

organisations across the region are strengthening their understanding of the true situation in Zimbabwe and develop new strategies for solidarity.

### **Prospects for Settlement**

As long as the political crisis continues, economic decline will also continue unabated. The further the economy sinks into despair, the more difficult it will be for Zimbabwe to rebuild and return to pre-2000 levels.

It is within this background that some solution to the political crisis is urgently sought. The risk, however, is that as the economic situation becomes increasingly desperate, so will the people also become increasingly desperate. And the pressure to accept a compromise, or bargaining on principles is increased.

Recent events on the political front are encouraging, as they indicate an increasing willingness on the part of actors from both major political parties to seek a speedy resolution to the national crisis. On 22 July, Members of Parliament from the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) attended the opening of Parliament by Robert Mugabe. MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai, though not an MP, also attended the address, listening in the Speaker's Gallery, sitting close to renowned war veteran leader Joseph Chinotimba. While many cynics dismissed this as a worthless move on the part of the MDC, others have welcomed it as a good faith gesture which demonstrates the party's willingness to move the country forward. In a statement explaining their decision, the MDC said the action was "calculated to reduce political tensions in the country so that an atmosphere conducive to dialogue can be created with a view to amicable negotiations for a dignified exit for Mr Robert Mugabe from the political scene<sup>47</sup>." While it is not clear what, if any, deals were made behind the scenes before the MDC attended the opening of Parliament, the state media coverage of the event, and of the MDC since, has been toned down. Where a ZBC reporter might have previously announced that; "hooligan elements of the British sponsored MDC, and Tony Blairs puppet Morgan Tsvangirai attended the opening of Parliament", the news coverage of the event was much more sober and respectful. It is hoped that this gesture will mark a general shift in the political landscape, and a move towards a climate of tolerance.

On 8 August 2003, following an application by defence lawyer George Bizos, charges against the MDC Secretary General Welshman Ncube and party Shadow Minister for Lands and Agriculture Renson Gasela in the ongoing treason trial were dropped. While sceptics cite divide and rule tactics in this manoeuvre, as charges against Morgan Tsvangirai are still pending, others hope that this development also signals a softening of Zanu PF's hard-line tactics. Only time will tell.

At the same time, recent efforts by Manicaland Bishops Sebastian Bakare (Zimbabwe Council of Churches), Patrick Mutume (Catholic Bishops Conference) and Trevor Manhanga (Evangelical

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47 See MDC Information Department Press Statement, "MDC to attend opening of Parliament," 22 July 2003.

Fellowship of Zimbabwe) have been welcomed by many political and civil society actors. The three are currently engaged in foundation work for possible dialogue between Zanu PF and the MDC.

To date, it looks as though both parties may respond favourably to this initiative. Of concern however have been attempts by some “hawks” within ZANU PF, (for example Minister for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Patrick Chinamasa and Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo), to cast aspersions on the Bishops’ efforts. It is the power and influence of these elements that has to be managed if there is to be breakthrough.

In their submission to the Bishops, the MDC listed ten issues for consideration. These include: “the restoration of political liberties; the cessation of all political prosecutions; the restoration of economic stability; stopping torture; the depoliticisation of food relief and general provision of state services; the establishment of a fair, just and equitable electoral framework; the restoration of law and order; restoring Zimbabwe into the community of nations; constitutional reform; and food security<sup>48</sup>.”

At the time this update was compiled it was not yet clear if Zanu PF had submitted its issues, although party spokesperson Dr Nathan Shamuyarira has claimed that when they do so they will do so directly to the bishops, and will not provide these points to the press for national coverage<sup>49</sup>.

The issues proposed by the MDC represent a combination of economic and political concerns which must be urgently addressed. Many are hoping that Zanu PF will similarly present their issues to the church leaders, so that from these documents an agenda for talks and negotiations might be developed.

