



HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT



5 August - 5 September 2024

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Introduction

In this Human Rights Report, Heal Zimbabwe Trust takes a look into the state of human rights in the country and other key conflict issues for the month of August. Heal Zimbabwe receives reports from its trained Human Rights Monitors across the country.

State of Human Rights and National Outlook of Conflicts

The month of August saw a sharp rise in human rights violations and conflict, particularly those perpetrated by the state and its agencies. The period preceding the SADC summit was punctuated by arbitrary arrests, pretrial detention, abductions, intimidation and a litany of human rights violations targeting human rights defenders, prodemocracy voices, opposition activists and government critics. The crackdown on dissent was meant to shut down any prospects of citizens exercising the right to protest during the SADC summit. In the end, more than 160 citizens were arrested and charged with various offences with the underlying factor being that all of them were interrogated on their plans to protest during the summit.

Home Affairs Minister Kazembe Kazembe confirmed that the arrests and detention of government critics was meant to thwart the possibility of protests during the summit, stating that the government had “outplayed” them. Zanupf Spokesperson Christopher Mutsvangwa confirmed this was a crackdown when he said the arrested prodemocracy activists could now be released as the SADC summit was now over. These utterances, coupled with comments from other key government figures like George Charamba show that the arrests, detention and other human rights violations were less about law enforcement and more about clamping dissent.

In the month of August 2024, 41 prodemocracy activists were arrested in the SADC summit crackdown, cumulatively taking the number of detained government critics to 128 across the country. As the SADC summit approached there was surge in cases surveillance, threats and intimidation targeting government critics and opposition leaders. The human rights violations were concentrated in urban areas particularly Harare where the summit was hosted. The public media also played a role in warning and vilifying pro-democracy campaigners from demonstrating during the SADC summit while government officials openly threatened citizens against protesting. On the eve of the SADC summit, armed military and police officers were deployed in major cities and peri urban settlements cultivating a climate of fear. In Harare, citizens were assaulted by police officers and the Central Business District became a no go area.

State Perpetrated Human Rights Violations

Pretrial Detention

Pretrial incarceration has become a consistent feature in the crackdown on dissenting voices in Zimbabwe. This has been mainly done through the denial of bail applications and systemic inordinate delays in the handling of matters involving human rights defenders, opposition activists and government critics. As of 31 August 2024, a total of 128 opposition activists, prodemocracy campaigners and government critics were in pretrial detention in prisons in Harare, Mutare, Kariba, Masvingo, Gokwe and Bulawayo. These included:

- ✓ 76 CCC members arrested in June and had spent more than 80 days inside prison,
- ✓ 14 CCC members arrested in Kariba,
- ✓ 12 opposition supporters arrested in Mutare,
- ✓ 10 Gokwe residents,
- ✓ Civil society human rights defenders Namatai Kwekweza, Samuel Gwenzi, Robson Chere, and a DJ Vusimuzi Moyo who were abducted from Harare International Airport
- ✓ Calvin Muvheyi a student leader from Masvingo
- ✓ Civil society activist Darlington Madzonga
- ✓ Transform Zimbabwe leader Jacob Ngarivhume and cleric Kevin Nyamakanga. Heal Zimbabwe has condemned the prolonged detention of human rights defenders and government critics and characterized the prolonged detention -of government critics as punishment for dissent more than it is part of law enforcement. <https://www.healzimbabwetrust.org/pre-trial-detention-as-punishment-for-dissent/>.

Pretrial Detention

As had become the norm in July, arbitrary arrests of government critics in the month of August. Most of the arrests were linked to the crackdown in the run up to the SADC summit as government sought to pre-emptively quell the possibility of protest action. Heal Zimbabwe recorded 41 cases of arbitrary arrests of government critics with only 3 not directly linked to the SADC summit. In Mutare, 12 opposition supporters were arrested for allegedly gathering at a house and plotting to carry what the ZRP termed “acts of violence meant to disturb the successful hosting of the SADC summit”. In Gokwe, 10 opposition activists were arrested for allegedly protesting President Mnangagwa and his assumption of the SADC chairmanship. In Masvingo, student leader Calvin Muvheyi was arrested for allegedly organizing anti-government protests through a Whatsapp platform. In Hwange Promise Munkuli was arrested and detained for allegedly mobilizing citizens to protest President Mnangagwa’s SADC chairmanship while legislator Daniel Molokele and councillor Ellen Zulu were summoned by the police only to be released a few hours later. Bryne Nyoni was also arrested and held incommunicado by the police in Hwange who confiscated and violated his privacy going through his phone before releasing him into the custody of his lawyers. Transform Zimbabwe leader Jacob Ngarivhume was arrested together with Bishop Kelvin Nyamakanga and charged for allegedly participating in a gathering together with the CCC supporters arrested in June 2024. In Masvingo, two tourists Luka Slavia a Czech national and Tom Sselamwa a Ugandan were arrested for filming a video talking about water shortages. In Beitbridge, former Binga North legislator Prince Dubeko Sibanda was arrested at the border on allegations of inciting public violence while in Harare, CCC candidate for in the 2023 elections Last Chinodya, former Budiro legislator Costa Machingauta, prodemocracy activist Darlington Madzonga and former CCC candidate Tineyi Munetsi were arrested on various charges with the police interrogating them on their plans on alleged protests during the SADC summit. A Beitbridge man, Ezekiel Chiradza was arrested for allegedly undermining the authority of the president for a viral video he recorded himself accusing President Mnangagwa of economic mismanagement and the ZiG currency. These arrests are a mirror into the state of human rights in Zimbabwe as the country experiences further democratic backsliding.

