

“The Suffering Church of Zimbabwe”



A summary of observations by ten South African Church leaders

19 August to 3 September 2003

Edited by

The Solidarity Peace Trust

December 2003

I saw aged women coming to church without shoes. In my heart I felt that they were coming to church, and the only thing they were going to eat all day was the communion wafer.

What I find missing is the joie de vivre of the people – you hear them laughing, you hear them singing, but they are not joyful. Why should you be joyful when life is such a burden?

But among the priests there is division as well. One of the priests told me that the queues were not that bad and said “we have been demonised in the media.” I would have thought he could see the hardship of the people.

I struggle to sleep at night. I am just coming in to observe and I have been affected in such a bad way. I don't know how the Government sleeps. When people speak to you they are looking over the shoulders all the time. The priest I was staying with was so afraid - the fear they have instilled in the peoples minds, is mind-boggling.

– if we don't speak, people of God will perish: let the blood of this nation not be upon us.

COMMENTS BY SOUTH AFRICAN CLERGY

Foreword from Bishop Kevin Dowling

Dear friends and all who seek for peace through justice,

This report from priests and pastors is both tragic and at the same time instructive for those who have “eyes to see” and “ears to hear”. To those who are wilfully blind and deaf, the cries of the poor, the marginalised, the vulnerable, and the oppressed in this report will go unheard – and yet another shocking injustice on our continent will not be addressed, and the “little ones” in Zimbabwean society will once again be sacrificed for political ends which have nothing to do with the ideals espoused by the African Union.

The Solidarity Peace Trust has prepared this report for one purpose only: to proclaim the truth in the ongoing quest for justice in Zimbabwe, and so that the suffering and cries of the oppressed millions in Zimbabwe will be heard. This quest of ours faces formidable obstacles, above all the obfuscation and manipulation of the reality by the Zimbabwe regime supported by an African leadership, particularly in the SADC region, which is nothing short of shameful.

It belongs to the Church and faith communities, especially but not only in the SADC region, to raise its prophetic voice in the name of all those who have been tortured, killed, raped, and denied basic human rights in Zimbabwe by a regime which callously disregards its fundamental duty in terms of the UN Charter. This duty and responsibility is very simple and clear: to protect and promote the rights and quality of life of every human being in Zimbabwe, regardless of race, religion, sex, economic condition, political persuasion, or any other distinguishing characteristic – but especially of the poor and marginalised in that society. That the Zimbabwe Government has not done so is abundantly clear from what you will read here.

What is truly iniquitous is the way the “land issue” and ideological red herrings such as “standing up against Western imperialism” and “you are getting engaged in the Zimbabwe question only because white farmers have been affected” have been used by African political leaders to mask what is the real issue. And that is, that President Mugabe and his Government have systematically engaged in human rights abuses of the very worst kind in order to retain political power.

To politicise food distribution in a time of famine; to deny access to health clinics by the poorest members of Zimbabwe society, i.e. by those who are regarded by the regime as MDC supporters and who are systematically excluded from such access, has nothing whatsoever to do with the “land issue” or anything else. It is simply a blatant abuse of power to make political opponents, and those who simply want a change of government, suffer for a choice which should be free.

To engage in systematic torture of MDC supporters, either real or perceived, on a countrywide scale is to engage in what is specifically prohibited by all conventions accepted by the world community; to train at least 30,000 young people as a youth militia and then unleash them on civil society to create mayhem by arson, torture, rape, murder and intimidation on behalf of the ruling party flies in the face of United Nations conventions on child soldiers, and borders on what is defined as “crimes against humanity”.

Such examples are not idle speculation. These human rights abuses have been carefully documented and attested to by Zimbabwean people themselves, aided by Churches and NGOs who care about people and not about meaningless myths. I personally witnessed victims of torture by the Zimbabwe regime in Bulawayo in June 2002, and I participated in the release of documentary evidence of systematic use of torture and the training of youth militia in Zimbabwe

at 2 news conferences this year. The second news conference brought before the media three former youth militia who gave chilling evidence of the above - quite apart from the heartrending account of a young woman repeatedly gang raped in the youth militia training camps, and who was now trying to come to terms with the fact that she had AIDS - and a baby to care for.

For African leaders to commit themselves to “solidarity” with President Mugabe and his regime, and to turn a blind eye to the suffering of millions of ordinary Zimbabwe citizens, again has nothing to do with the “land issue”, nor with “standing up against Western imperialism”. It has to be named for what it is, and Church leadership must fearlessly proclaim this.

Such “solidarity” is to take an option which clearly states that the ordinary African citizen in Zimbabwe does *not* have basic human rights which should be protected and promoted at all costs by African political leaders. Indeed, by African leaders who should be publicly proclaiming now their solidarity with their suffering African sisters and brothers in Zimbabwe – just as they did when their South African brothers and sisters were suffering under the brutal apartheid regime. Their silence and denial at the moment is deafening.

It is to take an option which, in effect, proclaims to the world community that ordinary African citizens can be “used” and “sacrificed” on an “altar”, i.e. not for some valid reason, but for what amounts to an ideology. It is this: that the protection of and support for manifestly unjust African political leaders like Robert Mugabe must be pursued against all odds and at any cost by African heads of state to ensure the “sovereignty” of African nations, to find “African solutions to African problems”, to resist “the use of human rights by Western nations to whip Africa into shape”, or whatever. It is to state that fundamental human rights, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, mean one thing for the rest of the world, and entirely another thing for Africans. And that, I would submit, is an appalling affront to the dignity of African people in Zimbabwe and on this continent. Human rights are objective realities and belong to the essence of what it means to be human both as individuals, and as communities and nations. Human rights, therefore, mean exactly the same thing whether one is in Europe, or in Zimbabwe.

I hope that this report, and the others released by the Solidarity Peace Trust, will help in some small way to conscientise our African people everywhere, supported by all who have a concern for justice and human rights, to challenge African political leadership to fulfil its fundamental responsibilities on the African continent, and to stop hiding behind obfuscations and manipulation of truth and reality. Nothing less than decisive action on these issues is demanded by the present situation in Zimbabwe. We cannot allow the cries of so many poor, suffering and unprotected people in Zimbabwe to remain unheard. That would be to “walk by on the other side” and to condemn our sisters and brothers in Zimbabwe to a truly hopeless future.

