



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 9 January 2019

Information on an incident which occurred at Silonga Primary School in Silonga, Zimbabwe, in or around the 7th/8th April 2017, whereby a group comprised of the state police, war veterans and militia came to a church meeting and carried out a number of atrocities including beating people, and torturing the secretary of the church.

No reference to the incident described above was found among sources available to the Refugee Documentation Centre. See for example attached report on human rights violations during April 2017 from the Zimbabwe Peace Project which contains no mention of this incident.

A 2007 report from the Zimbabwean news portal ZimOnline states:

“Zimbabwean police on Friday arrested nine church leaders of the Christian Alliance group in Kadoma town, more than 150km west of Harare, for allegedly meeting without first seeking approval from the police.

The Christian Alliance is a coalition of churches, opposition political parties and civic groups that is pushing for sweeping political reforms in Zimbabwe.

Christian Alliance spokesperson, Lucky Moyo, told ZimOnline yesterday that armed riot police swooped on the 300 pastors and church leaders who were who were attending the meeting in Kadoma for a Christian Leadership seminar.” (ZimOnline (30 January 2007) *Police arrest nine church leaders in Kadoma*)

See also 2007 report from the Anglo-Irish charity Christian Aid which states:

“The arrest of eight church leaders and the closure of an office of a church-based human rights organisation – funded by Christian Aid – in Harare are the latest examples of the pressure ZANU PF is putting on human rights groups.

Christian Aid, Tear Fund and other European agencies are speaking out on behalf of these church groups following a spate violence and intimidation. Zanu PF militia have stormed meetings and threatened violence against participants.

The leaders from the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA) were arrested at a church gathering in Kadoma.” (Christian Aid (7 March 2007) *Aid agencies hit out at clampdown on Zimbabwe church groups*)

A 2012 report prepared by the Zimbabwean NGO Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), in a section titled “Violation at school during working hours”, states:

“It was also evident that large numbers of teachers that had experienced violence reported that this had occurred during working hours and at school. This is important since it has severe implications for the education system as a whole, and hence a contrast was carried out between those that reported that the violations had taken place at school during working hours and those that had not. Those reporting violations during working hours reported significantly more violations, with torture and rape being especially more frequent.

Those that expressed a political party preference, irrespective of the party, were significantly more likely to report that the violations had happened at school during working hours. They were also significantly more likely to have experienced a physical injury and to have reported this to the police. However, there was significantly higher probability that the police would either take no action or were sympathetic to the perpetrators. They were also more likely to have witnessed political violence and to have been forced to vote in an election or to have experienced violence during an election. However, both groups reported high frequencies of being forced to vote or experiencing violence violation in the June 2008 Presidential re-run. Those reporting violations during school hours were also more likely to report having witnessed violence, and obviously there was a higher probability that children would have witnessed violence and intimidation.” (Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) (25 May 2012) *Political violence and intimidation against teachers in Zimbabwe*)

A press lease from the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) states:

“Additionally, members of ZANU-PF have been accused of appropriating school and church buildings, furniture and vehicles for political rallies and campaigns, and forcing teachers and school children to attend political meetings. The Association of Rural Teachers Unions of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) lodged an urgent application, before the High Court of Zimbabwe, against ZANU-PF and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in June 2018 (the ‘Safe Schools’ case) detailing several specific incidents, including where rallies were held on school grounds, teachers and children were forced to attend rallies during school hours, benches and chairs were removed from classrooms. On 28 June 2018, the High Court delivered an order barring political parties from ‘asking, encouraging or forcing children in schools from attending political rallies, forcing teachers to attend rallies or to make financial contributions toward rallies, and using school property for rallies including school grounds, buses, furniture, etc.’ (World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) (27 July 2018) *Zimbabwe: Human rights defenders at risk as elections approach*)

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.

References:

Christian Aid (7 March 2007) *Aid agencies hit out at clampdown on Zimbabwe church groups*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/aid-agencies-hit-out-clampdown-zimbabwe-church-groups>

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Sources Consulted:

All Africa

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Electronic Immigration Network

European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UNHCR Refworld