Intimidation, threats and surveillance.

Intimidation has become a weapon of choice in the post Mugabe era in suppressing opposition voices while state surveillance on prominent human rights defenders and opposition activists is another intimidatory tactic used. In rural areas, opposition supporters are threatened with violence, death, denial of aid, loss of land and other unspecified action while in urban areas, human rights defenders and opposition activists are threatened with abductions, torture, arrests and constantly followed by suspected state security agents. As the SADC summit approached and the paranoia of the government over protests hit the ceiling, opposition supporters and government critics faced systemic intimidation and threats. In Harare, suspected state security agents visited the homes of Obert Masaraure and Job Sikhala and demanded to know their whereabouts, threatening their families.

Civil society organizations were not spared as truckloads of police officers raided the offices of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition and the Zimbabwe National Students Union, leaving handwritten notes that warned their leaders against demonstrating during the SADC summit. In total, Heal Zimbabwe recorded 17 cases of intimidation that was directly linked to the SADC summit and 12 incidents of surveillance of human rights defenders, opposition activists and prodemocracy campaigners. The SADC summit created a climate of fear around the country in general and government critics had to go into hiding for weeks.

Intimidation, threats and surveillance.

Enforced disappearances are a crime against international law. Heal Zimbabwe recorded one case of abduction in the month of August. Brighton Dzvoza an opposition political activist in Masvingo was abducted by suspected state security agents and tortured before being dumped at the Hippo Primary School gate. He was warned not to protest during the SADC summit.

Police brutality

State security agencies continue to abuse human rights even as they should be the first line of defence for citizens seeking protection. In Nkayi, 17-year-old Sabelo Dube was mauled by police dogs as police officers taunted him at Kenilworth.

arrested and thrown into remand prison when in need of medical attention only to be acquitted by the courts. In Harare, police officers went on a rampage on the eve of the summit and post the SADC summit assaulting people walking in the streets of Harare in the evening and revellers in night clubs in Dzivarasekwa, Kuwadzana, the Central Business District and Domboshava.

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Politically motivated conflicts in communities

SADC Summit related threats

Makoni Ward 39 and Ward 15

At around 0200 hours on the 15th of August, a team of unidentified men using a white unregistered Toyota GD6 visited and intimidated Anna Chivaka (CCC Candidate for Ward 15), Timothy Teka (human rights defender in Ward 15) and Taona Chikware (CCC activist in Ward 15) in Makoni. They claimed that they were from SADC and they wanted to see the above mentioned activists. This forced the three to flee into hiding. The vehicle was also spotted for days at Chiware, Rupfunde, and Chiwetu shopping centres instructing people not to participate in any demonstrations ahead of the SADC summit.

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Mbire Ward 12

Ahead of the SADC Summit, unmarked vehicles trailed known CCC activists in the area including Tendai Chadindika. Several activists fled from their areas after they had been visited at their homes. By 31 August, unmarked vehicles continue to be seen at business centers in the District.

Zaka Ward 7

During the second week of August, former opposition councillor Peter Imbayarwo received threats of violence over repeated phone calls by state security agents who accused him of mobilizing protests. He had to go into hiding.

Mutoko Ward 20

On the 15th of August, Mapako Mapengo notified the police of the intention to hold a protest during the SADC and he was followed around by state security agents who threatened him. He was then forced to go into hiding.

Partisan distribution of food aid

Zvimba South Ward 23

On 13 August, the department of social welfare distributed wheat and maize at Kuwadzana hall. However, the only people registered under ZANU PF structures received aid on that day.

Makoni Ward 39

On the 4th of September, community members who were known for supporting ZANU PF received food aid from the Department of Social Development at Chiwetu Rest Camp. This happened after Village Head Rupfunde held several meetings in the village telling people that he will exclude opposition and human rights activists from government food aid beneficiaries' list.