Bishop Kevin Dowling

Trustee: The Solidarity Peace Trust

Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace representative within
South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference

Contents

Introduction	6
1. Impact of the trip in general terms	9
2. Fear, torture and intimidation	10
3. Poverty and Starvation	11
4. The rich and powerful	14
5. The urban council elections	15
6. Youth	16
7. Media	16
8. The suffering church of Zimbabwe	17
9. Queues, shortages and corruption	18
10. Positive observations	20
11. Understanding of dynamics – who is to blame?	20
12. What needs to be done?	22
13. Detailed torture accounts	25

Photographs

Front cover: *Procession with crosses to commemorate those who have died in political violence since 2000 in Zimbabwe: 29 June 2002, St Mary's Cathedral, Bulawayo.*

Back cover: *Laying on of hands by pastors, 29 June 2002, St Mary's Cathedral, Bulawayo.*

Produced by: ***The Solidarity Peace Trust, Zimbabwe and South Africa***

Contact info: *email: selvanc@venturenet.co.za or leopard@metroweb.co.za*
phone: + 27 (0) 83 556 1726

Introduction

The Solidarity Peace Trust has a Board consisting of church leaders of Southern Africa and is dedicated to promoting the rights of victims of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The Trust was founded in 2003. The Chairperson is Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo, and the Vice Chairperson is Anglican Bishop Rubin Phillip of Kwazulu Natal.

In August and September of this year, The Solidarity Peace Trust organised for ten priests and pastors from South African parishes to spend a fortnight in Zimbabwe. The priests came from Kwazulu Natal, Gauteng and Cape Town, and were billeted with Zimbabwean priests in urban centres around the country. They came from a cross section of denominations, including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and various Evangelical churches. The hosting towns were Harare, Chitungwiza, Bulawayo, Mutare, Kwekwe, Gweru, Masvingo, and other small towns. The priests arrived in mid August and left on 3 September.

The vision behind the exchange was that it would give South African priests the opportunity to to experience at first hand the problems being faced in our parishes at this time, and to carry this knowledge back with them to their bigger church communities in South Africa, to express solidarity with their Zimbabwean counterparts.

The visit also coincided with the Urban Council Elections in Zimbabwe, and while the priests were not formal observers, they were able to informally observe and comment on the elections in their hosting parishes.

There was no precise agenda given to the visitors apart from this – to be in Zimbabwe in solidarity and to live the life of a local parish priest for two weeks, to meet with ordinary parishioners and gather impressions of the current state of the nation.

On their last day in the country, the South African priests gathered in one city, together with a few Zimbabwean facilitators, and spent many hours discussing their observations with one another. The entire conversation was recorded and transcribed. In addition, priests also submitted their written findings at a later date.

Summary of findings

What was clear was that all the South African priests were deeply saddened and moved by what they observed. Some had been to Zimbabwe before in the recent past, and even they were shocked at the decline and the current poverty and starvation in small urban centres. Everyone commented on the high levels of fear in the general populace. Some had very personal exposure to intimidation, with one South African priest being chased out of his hosting parish by suspected CIO threats, and several others hearing terrible accounts of State torture from victims themselves. Priests were shocked at the inability of victims to receive justice, particularly as in several cases the torturers were the police.

Several witnessed what they considered election irregularities over the Urban Council Elections. All were horrified at the endless queues, the depression, the hopelessness, the exorbitant cost of basic commodities. Starvation and poverty and also the impact of HIV/Aids were frequent themes. The plight of the youth in particular was another common theme.

The visiting clerics also commented on the divisions within the Zimbabwean church, the silence of many priests and the collusion of yet others with government. They also noted the persecution

of those priests who spoke out. Zimbabwean priests were able to learn much from their visitors, who were mostly very active in the struggle against apartheid in their own country, and who can remember facing the same timidity and insecurity in their own recent pasts.

The South African visitors drew their own conclusions as to who is to blame for the state of Zimbabwe today – western imperialism? or misrule by its own government? Observations were also made about the “land issue”.

Finally, the South African priests all felt there was a real need for them to do more – all were touched and wanted to return to South Africa and spread the word of their experiences, and to be available to help their Zimbabwean counterparts in any way possible. All felt they would pray for Zimbabwe, and some felt there was need for real action, that prayer without action was meaningless. The South Africans intend to lobby their own government based on their findings, and to inform their own parishes. Several have already spoken out strongly since their return including to the media.

Report structure

The rest of this report is made up of selected extracts from video transcriptions and written reports from the ten South African priests. The extracts have been reorganised in terms of theme, as the report-backs threw up common observations and concerns. In accordance with a request from the visiting priests, anonymity is preserved. There were concerns about negative repercussions for Zimbabwean priests if critical comments made by the visitors could be traced back to hosting parishes. There was also awareness from the visitors that they spoke as individuals and not on behalf of their bigger church communities in South Africa, and anonymity precludes the linking of their precise parishes to specific comments by themselves.

Rather than try to summarise or paraphrase, the priests’ words have been left as they were spoken. However, the report does not include every comment by everyone, for the sake of space and in order to avoid repetition. Italics and plain print alternate to indicate a change from one speaker to the next. All speakers should be assumed to be South African unless otherwise indicated. In the few instances when Zimbabweans spoke out, this has been indicated clearly.

Accounts of torture

There are a few very detailed reports of torture, which are included exactly as written by the priest who met the victims. Because of their length, they are added in their own section after the main body of the report.

The way forward

The South African visitors were very aware that their fellow citizens do not have the full picture of what is happening in Zimbabwe, and nor do others in the SADC region. They formally requested that a final report be compiled based on their observations and that this be sent to both political and church leaders in the SADC region, as well as to others.

It is the wish of the priests who visited Zimbabwe that their observations are shared with as many others as possible in order to create greater understanding and empathy with ordinary Zimbabweans and their parish priests. The editors of this report have summarised these observations in good faith and in accordance with this request.

It is the hope of all participants in this exercise, that further exchanges of this nature will take place, in both directions, with Zimbabwean priests visiting countries in the region to relate their experiences, and priests from SADC coming to Zimbabwe at regular intervals. It was the perception of the Zimbabweans that the visit had given local church leadership hope and new ideas at a time when preaching to parishioners without hope has become the challenging task for many Zimbabwean pastors.

Regarding this present report, the Solidarity Peace Trust sees its only role in acting as a multiplier, making the South African visitors' impressions known to a wider audience in the region and beyond. Apart from this, the Solidarity Peace Trust would like the following statements to speak for themselves.

1. Impact of the trip in general terms

We came to work in solidarity, to see the suffering of ordinary Zimbabweans - to be a witness - and most importantly to take back what we've seen to our churches, to South Africa, to our own government – I can say, “I came, I saw, I witnessed - and I don't like what I saw.”

We will take back a message of suffering. People are living lives that are so desperate, and people across the border don't know what is happening. The church is supposed to be for everybody. If a pastor was arrested in South Africa because he gave a practical ministry, the others would protest in solidarity. Priests here need to stand in queues and sing “we shall overcome.” We need to take back a message to South Africa, to take back the truth.

At the moment I'm ashamed to be Catholic, because so many people doing terrible things in this country are Catholic. The President is Catholic and the Foreign Minister is Catholic, Stan Mudenge. I was told Stan goes to church every week. Can you imagine what that has done to me? - knowing that that man sits in a Catholic service every Sunday, and yet he isn't moved by the suffering of his own people? I found a lot of poverty and things like that, but I also found a lot of people who are oblivious to what is happening on the ground.