At a conference on dialogue and negotiation held by the Crisis Coalition in July, civil society leaders endorsed these and similar non-partisan initiatives aimed at catalysing a resolution of the current crisis<sup>50</sup>. In addition, the conference encouraged any dialogue process to incorporate a broad spectrum of stakeholders, beyond simply political parties

However, optimism about these initiatives must be tampered with caution. Many reports in the local media speak as if the resolution is a *fait accompli* and that it is only a matter of time before negotiations begin. However, there is a very real danger in stepping back when actually nothing is yet resolved. If, in anticipation of the success of these initiatives, pro-democracy organisations relax their pressure on the ruling party to restore democratic governance to the country, it is very likely that the process will stall, and be further delayed. Civil society must remain vigilant to guard against possibilities such as a government of national unity (1987 style), being trotted out. Mugabe’s Heroes’ Day calls for the opposition to “repent” and seek common ground with government<sup>51</sup> may indicate a willingness to absorb discontent, rather than adjust to it. It is common

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48 “MDC sets agenda for talks,” *The Daily News*, 4 August 2003.

49 *The Herald*, 5 August, 2003.

50 See Appendix 4 for conference resolutions.

51 “Repent or no unity,” *The Herald*, 12 August 2003.

knowledge that Zanu PF has in the past, proven itself as a reluctant and intractable negotiator. Thus, many are wary of their promises, and wisely refuse to believe any thing until it is proved in action.

It is therefore encouraging that organisations such as the ZCTU continue to pressure the government to resolve the aspects of the crisis most relevant to their membership. For example, on 28 July the ZCTU gave government a 14-day deadline to resolve the cash crisis<sup>52</sup>. When the deadline expired without decisive action from the government, the ZCTU agreed to meet as an executive and chart the way forward for actions, anticipated for the end of August or beginning of September<sup>53</sup>.

There is a need to ensure accurate and timely information about the activities and objectives of both parties, so that the generality of Zimbabweans understand how the process is progressing, what is being discussed and are able to provide their inputs and articulate their concerns. This is one more area where civil society will need to remain active, looking beyond the superficial coverage and insisting on its right to be informed about the process, so that it can communicate accurately with its constituents.

There may (understandably), be sensitivities between the two parties regarding the details of their discussions, if and when they occur. But accountability and transparency—particularly on matters of national importance, such as the transitional mechanisms, questions of truth and justice, accountability for human rights violations, the return of the rule of law, and citizen participation in political matters—should be entrenched from early on in the process.

There is a need for vigilance on the part of civil society in the coming months. There will be temptation from actors from both political parties to exclude the broader interests of the Zimbabwean people and settle matters as political elites. If Mugabe and Zanu PF do not continue to feel mass pressure from the people, international condemnation as well as the effects of the economic morass they have created, there will be little incentive for them to negotiate in good faith; if at all. The need for creative and innovative measures to place continued pressure on the ruling party to bring about a settlement and allow Zimbabweans to return to the rest of their lives in peace has never been greater than it is now.

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52 “ZCTU breathes fire,” *The Daily News*, 29 July 2003.

53 “Stayaway over cash looms,” *The Daily News*, 13 August, 2003.