Gutu West Ward 2

On the 2nd of September 2024, Village head Mapuranga denied known opposition activists food aid that was coming from the Department of Social Development. During the month of August, Village head Mapuranga conducted several meetings, threatening to deny food aid to any individual who would join the SADC summit demonstrations in Harare.

Zvimba Ward 3

In August 2024, social welfare members were moving around the ward registering people for food aid. They were accompanied by ZANU PF members who kept telling community members that only ZANU PF members were allowed to register.

Bikita Ward 22

On August 31, ZANU-PF leaders including Margret Mushamba, Mhika, and Loice Mashanda told community members that social welfare food aid was coming from President Emmerson Mnangagwa and was meant for ZANU PF members only. They indicated this at Nyika Growth Point where the elderly were waiting for aid from the Department of Social Development.

Chivi South Ward 25

On the 27th of August 2024, Village Head George Mutote convened a meeting in the ward and openly declared that no opposition activist was going to receive food aid. On the 29th of August, he went on to distribute food aid in a partisan manner.

Forced participation in ZANU PF cell structures

Mutoko Ward 20

On the 13th of August, Councilor Batsirai Chitiyo compiled government food aid beneficiaries at a ZANU PF meeting, forcing vulnerable households to join ZANU PF. Children as young as 15 were recruited into ZANU PF cell structures to be able to access food aid.

Mudzi Ward 1

On the 15th of August, Nyamapanda, ZANU PF leader Nicholas Madzinga, War veteran Antony Madzinga and businessman Kamonera are forcing ordinary citizens to join cell structures threatening to ensure no food aid comes to those who do not.

Mudzi Ward 1

Chief Gorongo continues to intimidate people and compromise the distribution of food aid from government. On 2 September 2024, Chief Gorongo he convened a meeting at his homestead and highlighted that the food aid that was coming from the Department of Social Development was meant only for ZANU PF supporters. He went on to announce that community members were supposed to pay US\$1 towards payment of guards at a local Council clinic. Failure to do so would result in denial of food aid.

Makoni (Ward 39)

On the 17th of August, Diana Mupoperi (ZANU PF activist) gathered Rupfunde, Madziva and Jombo villages at Manonga Secondary School where she forced community members to join ZANU PF cell structure for them to receive food aid from the Department of Social Development. She held the same meeting at Nyanhete shopping centre with community members from Zindoga, Dambi, and Zigori villages and repeated the same message. She indicated that only ZANU PF cell structure members will be allowed to use the community borehole at Zindoga Primary School which was drilled under the Presidential borehole drilling initiative.

Interventions by Heal Zimbabwe Trust

1 Provided hot meals daily together with hygiene and sanitary wear for all the detained 128 human rights defenders throughout their period of incarceration.

2 Facilitated temporary relocation funds for 16 human rights defenders who faced imminent threats to their security.

3 Provided safe shelter for one human rights defender and his family who faced threats of violence from state security agents.

4 Referred one case of violence for medical support.

5 Released a statement condemning the pre-SADC summit crackdown and calling for an end to the crackdown. The statement can be accessed here



<https://www.healzimbabwetrust.org/heal-zimbabwe-statement-on-the-deteriorating-human-rights-situation-in-the-country/>

1. Heal Zimbabwe held online discussions with its community peace clubs, Early Warning and Early Response Committees clarifying the Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy emphasizing on the need to monitor food aid distribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the quest for a peaceful, socially cohesive Zimbabwe where human rights are promoted, protected and respected, Heal Zimbabwe recommends that the following be done:

Judiciary



The courts must be impartial and apolitical. All political prisoners must be released, and their politically motivated charges dropped.

The Department of Social Development



The Social welfare department must distribute food aid in an impartial manner without regard to the political affiliations of potential beneficiaries. The distribution of food aid must be informed and guided by the Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission



The ZHRC's silence in the face of escalating human rights violations is loud. The Commission must live up to its constitutional obligations to promote the respect of human rights. The commission must investigate cases of human rights violations.

The Police

The Zimbabwe Republic Police must protect instead of violating the rights of citizens. The police must be impartial, executing their duties in a fair, nonpartisan manner. Heal Zimbabwe calls for government to ensure that all police officers act in accordance with the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and enforce the law guided by Section 219 of the constitution that outlines their constitutional obligations. Furthermore, the police must protect the citizens instilling confidence in our justice system.



SADC

The Southern African Development Community must rein in on Zimbabwe to investigate the violations of human rights that were perpetrated in the name of the 44th Ordinary summit. The human rights abuses and culture of fear is antithetical to the principles of democracy, peace and the promotion of human rights enshrined in Article 4 of the SADC Treaty.







Government

The Government of Zimbabwe must end the crackdown on dissent and respect human rights. Cabinet ministers must cease from issuing threatening statements, and instead take the lead in unifying the nation. Government must investigate the human rights abuses especially abductions perpetrated in the run up to the SADC summit.



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