I am ashamed to be Catholic because a lot of people who are causing the hardship and pain in this country - they are Catholic. There is only one man prepared to stand up and be counted and he is also Catholic – Archbishop Pius Ncube.

I was very fortunate because I spent my time with a man obviously close to the people. He is aware of the suffering the people are going through. He spoke passionately from the minute I got there until the minute I left. He prepared his parish for my arrival. He had come through the war - he told me of some of his escapades during the war, how people protected him and warned him where not to go on certain days.

The woman in Kwekwe whose sons were beaten for being MDC, when I was talking to her at her little vendor's stand, I said I came through Bulawayo. She told me that when I went back to Bulawayo, I should tell Fr Ncube that “we are suffering in Kwekwe.” And I found it consoling that the person they were looking up to was the Archbishop Pius, who is Catholic.

I struggle to sleep at night. I am just coming in to observe and I have been affected in such a bad way. I don't know how the Government sleeps. When people speak to you they are looking over the shoulders all the time. The priest I was staying with was so afraid - the fear they have instilled in the peoples minds, is mind-boggling.

How can a whole nation be subjected to that? This violence is black on black and it is people who live next door doing these things to each other. I cannot understand, I cannot comprehend.

2. Fear, torture and intimidation

The level of fear in this country is tangible – you can feel it.

I had to leave the small rural town I was staying in. That is another kind of situation. You know, I had heard that people were being intimidated for supporting another political party but I thought it was not going to happen to me, because I came as a minister of a South African church and was not supporting any local political party. But last Friday when I got back to the house there, as I entered the door Fr C said “we need to talk”. He got me into a panic, I was saying, “what have I done?” He was in a very anxious state - he had received a few calls from a man who later called himself Dube, who asked by name --where was I? Fr C said, I think you need to go. It was a scary situation – was I safe to stay another night there? This caller Dube had said about me – “get out of town, get out of the country, you are causing problems for us here.” But I felt I wasn’t even doing anything political, I was just meeting church leaders, praying with them, meeting one NGO, World Vision, in order to understand what was happening in the country.

I’ve been through that in South Africa, I’ve been intimidated. I prayed with Fr C and left. But I have seen, and I have heard - and I know it is true people are suffering in this nation. People are dying in this nation.

I had the privilege of meeting a couple of people during the week, who shared with me horrific stories of torture. I thought we were through with all this in our region. I have never ever come across such brutality as I have this last week and it is haunting.

If these MDC people are treated so badly, who stands with them? They stand by themselves. They are all alone. What do you say to a man who has been forced to eat his own faeces? Forever he will be a broken man.

Zimbabwean response: I wouldn’t agree that forever he will be a broken man, because what you said before - they are all alone - that is not true. People know that these things are happening to so many people, because so many people want change. It is important for you to speak out back in South Africa, because when we hear of protests outside the country, it gives hope to people here. They feel not alone. The fact that you listened to him is factual proof that he is not alone, but that other people realise and that other people care.

It is no longer humiliation, torture becomes a political statement if others will listen.

I went to the house next door. The guy has a big problem. The Ruling Party attacked him, because they wanted him to vote for them and they took everything – his ploughs, all his tools for farming. And what they did is they came back at night and chopped the tails off his oxen.

I said to him don’t worry, they did this because they know that oxen get their power from the tail - but they didn’t know the Power is from above - have courage. And he said, I said to them “What do you want? I am a man of God - there is nothing I can do. I won’t vote for either party.” He said to me “what must I do in this situation?”

I said you have answered yourself – you have to pray.

He said, “You go and report to the police, they report to the same people who did this, so it’s no use.”

I had time to visit cities around Gweru. To sum up what I've seen is that power in the wrong hands is destructive. I have seen that Zimbabwean people –their rights have been violated. Nobody has the right to have freedom to abuse whoever he wants, yet the State does that here.

Zimbabwean: Politicians are afraid of pastors. I have heard of pastors with midnight knocks on their doors. For weeks we have to put pastors in safe houses. The reason they pursue us, is because they are afraid of us. Once they know you are monitoring them, they become afraid and we should not forget that.

3. Poverty and starvation

In Y, which is a poor area, I saw aged women coming to church without shoes. In my heart I felt that they were coming to church, and the only thing they were going to eat all day was the communion wafer.

I have seen pain. The way I can describe the situation here is *pain, pain, frustration, depression, fear*, you name it - this is what I have experienced.

I was very conscious of eating better than others. The meals in the presbytery were very simple - there was no lavishness and I felt they were trying to be at one with the people around. This upset me really at X parish itself, this lady told me that she wasn't sure where she was going to get her next meal from, or how to get money for her children to go to school. Her dress was beautifully washed and ironed – but her shoes, there were no laces in her shoes and they were too small for her.

I went out with World Vision to distribute food - it was a heart-moving situation. I saw how people are suffering there. At one distribution point we found hundreds of people who were waiting. The sad thing is that most of these people are not working and I found myself asking how people were surviving out there. I met people who said they hadn't had food for more than a day.

What I find missing is the joie de vivre of the people – you hear them laughing, you hear them singing, but they are not joyful. Why should you be joyful when life is such a burden?

We saw people selling mealies and the police arrested them - it was pitiful because you can see these people are hungry - they are very hungry.

Yesterday I went to a supermarket and asked a vendor outside how much he earns a month and he earns Z\$400 a week - but one loaf of bread is Z\$1,000 and maize is Z\$1,000.

In fact, even going to the restaurant, a lot of lessons were learnt. As an outsider, I asked for certain things like chicken, like beef, and the restaurant would say we have run out of food in the country.

I remember another incident -I was at Gwanda train station and a goods train came along and stopped. People around there ran to the goods train to see what it is carrying and I heard people shouting “mumbu, mumbu” which means “mealies, mealies,” and I realised how desperate people were – they are always waiting for people to bring something, to bring mumbu or whatever. In South Africa we are taking things for granted, but here it's a different story altogether – even for maize it's a big thing for them, although even to get maize it's so

expensive. I see these people in town – what about those people out there in the bush? I saw on a video this old man eating monkey bread. Others are surviving by eating roots from certain trees, and I said, “Wow, this is really bad, people are really starving.”

I think a lot of people are living in total despair. People cannot survive except from other people's generosity.

One school-teacher, who is a temporary teacher, earns Z\$20,000 a month – he pays 10,000 rent so he has 10,00 to live on. I had him to a meal, which was a simple meal of meat and sadza and relish and he said he hadn't had such a sumptuous meal in how long, but it was an ordinary meal.