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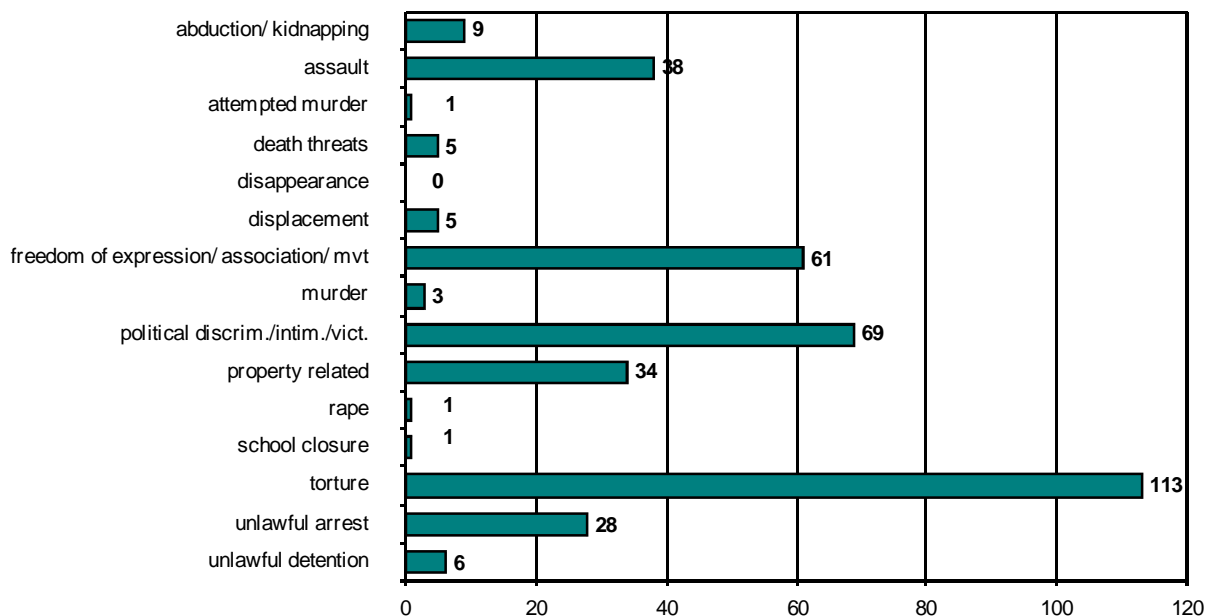
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The Independent	newsdesk@zimind.mweb.co.zw	www.theindependent.co.zw
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Media Institute of Southern Africa	misa@mweb.co.zw	www.misa.org
Media Monitoring Project	monitors@mmpz.org.zw	www.mmpz.org.zw
Movement for Democratic Change, Department of Information and Publicity	mdcinfo@zol.co.zw	www.mdczimbabwe.com
The NGO Network Alliance Project/Kubatana.net	nnap@kubatana.org.zw	www.kubatana.net
Parliament of Zimbabwe	clerk@parlzim.gov.zw	www.parlzim.gov.zw
Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre	bdube@sirdc.ac.zw	www.sirdc.ac.zw
The Standard	editor@standard.mweb.co.zw	www.thestandard.co.zw
SW Radio Africa	georgina@swradioafrica.com	www.swradioafrica.com
Voice of America Radio		www.voanews.com
World Food Programme	wfpinfo@wfp.org	www.wfp.org
Zanu PF Information and Publicity Department	zanupf@africaonline.co.zw	www.zanupfpub.co.zw
Zimbabwe Election Support Network	info@zesn.org.zw	www.zesn.org.zw
Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum	research@hrforum.co.zw	www.hrforumzim.com
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights	zlhrlaw@mweb.co.zw	
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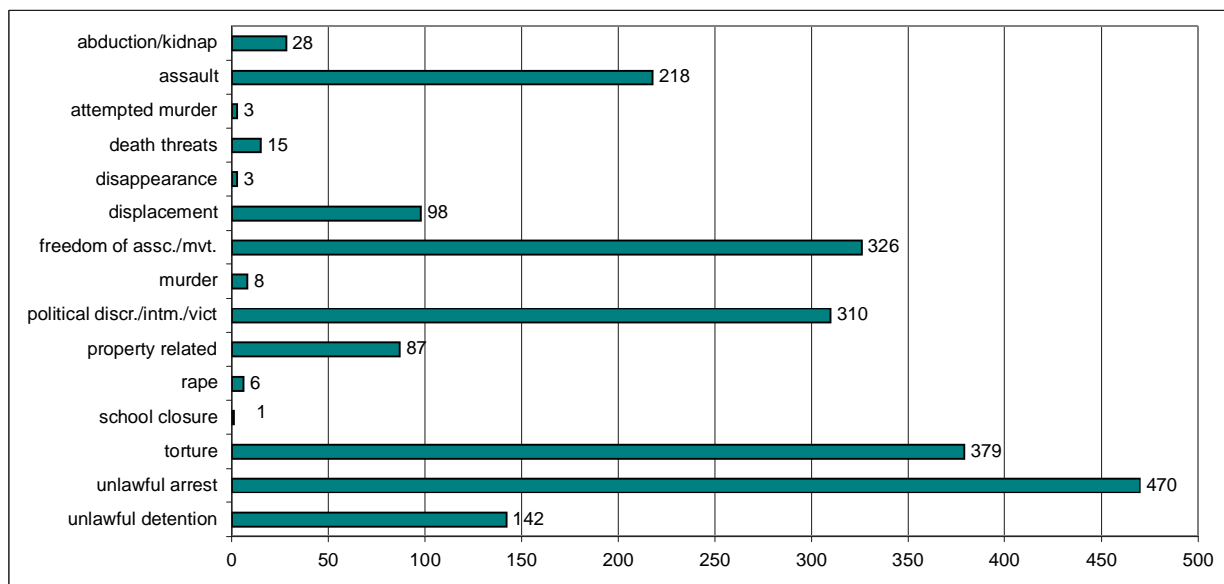
## Appendix One

