



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 30 March 2015

Information on the situation for a person in Zimbabwe who fears that they may be at risk of harm from the Central Intelligence Organisation or ZANU-PF members.

The 2014 Freedom House report on Zimbabwe states:

“State-sponsored political violence against the political opposition is a serious and chronic problem, although violence was much less severe in 2013 than in previous election years, especially in the post-election period. In general, MDC politicians, activists, and supporters were still subject to harassment, assault, and occasional arbitrary detention by security forces, militias, and supporters of ZANU-PF.” (Freedom House (22 August 2014) *Freedom in the World 2014 – Zimbabwe*)

This report also states:

“The new constitution failed to introduce greater civilian control over or require the professionalization of the highly partisan security forces. As such, both the Joint Operations Command, composed of the heads of the security services, and the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) remain closely tied to the presidency and free of any concrete or enforceable regulation by the legislature or bureaucracy.” (ibid)

The 2013 US Department of State country report on Zimbabwe, in a section titled “Freedom of Speech and Press” (paragraph headed “Freedom of Speech”), states:

“CIO agents and informers routinely monitored political and other meetings. Authorities targeted persons deemed to be critical of the government for harassment, abduction, interrogation, and sometimes torture.” (US Department of State (27 February 2014) *2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe*, p.19)

The Human Rights Watch report on Zimbabwe for the events of 2013, in a section titled “Conduct of Security Forces”, states:

“The security forces have a long history of partisanship on behalf of President Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party. The partisanship of the security forces’ leadership has translated into abuses by these forces against MDC members and supporters, and civil society organizations. Although the new constitution obligates the security forces to be politically neutral and impartial, this constitutional requirement has been disregarded. Beyond the open endorsement of ZANU-PF, in advance of the 2013 elections, security forces intimidated, beat, and committed other abuses against Zimbabweans perceived to be supporting the MDC or critical of the government. Members of

the security forces have committed these abuses with almost absolute impunity.” (Human Rights Watch (21 January 2014) *World Report 2014 – Zimbabwe*, p.3)

The Summary of a Human Rights Watch report on the Zimbabwean security services refers to the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) as follows:

“Instructively, the CIO has no legislative framework guiding its institutional set up and operations. It is a department within the President’s Office—the Department for State Security—with a minister responsible for it and a director-general running it, its operations are shrouded in secrecy. The CIO has operated more as the intelligence arm of the ZANU-PF and has been implicated in serious human rights abuses against ZANU-PF’s political opponents.” (Human Rights Watch (5 June 2013) *The Elephant in the Room*, p.3)

In a section titled “Background” this report states:

“In the lead up to the June 2008 presidential runoff elections, Human Rights Watch investigations found that the Joint Operations Command (JOC), comprising Mugabe and the heads of the security forces, was responsible for orchestrating widespread political violence throughout the country against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This violence resulted in the killings of hundreds of perceived MDC activists and supporters and the beating, torture and forced displacement of thousands more. As with previous state-sponsored political violence, the authorities failed to hold accountable those responsible, entrenching impunity within the security forces.” (ibid, p.10)

See also section titled “Security Sector Political Interference” (paragraph headed “Central Intelligence Organization”) which states:

“The CIO, together with sections of the police and army, have been implicated in the abductions, torture, beatings and harassment of perceived ZANU-PF opponents. For instance, Zimbabwe’s Supreme Court established that CIO agents abducted and tortured Zimbabwe Peace Project Director Jestina Mukoko, a prominent human rights campaigner, in December 2008 in an attempt to induce a false confession.⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch has in the past documented numerous incidents in which CIO agents have been implicated in abductions, beatings and torture of civil society activists and perceived MDC supporters.” (ibid, pp.28-29)

The 2014 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office report for Zimbabwe, in a section titled “Access to Justice and the Rule of Law”, states:

“In 2014, access to justice was limited for victims of political violence, intimidation, and for those trying to seek legal address around land and property rights. In these areas, in particular, there was a culture of impunity. Victims of political violence were rarely able to rely on the police to pursue justice on their behalf. Court cases were lengthy and regularly postponed. Selective application and interpretation by law enforcement officials and the Attorney General limited access to justice and freedoms by ZANU-PF opponents.” (UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (12 March 2015) *Human Rights and Democracy Report 2014 - Section XII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern – Zimbabwe*)

The 2015 Amnesty International report for Zimbabwe, in a paragraph headed “Abductions”, states:

“In November, abductions were recorded for the first time since 2009. On 12 November, former ZANU-PF Harare province chair, Jim Kunaka, was abducted by unknown people in Mbare township. He was reportedly forced into a car, blindfolded and driven to a bushy area where he was assaulted with iron bars before being dumped. The abduction was reported at Harare Central Police Station. Jim Kunaka's abduction took place at a time of intense jockeying for positions within ZANU-PF. On 2 December, pro-democracy activists Allan Chinewaita, Jerry Mugweni and Itai Dzamara were abducted by men in three cars while engaging in a peaceful protest in Harare. They were reportedly taken to ZANU-PF headquarters and were robbed, slapped, beaten and spat at by party youths. They were then driven to Harare Central Police Station where they were handed to security agents who tortured them before releasing them without charge. They were hospitalized with severe injuries.” (Amnesty International (25 February 2015) *Amnesty International Report 2014/15 – Zimbabwe*)

A Voice of America News report states:

“Occupy Africa Unity Square protest leader Itai Dzamara has been allegedly abducted by suspected state security agents while at a barbershop in his neighbourhood. Occupy Africa Unity Square secretary general Charles Nyoni says Dzamara was abducted by five men who forcibly shoved him in a white isuzu twincab. Nyoni tells Studio 7 the men approached Dzamara and accused him of stealing a cow before they grabbed him. He says efforts to locate him are proving too futile as the police are professing ignorance over the issue.” (Voice of America News (9 March 2015) *Unknown Zimbabwe Assailants Abduct Occupy Unity Square Leader*)

See also Voice of America News report which states:

“The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has accused the ruling Zanu PF government of using its state security agents to abduct political activist Itai Dzamara resulting in a protest by MDC-T youths which led the police to cordon off the party's Harvest House headquarters in Harare for two days. The police beat up some MDC-T activists, including the party leader's spokesman Luke Tamborinuyoka, as officers search for police regalia they alleged had been siezed from officers by protesters. In Bulawayo, the MDC alleged that Zanu PF youths disrupted its meetings resulting in some women being stripped naked. All this has seen political tensions rising in the country.” (Voice of America News (13 March 2015) *MDC-T Says Zanu PF Used State Agents to 'Abduct' Dzamara*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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