What I noticed is there is a problem – the economic situation is very bad. When you look around you can see that people are hungry. I had to go house to house and I discovered that people are hungry, they were not afraid to share their sufferings they are going through, they said bread is too expensive for them and it is very hard to get mealie meal and it is hard to go to town because transport costs too much and even transport is a problem and does not flow as it should because of fuel problems.

My pastor took me to Old Township. There it was really a poverty stricken area. What I witnessed there was heart wracking. Overcrowding, people lived in shacks, you'd find a mother trying to get some corn out and feed some babies. They live so close together and I was praying there will never be a fire there because that whole township will be destroyed.

It is impossible to even buy a loaf of bread if you are not working. It is coming towards December time. But how are people going to get anything - there are long queues and no money. I just experienced so many things, but for example I was standing by the main gate and the pastor brought a lady. She told me that she cannot buy food because she has no cash. They did try to come together to get a solution but it is impossible.

I notice there is a big difference between the poor and the rich. What is the cause of this - the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer. A gentleman said every day I wake up and come to town and queue all night, and then whosoever comes the next morning I say take my place for five thousand dollars and this is how I survive.

We saw a small little child in Harare - she came to me and said, “I am hungry.” She said they are two brothers at home and a little one and herself. Her parents died of TB and they all survive by what this little sister can do, aged less than ten, washing cars to put bread on the table.

My eagerness to chat to people landed me in a beer hall. I bought myself a beer and chose a comfortable corner. I identified a group of 4 people that I could join, two youngsters and two fairly old men. The language spoken was a mixture of Sindebele, English and a little bit of Nambian. I introduced myself to them and they did likewise. These are some of the observations in the discussion: a.) as a South African who was eager to hear about their country, I was like a hero to them. b.) The semi-old man was concerned about the fact that tomorrow was a pay day for the industry he was working at. He had a family to support and a student who was waiting for money. He was concerned about what the bank would say when he wanted to withdraw his money. c.) The old man in our midst, who was also a pensioner, said that he receives pensions that would buy him only three loaves of bread per month!

The plight of the mere citizens there is very real. Right now, not a single of them is prepared to tell of their experiences except if they have gained confidence in you. The old man in the bar for instance had to say that he has taught himself how to live on only one main meal i.e. dinner, since he no longer can afford three meals.

They await the year 2006 in which the President is supposed to retire. But how much damage will be caused by then?

Politicisation of food

Food is being distributed on partisan lines through the district administrator's office. As a result, MDC supporters are beaten whilst queuing for food. They are told that they should get their food from MDC.

The first day, I saw the Daily News article about the chiefs and headmen being supposed to hand out WFP food. And a young man said, "my father lives in a rural area and because he asked a question in a ZANU meeting he was labelled MDC and couldn't get food." I don't know how people can use food to get votes and things like that.

While there I read a report in the newspaper about the Government wanting the Tribal Chiefs to take charge of the distribution of the food of the World Food Aid Programme. I discussed this with one or two people and their feeling was that this should not happen because if you were not a ZANU – PF supporter, you would not have access to this food.

The unfairness practiced at GMB posts is beyond telling. A bag of maize is sold at Z\$ 1080. Only members of the Ruling Party were buying the maize at cost. Should you belong to the opposition you could be charged up to Z\$11 000.00.

The day I visited the GMB, my host who has a car was away for a few days. I had no option but to walk for 7km to the post. On my arrival, I discovered only about 60 bags were available, which were expected to be supplied to the whole community. The quantity was insufficient. A certain prominent member purchased 40 bags of maize at once. This was illegal since no family was allowed to purchase more than two bags of maize for a month. The shortage of maize was also caused by the railway workers strike. Workers were striking for a wage increase.

I remember two women who presumably came from afar for maize – but in vain. The superior distributor easily turned his back on them. They did not follow the right procedure; the procedure was that they should produce a letter from their local councillor.... Nobody could just buy without the approval of the superior distributor.

HIV/Aids

In Europe populations fall because of birth control, here the population is falling because of Aids.

The other thing that frightened me is the explosion of the Aids crisis, which we have not experienced yet in RSA. I was showed parish records where whole families have been wiped out. I saw children playing in the front garden, the father was dead, and the mother not far off. The priest was telling me that this year he has had a hundred funerals – he said, "we have more funerals than we have baptisms." And these are young people who are dying.

People with HIV/Aids are scared to come out because they are not given any treatment after tests and counselling, they are only tested for statistic purposes only. I had to persuade a family to go for HIV/Aids testing in a hospital other than the clinic.

4. The rich and powerful

Stan Mudenge's wedding

I went to Stan Mudenge's wedding [Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe]. It was a completely different world from what I had experienced the rest of the week. I was walking with a priest and I said, "this is clearly money here" – and he said, "no, it is ZANU PF," meaning that they are the only ones who have money. The wedding cost Z\$55 million. There was so much military all over – there were green bombers, there were ambulances, in fact when the President arrived, he flew in with about two or three helicopters, he was fetched in his vehicle and when he took off again the ambulance had to follow him.

We were all in tents and we had a wonderful meal with rare roast beef and salads and potatoes and things and you know there were lovely drinks. And the ordinary people were all sitting outside in the blazing sun and had been sent off somewhere else to have their lunch and then they had to sit and listen to the speeches and the little that was in English was all political rhetoric.

Mugabe said that western imperialists are trying to impose their rule on Zimbabwe and that Mudenge is his right hand man who goes to garner support around the world for Zimbabwe. It is only Europe and America that is against them and all other nations are under our wing.

Mugabe said - and it was obviously a joke – "There is no sugar in the country – and they blame the President!" Everyone laughed at this, but who should they blame? He was blaming everyone else and blaming imperialism. It is not in their vocabulary to blame themselves and how can they? How can they take 55 million of tax-payers money for a party - and down the road people are starving. I mean, some people are having one meal in two days. I spoke to a teacher who lost his job in 2000 because he is MDC and who hasn't worked since then. He has a wife and two children and a three-month old baby – how do they live?

The wedding was like Alice in Wonderland – the marquees and all that, and just down the way the people were in the sun – people were bussed in for the wedding from all around. Food was provided for them, which was sadza and stew but we had rare roast beef and chicken and fruit cocktail with ice cream. It was ridiculous. The bridal couple were served by people in white gloves etc.

Law and order

Is there any law? There is ZANU PF and there is the rest of the country. There is ZANU PF with flashy cars and helicopters and 55 million to spend on a party, and then there is the rest of the country starving to death.

Why does the law fail to take its course in this situation, when people are tortured?

The ruling party seems to be determined to silence all dissenting voices, thus today it is alleged that some traditional leaders are being denied their monthly allowances if they continue to stay or associate with members of the opposition. Some of the leaders have also been forced to evict some of their subjects, suspected not to belong to the ruling party. It is also now alleged that in some cases blood brothers no longer talk to each other when they don't belong to the same political party. The most criticized POSA [Public Order and Security Act] is being overused by police to squash all opposition meetings. There is now an increase in political violence whenever there are any forms of elections. It is only the hope of many Zimbabweans that sanity will prevail and that every one will once again associate and move freely and peacefully.