### *Incidents of Politically Motivated Violence*<sup>54</sup>

#### Totals: 1 June 2003 – 30 June 2003



#### Cumulative Totals 1 January 2003 To 30 June 2003



54 Graphs courtesy of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum June 2003 Report. Find copies of the HR Forum Reports on [www.hrforumzim.com](http://www.hrforumzim.com).

## Appendix Two

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### PRESS RELEASE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) is gravely concerned at the press reports and other reports received at our offices relating to the failure of aspiring candidates to register for the forthcoming local government elections. ZLHR is informed that aspiring candidates failed to register in the following areas; Bindura, in all the 10 wards; Chegutu, in all the 11 wards; Karoi, in 4 out of 9 wards; Marondera, in 5 out of 11 wards and in Rusape, in all the 10 wards. The main reason given in many of the cases has been reports of threats, intimidation and violence which have prevented the candidates from presenting their papers to the nomination court. To some extent there have been reports of candidates failing to register due to citizenship-related technicalities raised by the Registrar General's office.

ZLHR finds it unfortunate and sad that despite 23 years of perceived independence, the citizens of Zimbabwe still cannot fully enjoy the rights attendant on full sovereignty, such as the right to vote or be voted into public office, without attracting a real risk of organised violence being visited upon them. There is no possible justification for such a state of affairs in a country calling itself a democracy. This is especially so when the issue of "one man one vote" was one of the cornerstones on which the liberation war for Independence was rooted.

The government has an obligation to ensure that everyone participates in the free and genuine election of people to represent their interests in public office. It is not possible for the government to comply with its duties in that regard if it participates in, or encourages, or fails to condemn or deal effectively with violence, intimidation or threats in all their forms, in what effectively leads to a denial of peoples fundamental rights and freedoms.

The government's attention is respectfully drawn to the following instruments which clearly state the government's responsibilities when it comes to the issue of election of people into public office;

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, article 21 of which provides that;

"1. Everyone has the right to take part in the governance of his country, directly through freely chosen representatives.

2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.

3. The will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government: this will shall be expressed in **periodic and genuine elections** which shall be by universal an equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."

**International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, article 25 of which provides that;

" Every citizen shall have the right and opportunity ...without unreasonable restrictions:

(A) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;

(B) **To vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections** which shall be by universal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will the electors;

(C) To have access on general terms of equality, to public service of his country."

**The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, article 13 of which provides that;**

“1. Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly, or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law.

2. Every citizen shall have the right of equal access to public service of his country.”

ZLHR also draws the government’s attention to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum’s norms and standards for free and fair elections which provide that the government security forces should act impartially and professionally and should be able to provide reasonable safeguards to political contestants. The same norms and standards provide that the right to vote should be accepted as a birth right and that eligible individuals should have a right to non-discriminatory voter registration and nomination procedures.