5. The Urban Council Elections

I tried to contact the person you gave me, who was running for City Council. On the Friday night he phoned me. He made an arrangement we should meet each other. I tried to contact him again, and somebody kept putting the phone down. I was recommended to speak to the lady selling fruit. She told me there is a big problem - Z is not here. I asked her to give him a message from me. So anyway, she said, "there is a big problem, because he has been harassed and is running from place to place". I asked if he would come back to his office and she said he would the next morning at ten o'clock. She said, "Father, I don't think you are going to see him." Somebody else came forward and told me it was very dangerous and Z was still on the run. They said he would come to me and he didn't come. He was probably being watched. I saw the burnt MDC offices in this town.

I asked why she was not registered and she said, why should I, when there is no future for us? I explained voting could change the future. Quite a lot of men were saying my power is my vote.

In Y township an old man told me, "Father, I voted yesterday" – he was the oldest man in the parish. The young people seem to have just given up - a lot of them have not registered. Even among the religious, the nuns, many have not registered and those who were, would not vote. People are living without hope.

On Saturday I had two youngsters who took me walking through Y. There were people outside the polling booths and we walked through this whole township, opposite the polling stations were groups of people toyi toying. We went into the market and I asked them who was dancing and singing at the polling station? I was told it was ZANU PF. I asked if it was not illegal to do that in a polling booth? There were police there and I just walked straight and ignored them. They turned their vehicle around and went slowly past me several times. On Sunday there was nobody voting.

There were elections. I visited the township - there was this good lady giving people soup so that they would vote for the Ruling Party and even there on voting day, they were there bribing the people with food.

One guy said to me, "what is the use of voting, because we vote and the outcomes are not what they should be." I see people now losing interest in voting altogether.

In these areas we also saw the Ruling Party (ZANU PF) supporters canvassing for votes. The allegation is that when you vote for ZANU PF you will be rewarded with a 50kg mealie meal.

The political situation is different from ours since the Ruling Party in Zimbabwe has got a right to intimidate others. This party dominates the radio and local television station. The opposition party is not allowed to function and operate openly. On the day of elections people were highly intimidated and bribed with food by the Ruling Party.

6. Youth

Youngsters would dearly love to have opportunities... a young man and his grades show he has A's but because he doesn't have money....

I also visited Redcliff. I went to a hospital there to see somebody who was taken ill from the parish. There were relatives around the bed and the same topics came up from young people – what is it like in South Africa, is there work there? People were astounded that it took only two months to get a passport. It takes 10 months here, I gather. There is an impression that South Africa is a Mecca. And I had to say a lot of the people are struggling. It struck me that there is hardly anybody on the road selling their wares here.

I find a terrible despondency in young people. I have handed out my telephone number to so many youth who believe there are jobs for them in South Africa and they do not believe there are unemployed South Africans. We have problems of our own, and youths coming from all over Africa. We need to generate hope in young people here – in South Africa young people played a key role in brining about change and they could do so here if they had more hope.

I met two boys from secondary school who were wondering if they would even be able to go back to school next term because of school fees. They are paying something like Z\$17,000. For us in South Africa it would be a small thing with the exchange rate – perhaps churches could sponsor children here at school – if people could sponsor food, clothes – but it is hard because the whole thing is controlled by the Ruling Party here – they control everything that goes in or out of here.

Youth militia

Part of the 60 who got jobs as temporary teachers were militias who have not even passed O levels, 20 places were reserved for them, who were now going to teach all sorts of subjects that they themselves have not passed. I'm sorry, but your country is being run into the ground by a madman.

The other thing is this whole youth militia. The priest I was with said it reminded him of the Nazi “brown shirts” because they seem to just do what they like.

7. The media

The cook from the parish who went to buy *The Daily News* always put it in a plastic bag for fear of being beaten up. The priest also introduced me to SW Radio Africa. So in the evenings before we even had supper, we would listen in to what was happening. On the national radio he

told me about this song – our land is our prosperity – and it goes on and on and on. The tv was like an ornament in the house, we never watched it.

I spent time in the evening watching ZBC – they must change and call it ZANU PF Broadcasting because you only hear about ZANU PF. And what they tell you, it is not the truth - because when you look around the country, what you see, is not what you hear on tv. They tell you about new computers and all that stuff, that the President is going to what-what place, but they don't tell you about the queues that you see, people starving. They don't talk about poverty. When they talk about fuel, they just promise that there will be fuel. Now, when I looked into the situation in town I found that people have trouble getting their own money – they are allowed only Z\$ 5,000. I spoke to an old lady who queued for three hours and got only Z\$ 5,000, but it takes Z\$1,000 to get to town.

You know back there in South Africa I like to watch news. I've seen some stuff on things happening here in Zimbabwe and how people have been tortured, so I had a taste of that fire and brimstone before I got here. But I was still not prepared.

8. The suffering church of Zimbabwe

The church is really suffering – it is the suffering church of Zimbabwe. These days we priests talk about the holistic approach – so that we are not just preaching words, but considering the whole person, so if the church cannot help members of their congregation – I do not blame the church leaders, but they cannot help the situation.

One church leader said the politicians are interfering with our work. They are trying to tell us what we should do and what we should not do, what we should say and what we should not say. So it was really scary - I thought are these people trying to be God, to dictate to church leaders what they should say. People from the Ruling Party of Zimbabwe - the government - is trying to tell the church what to do.

I stayed with a very interesting pastor – Pastor B. In February of last year he stood up and challenged some issue in the church – his senior, who is also a senior ZANU PF politician, cut off his salary and said you should not be paid and allowed him to carry on in his parish without being paid. He is not earning a salary for six months. He is experiencing many hardships.

Is this what we as pastors are going to allow - that a man can preach and do God's work without earning money to feed his family? This man is just one out of hundreds of pastors around Zimbabwe being picked on.

All what we need to do is what God has called people to do, not what any government wants us to do.

One of the pastors was saying, well we have a problem, which is lack of unity in the church. A house in disunity cannot be saved. I asked people the problems they were encountering; poverty, HIV/Aids, and the famine in the country, and how the superior powers are using food as a means to get people to vote for them. I heard a story about a woman who went to buy maize and was asked what party she supported. She was asked where she had been buying maize.

But among the priests there is division as well. One of the priests told me that the queues were not that bad and said “we have been demonised in the media.” I would have thought he could see the hardship of the people.

Most priests in South Africa kept quiet during apartheid. I found it so difficult not to speak out in M. But I felt it was not my place to speak out – but yes the silence of some priests.... At the wedding another old priest pulled me aside and told me Mugabe had ruined the country. But he was afraid and would only say it quietly.

The pastors in these areas are having a tough time, because preaching doesn't help. The congregation leave the services and go back to their crime.

Church leaders who stand for peace and justice are ill-treated and isolated. I noticed this when I went around visiting Methodist, AFM and Roman Catholic Churches.

The other thing I see is that churches seem to deny that there is a problem in the country. Even pastors seem to compromise. As preachers of the gospel we know the kingdom is all about justice and peace but on this situation of Zimbabwe, pastors seem to just say “the Kingdom of God is coming,” and they don't preach for peace and justice. I'm saying this because I visited another church where the pastor preached as if he was in South Africa, as if there was no problem, but how do I face the injustice here? How do I survive? How do I speak to the people here about the injustice they experience?

9. Queues, shortages and corruption

As I was going around looking at the situation, queuing for cash, queuing for petrol, queuing for food - which is so expensive - people were expressing their anger, their pain, in words, saying “we are suffering.”

What I've been picking up talking to people is that people are really suffering – the shortage of food, of petrol. A few church ministers were saying they cannot visit outstations because there is not fuel.

I don't know how to describe the money situation – you have money and you need cash and you queue even overnight, and you are told in the bank, there is no money, there is nothing for you - and what does this mean? It means you are not going to be able to get food or other necessities – you cannot get those things. Back at home for a thousand rand I would get a lot of things. Wow, I could get things to eat for a month but here it is scary.

On Saturday morning the queues in town were the worst in ten days. They were all along the road outside – queues and queues and queues of people.

I met people who said, “things are bad we have to queue for so long for everything.” But they were too afraid to speak out as to where the problem really lies.

One Saturday afternoon my host Fr. B was to visit K. This place is ±40 km away from the seminary. K was a mining place. It had a small hospital, which was run by the Catholic Church. Here there is a great shortage of water; we were to provide the nuns with a few litres of water. The only ambulance is lying in the yard without fuel.

It was shockingly quiet as we drove around, and we noticed the following: people were standing in abnormally long queues. There is a scarcity of money. People have got to carry lots and lots of Zimbabwe dollars, which will purchase only a few items.

Cars also had to queue so as to get fuel at the garages. Sometimes fuel would get finished before some cars can reach the petrol attendants. An alternative would be obtaining petrol from the black market where it is sold at alarmingly high prices.

I first saw a long queue of taxis parked in the different garages. On one of my cross-examinations from one of the taxi drivers, he told me that Zimbabwe's garages have got no fuel at all; they sometimes have to get fuel from the black market, which is very expensive.

Money confiscated

An elderly lady had died, and after the funeral there was a bit of a feast and a lady that I spoke to said that they would not have been able to have the tea if their friends had not rallied around. They spoke of two places that had been raided and had their own money seized by the police. At a garage Z\$ 29 million was confiscated from a box clearly labelled "wages". The police took it because you are only allowed Z\$5 million at a time. Whether they received receipts I don't know.

Bureaucracy and corruption

People are really, really struggling. I went to the shops and a few things cost thirty thousand dollars. This temporary teacher has only Z\$10,000 to live on after paying rent of Z\$10,000. He has a job through government but will get paid only in three months time! How he is supposed to survive I don't know.

In trying to get the job – he saw 60 temporary jobs advertised. 800 people turned up and they had to wait until 2 pm for the interviewers to arrive, although they had been told interviews would begin at 8 am. But he was eventually told he would get the job. He had to get a photo taken for Z\$1,500 and it cost him Z\$6,000 to get the forms to apply – he was sent from one government office to another, and in each he had to buy application forms. When he went to hand in the forms, he was told he didn't need the forms or photo – money wasted.

The worst is he went to the police to get fingerprints done, which were needed for the application. The police just told him to get out of the station they were too busy. He and his friend each had to pay the police Z\$ 2,000 to get their fingerprints taken! This man had to pay Z\$10,000 just to get a job, which will only earn him Z\$20,000 per month for three months! You cannot tell me that money is going into government coffers – and half the forms he had to buy weren't necessary.

People were pinpointing quite clearly that there was corruption around, that there was lack of work and sometimes the work was reserved for ZANU PF.

10. Positive observations

One thing I have discovered here is every house has a little garden. It has brought out the best and the worst in the people.

What inspired me most is that this nation seems to be growing. People are just standing and trying to make ends meet and going ahead. But I am grateful for the NGOs distributing food. The EFZ [Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe] are really trying by all means to get things going better.

It is very, very, very important to know this world belongs to those who believe - the lord's words will be fulfilled. On the other side you see people who are happy. We went to two graduation ceremonies. I gave words of encouragement, said it is wonderful to see people getting degrees. If we could encourage people to learn - we have got UNISA helping all sorts of people who did not go to school and get any education.

In front of 15 pastors in Mutare, those contesting for city council have made a promise and we must hold them to that promise. The church played a very constructive role in bringing together parties from across the board and got an agreement from all politicians to not campaign violently, and that they would accept the outcome of the election gracefully. The church has used its influence to denounce violence and to bring people together to unite them, to agree to a code of conduct.

11. Understanding of dynamics: who is to blame?

The conflict is not so much about ZANU PF and MDC. The problem is about the incumbent government and its people. It is violence that is being generated by the State machinery against its own people, whether it's against journalists, whether against the church, so I think that has to be clear.

The sad thing is that it is not something from outside, and it is not the whites against the blacks - it's people from the same tribe doing things to each other, because some dare to support another party.

Somebody is making a lot of money out of what is happening in this country. It's not somebody from outside. They say it is the imperialist west – it is not; it is people who have been elected into positions of power, who are abusing this power. And ZANU PF use people on the ground to snitch on each other and this is what the youth militia are about – it's the police, the army, the CIO, the green bombers – they all come together to pick people up. This young guy was taken into the bush and beaten up with his brother. He was accused of speaking ill of the President. Why can't there be a differing of opinion? It is in differences that we celebrate our life.

Maybe we could explain it, if it was a white on black situation but it is a black on black situation and it is also tribal - you are Shona, you are Ndebele. People would say nothing is happening [in terms of development] down here in our region. This is giving credit to that ex [colonial] government, because they were doing things for the people but this government is doing nothing for the people.

What I have seen and heard here – it smacks of apartheid, by which I mean the suffering and state oppression reminds me of what we went through in South Africa.

The ordinary people are above, the government should be taking advice from them, but it is happening the other way round.

There are people who I can say they enjoy their comfort zone through the suffering of others.

Even within ZANU there is admittance that there is a crisis.

The land issue

It's not just about land here. At home you hear all about the ills of the land story. There is poverty and no money - people are being beaten into submission. The number of people who have wealth in this country right now are fewer than in colonial times – and a bigger poverty gap.