Sadly the reported events on nomination day show no meaningful effort on the part of government to comply with its minimum obligations to Zimbabweans. ZLHR therefore calls upon;

- the government to comply with its obligations to ensure that those willing to contest elections do so in an environment which is free and fair.
- the government to publicly condemn and deal effectively with electoral related violence.
- the political leadership to preach tolerance and maturity.
- the police force to act professionally without fear or favour in enforcing the rule of law and peace during this election period.
- the public to remain calm, peaceful and to respect mutual coexistence and refuse to be manipulated into committing crimes against other citizens.

**22 July 2003**

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

## Appendix Three

### ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK

30 July 2003

#### Press Statement

#### STATEMENT ON THE NOMINATION COURTS FOR URBAN COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network notes with concern that not all wards and mayoral seats in the forthcoming urban councils elections will be contested. The nomination court that sat in various urban centres on 21 July resulted in some ruling party candidates being declared winners in most of the wards, as they faced no opposition.

ZESN notes that in Bindura, Chegutu and Rusape there will not be elections at all as no other candidates apart from ruling party, ZANU PF candidates were nominated. We also observe that in Bulawayo, Kadoma, Kariba Marondera, Ruwa, Shurugwi and Victoria Falls there will be no elections in some wards. Although the Urban Councils Act says that if only one candidate is duly nominated at the close of the nomination day in a council election, such a candidate automatically wins without a poll held, we believe this process discounts many problems that are being faced by other political players in Zimbabwe. ZESN notes that almost all elections in Zimbabwe have been preceded by violence, threats and intimidation. We also note that most of the victims have been candidates contesting against the ruling party.

ZESN notes that the violence that preceded and also took place on the nomination day itself invariably prevented other candidates from registering. We express concern that such scenarios where candidates are declared winners in violence ridden wards and constituencies means that the electorate has been denied a chance to participate freely in elections. We re-emphasise that violence has no place in any election, it only infringes and suppresses the electorate's right to legitimately exercise their voting rights. We believe that violence negates the whole rationale of holding elections, which is to have different parties and individuals contest for political seats. As such we condemn strongly such subversion of the peoples will.

We once again call upon the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Electoral Supervisory Commission to act impartially. We further call upon the police to deal with perpetrators of violence at election times and any time in the course of an election.

We remind the government and all its electoral organs to abide by the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum's (SADC PF) norms and standards for free and fair elections. ZESN believes that a new Zimbabwe is only possible if every citizen is allowed to choose candidates of their choice in a peaceful environment and through a transparent, credible and non-partisan electoral process.

ZESN urges all voters to peacefully participate in the forthcoming local government elections and refuse to be manipulated into committing crimes against other citizens.

**END**

## Appendix Four



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### **CIVIL SOCIETY RESOLUTIONS ON DIALOGUE AND TRANSITION**

Over 175 leaders of civil society organisations, representing women, labour, students, youth, churches, farmers, academics, minority groups, media, legal and medical practitioners met in Harare on July 5, 2003 for a historic conference on Dialogue and Transition.

The meeting developed a unified position as civics on dialogue and transition. It agreed that civil society has an integral role to play in any political transition, and should be involved in discussions regarding such transition as an equal partner. In addition, the meeting agreed to encourage non-partisan regional interventions around nation building while opposing external partisan interference.

The conference also resolved the following:

- To support current mediation efforts by the church to initiate political dialogue.
- To embark on a national consultative process, convene think tanks and commission studies on Political, Constitutional/Legal, Land Reform, Human Rights and Economic issues in transition.
- To demand the repeal of unjust laws in order to facilitate an enabling environment for greater participation by citizens in the process of transition.
- To reinforce calls for a new, people driven and democratic Constitution to enable transition.
- To press for an end to human rights violations by political party youths, state agents and state-sponsored groups.
- To demand and participate in the creation of institutions that protect people's rights and freedoms.
- To study economic and political processes elsewhere in developing solutions to Zimbabwe's current crisis.
- To support efforts aimed at developing a new economic framework which promotes equitable distribution of resources, ensures a living wage, eradicates poverty and promotes economic productivity.

**7 July 2003**