Well as far as I understand the situation here, I would say the government has caused the food problem. I think they did not have a good strategy of dealing with this land issue. Invading the farms – you allocate ignorant people, poor people land – how do you think they are going to grow food for the whole nation, when they have no equipment? I think there was a better way of dealing with this issue. Another newspaper had a whole list of the farms that have been taken over by the government. Those people also don't know how to farm. What can you expect but disaster in that situation.

If I heard correctly on the radio yesterday, tomorrow our South African government is going to pass a land appropriation bill. I may be wrong, but I get the impression from Zimbabweans that land redistribution was a necessity that many knew had to be done, including the farmers themselves. The British are being blamed, but for twenty years, nothing was done, then there was no order about it and no consideration was paid to those thrown out of jobs. If land issues are dealt with in South Africa, it must be done lawfully and in a fair manner.

One man said to me maybe even Mandela could not do what our President did, by giving us land and houses free. So he says he stands with the President.

The youth – from twelve thirteen years up - selling themselves, prostituting to make a living - the young guys go out stealing at night. I believe why the area became so crowded - they came from the rural areas. The farmland is lying wasted and dry. When the white farmers were working they had employment, but now they have come into town to live hand to mouth. These two feet walked on those grounds and it was really wracking.

I went to some farms, which had been taken away from farmers, it seems that those farms are not functioning anymore. I perceive it might be the lack of knowledge or no money to continue farming.

12. What needs to be done?

Prophetic ministry

Zimbabwean comment: The role of prophetic ministry is not about contesting political power - God has not called us to play that role. Generally your role is to ensure that politicians behave, but once you start to challenge political power by becoming part of it, you change dynamics. You have congregations and you do not ask people in your congregation what party they belong to. We said to them please don't get derailed.

Zimbabwean comment: There is a vacuum – who can bring these people together, what will happen who will bring a solution? The church can do this – but are we ready, are we mature enough? Because it's not only that. After visiting the President's office I received strange phone calls at night. But the fact is here. But even if the church is being intimidated we need to be mature enough to say we need a solution, we need to be with the people and their suffering, and say – come, we need to solve this problem. It doesn't matter what you believe, we need a solution.

Lobbying and material support

What is the international community doing about this situation? If this was happening in England, would they sit back and do nothing? But because this is happening in Africa, even some of the leaders here are supporting what is happening.

The people in Zimbabwe are our brothers and sisters, we need to support them. Back in South Africa I will share the story of Zimbabwe and mobilise them to pray for Zimbabwe. And also to see if there isn't a way practically we can help, maybe in a small way. Which could also be very hard to do because everything has to go through "the powers" here.

I have been thinking, I don't know what I am going to do now. Many young kids cannot pay the school fees. But maybe I can take two children and make a difference. You can take one child and make a difference. But I have learnt the secret of giving - the more you give, the more the Lord blesses you. I hope I will be mobilising the churches to pray for Zimbabwe. The woman I met yesterday said if you South Africans do not do anything, we are all going to die - Zimbabwe is finished, the economy is gone.

Prayer

We need help, help us to serve you better, to serve you more. In South Africa I believe prayer made a difference. 1994 we thought we were going to be fighting. I was involved and I will never forget it. Day and night we were going all over the place meeting with leaders and groups and saying we need to pray. And we got together to pray at that time - Buthelezi was saying he was not part of the political process. It was then that he decided to join the prayers and it was there that he agreed to enter the political process. I want to encourage church leaders in this nation to do that. It is only God who can save this nation right now because it is finished - the economy, the social life, everything. I love this country, I love this country, I will pray for help.

On Wednesday they organised a group of people and I preached. I tried to encourage people with my sermon. I tried to advise people not to sink but to swim above their disaster. I could sense they were very happy that there are some people that can move such a long way and pray for them. We shall have to find a way of speaking to our church in South Africa. We have to

inspire the church on that side. What man cannot change God can change. If we get more to pray we can bring change. We have got to conscientise our government on the situation here. Now that we are here we should find a way of making them aware of what is here.

Prayer – and Action

I firmly believe in prayer. I am pastoring a church known as the prayerful church but I also believe that praying and praying and doing nothing is not going to be much good. I love it when Jesus says to people who are starving, “what do we have to eat?” and they say, only five loaves and five fishes and Jesus says, “bring it to me” – and he distributed – he prayed and then he acted. Something should be done before the nation is totally finished. I believe something must be done - if it will cost somebody to die then he must die – but something must be done for the sons of the soil here in Zimbabwe to survive. I believe there is something more we can do - let us not only pray, let us take action.

It was really heart-wracking to see these situations. I think as South Africans we need to go back and really table these issues because God says we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves and also that actions speak louder than words.

I believe it is time for Christians to take an action. They must come together and pray for an answer. What we need now is a solution – there is no other way.

We also have got our own problems in South Africa - we are not here to sort out the problems in Zimbabwe, but we are here just to say we are standing with you. Don't look to us as people who can solve your problems.

The problem is pastors who try to act, are trailed for not supporting the right party. So it is difficult for them to act.

In one of the churches around here, a pastor was preaching and had to change the subject when some people marched in half way. So how are local pastors supposed to address the issues?

Zimbabwean comment: for the first twenty years the church has been happy to sit back and let the politicians do it all. There is a mind-set that politics is a dirty business, and is not for church leaders to get involved. I agree that things are not shifting - things are so desperate you have to be blind not to see, and have no heart at all. People are beginning to question what is the role of the church. But you are working against this mindset that has developed over time.

People latch on to the idea of prayer as a safe alternative to action and not as a spring-board - a safe alternative, because you can pray and then go away and do nothing. But if you have to wrestle, fight, and pray for the Kingdom then that is a costly business, and most people are trying to avoid the cost. You in South Africa have your own history of breaking through this fear that made cowards of so many, and silenced so many, but gradually the priests came forward and made a stand and I think your visit can help local church leaders to find their way. It is empowering for them just to have you here. It will lead the local church leaders to find their God given role. We are learning from one another but solidarity between churches here and there is a key.

Nowadays we see some change with pastors starting to say something is wrong. To be patriotic means you have to go along with all the evil that the government is doing. If you say this is evil, you are accused of being not patriotic.

I was so disappointed with SADC – they clapped Mugabe on the back and condemned sanctions – but there are no sanctions.

Church leaders have a much more powerful role than politicians because even politicians go to church and seek advice and say - lead us! During the days of apartheid, the church was a very real vehicle for change. The church was an alternative government - it is now time for this church to arise and see this.

We need to send the report to SADC leaders – our voices are South African and so our voices must be listened to. We are running congregations and we have an audience and can stand up and preach. After my sermon I will say I want to feed back on Zimbabwe. At conferences I will ask to speak on Zimbabwe.

We as South Africans, once had an experience of oppression by whites. The fearing of a white was injected in a black man's head like the present situation in Zimbabwe. But men of God stood up against the regime that was oppressing Africans. We need to bring together the servants of God in a time of oppression.

I conclude by saying to the church and leaders, that we are a prophetic voice to the nation – if we don't speak, people of God will perish: let the blood of this nation not be upon us.

13 Detailed torture accounts

I had the opportunity of interviewing some people who had been victimized and what follows is a transcript of those interviews.

For the purpose of this report, I will not be identifying the interviewees, but their personal details are known to me.

Interviewee 1:

Thirty year old male, he is a member of the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions.

He is the Regional Organising Secretary of this branch. Just some background to the events that took place; the MDC had organized a mass protest for the 2 June 2003. On the 20 May 2003 the police visited his place of work; he was not at work. They left a message for him to report to the M police station. No reason was given for their visit or their request that he report to the police station. On the 31 May 2003 he heard that the police were looking for him. On the 1 June 2003 they once again came to his work to look for him, but he had reported for duty and left. On all these occasions they also visited his home and harassed his family. It seems the reason that they were looking for him was that he was accused of organizing the mass protest that was to take place on the 2 June 2003. This he denies, as the protest was organized by the MDC and not the trade unions.

On 2 June 2003, the day of the mass protest, some of the workers reported for duty, as normal. However, some workers and residents gathered for the protest. The MDC leaders, who were to lead the protest, were arrested by the police. The police also dispersed the crowd, with the result the protest did not take place. He did not attend the protest, so the next day, 3 June 2003, he thought he was clear and reported for duty as normal. At 10am he went to the bakery to buy some bread. On his way he met four soldiers and two policemen. They asked his name and when he gave this, they arrested him. He was detained without any notification of the charges against him. He asked them to notify his employers and his family that he was detained, but they refused. He managed to get a message to his family via a friend.

Torture during police interrogation

At 6 pm he was taken from his cell to an interview room. There he was accused of bad mouthing the President on May Day, when he addressed a rally. During the interviews by various officers, he was repeatedly beaten with a baton when they were not satisfied with the answers he gave to their questions. At one stage they stripped him naked in the presence of a female police officer.

The beatings continued. At one stage, he defecated, and they made him eat his own faeces. Soon after this he passed out. When he awoke he was fully clothed and taken back to the cells. During the night someone would call his name and tell him that he was not going to make it through the night. The next day he was charged under the Public Order Security Act (POSA).

For three days he was not able to walk. Neither his lawyer nor his family was able to see him until he was able to walk. His bail was Z\$1000.00. On being released, he spent a day at M Hospital, on being discharged; he spent a further two weeks in bed in a Private Hospital. In all he spent ±Z\$500 000.00 dollars on medication, doctors bills and hospital fees. On 3 July he appeared in court and his case was postponed to 3 September 2003, because the dockets were

not available for further investigation. His personal thoughts on what was happening in the country, was that those in power did not care about the people and that their President used the Land Issue as a weapon. Anyway it was only the ZANU PF supporters who were getting the land.

Interviewee 2:

School teacher who worked in rural areas.

He was of the opinion that the political situation, up until the end of 1999, was fair. However, the situation worsened after the Referendum and the emergence of the MDC as a political entity in the country. Threats and intimidation of those who seemed to support the opposition became the order of the day. The turning point came in June 2000, during the Parliamentary Elections when ZANU PF nearly lost power to the opposition. During the Presidential elections those who supported the opposition were victimized. Because he lived in town, he was accused of being an MDC supporter and also trying to indoctrinate his pupils against the government. In November 2001 he was prevented from teaching in his school. Since then he has not been able to find employment in the Education Department, even though he is a qualified teacher.

Torture by police, youth militia and war veterans

On 1 June 2003 the police at 12:50 am came to their home and arrested him together with two of his young brothers. They were taken to the mountains by a contingent of police, war veterans and youth militia. Here they were stripped and beaten for three hours. When the beatings stopped they were left in the veldt and had to find their own way home. That night people were being beaten all over town. His opinion was that people were not able to hold meetings freely. They were not able to plan or do anything of political nature if they were of the opposition. The freedoms of association, assembly and speech have been compromised. There is no political tolerance in their country and one is not allowed to wear or display party regalia if it is not of the ruling party. The truth is that people want change, but they are afraid to speak out for fear of reprisals.

The tribal chiefs and headman are being manipulated. The Electorate is being forced by fear to tow the line. NGO's are only allowed to operate if their policies are in line with the ZANU PF policies. Another sad factor in this whole food saga is that illiteracy plays a big role. As the illiterate are duped into voting for ZANU PF in exchange for food. It seems his only crime is that he was a teacher who lived in town and thought in rural areas. According to him many teachers were leaving the teaching profession, because they were being victimized.

Interviewee 3:

Mother of four young children. Before her arrest she was married to a teacher. She is an executive member of the local branch of the MDC.

Torture by police and war veterans in police station

She took part in the mass action that took place in M on 18/19 March 2003. She was beaten by four policemen with gun butts and batons and arrested. She was released on 21 March 2003 on Z\$3000.00 bail. Since her arrest her health has detracted. On 2 June 2003 she once again took part in the mass protest that was organized. On the way to the protest they encountered many soldiers and police, who were heavily armed. They started beating people and she was again

arrested. On the evening of 3 June 2003 they were called individually to the interview room. During the interrogation she was beaten under her feet and all over her body with a baton. She was also kicked during the process. During this time they were without food and water. On the morning of 4 June 2003 they were, once again, called individually so that statements could be taken from them. When her turn came, she entered the room and found that there were about nine men in the room. Some of them were war veterans and others were from the Police Force. They made her sit on a chair with her legs on a table. While they were taking her statement, they were beating her.

She was menstruating at this time, and noticing this, they forced her to remove the soiled pad and placed it in her mouth. She was also kicked in her stomach. During this time her lawyer was trying to see her but he was refused access. All of them who were arrested on 2 June 2003 appeared in court on 4 June 2003. Bail was set at Z\$3000.00 per person. At this court appearance she was not able to stand and had to be assisted. They appeared in court again on 5 June 2003 and both cases against her were withdrawn with no reasons given. Her lawyer was advised by a Police Officer that she could make a statement at the police station and report the brutality that she and others underwent while in police custody. At the time of this interview no action had been taken.

Victimization of family and theft

Because of her and her family's involvement in the MDC, her home had been stoned and windows broken. Her husband, who has since deserted her, was victimized at the school where he taught. He was threatened and told to get rid of her. On one occasion the war veterans went to her house and demanded that her husband hand over her clothes to them as a sign that he no longer was involved with her. They burnt all her clothes in front of her house. She was left with one dress, one skirt and one blouse. She no longer stays with her husband, because after this he told her to leave, and she has had to find shelter elsewhere. Since all this her husband has stopped supporting her and the two children that are with her. The two remaining children live with their father. Her thoughts on the situation are that hunger has forced certain people to resort to desperate measures.

