

12 April 1990

ZIMBABWE

After the general election

Opposition politicians detained and beaten

In the two weeks since Zimbabwe's general elections, police and intelligence officials have arrested opposition party members, including a parliamentary candidate and an election agent, in at least three separate incidents. Members of the ruling party have burned houses and threatened opposition supporters, while police have refused to take action against the offenders.

Paul Razika, election agent for Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) candidate Patrick Kombayi in the town of Gweru, was arrested on 5 April and is detained without charge under the state of emergency at Mkoba police station. In January 1990 Razika, who is ZUM youth chairman for Midlands Province, was detained for more than a week.

Emergency powers which have been in place for a quarter of a century allow the Zimbabwe Government to detain indefinitely without charge.

The real reason for Razika's detention would appear to be that he objected to the improper intervention of both the CIO and the President in the election campaign in Gweru. He was witness to one of the most violent incidents of the election campaign.

The Gweru ZUM candidate, Patrick Kombayi, is seriously ill in hospital in Bulawayo after being shot six times on the Saturday before the election. One bullet passed through his genitals and another shattered his femur. He alleges that he was ambushed by officials of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO). Paul Razika was travelling in the same car as Kombayi at the time of the shooting and is therefore a crucial witness. Earlier the same day the ZUM election director, Jerry Nyambuya, was beaten up, apparently by CIO officials, bundled into the boot of a car and left for dead on a dirt road. Kombayi was standing against the Vice-President, Simon Muzenda. A few days beforehand President Robert Mugabe had issued a presidential decree redrawing constituency boundaries to exclude ZUM's main area of support.

Kombayi is under police guard in the hospital. Police on duty have attempted to be present while he instructs his lawyer. Public statements by members of the government suggest that there is no intention of investigating his shooting, nor of prosecuting those responsible.

On 7 April two ZUM officials were arrested in Bulawayo. Kembo Dube Bango, a youth district chairman, and Soft Nhari, an election agent, were taken by plain-clothes officials to Stops Camp, a police and CIO detention centre in Bulawayo notorious as a place of torture in the mid-1980s. Bango and Nhari claim that they were seriously beaten in custody, an allegation which is supported by the evidence of a subsequent medical examination. Bango has bruises to the chest and buttocks and Nhari has an arm injury. Both men were released without charge on 8 April.

Newman Ndlela, the defeated ZUM candidate in Insiza, was arrested in Bulawayo at 1 am on 7 April. He was also taken to Stops Camp by members of the Police Internal Security and Intelligence (PISI). The word *pisi* means "hyena" in Sindebele, the language spoken in Bulawayo and the rest of the Matabeleland area of Zimbabwe. After the last general elections in 1985 PISI was responsible for widespread arrests and torture of opposition party supporters.

Ndlela was taken to Nkayi, some 75 miles from Bulawayo. On 10 April a lawyer flew to Nkayi to take instructions from him. When the police heard that the lawyer was on his way Ndlela was driven at speed back to Bulawayo, where he was refused access to a lawyer until he had made a signed statement. He was then taken to court to plead on a charge of illegal possession of arms of war - still without a lawyer being notified. In fact, his lawyer got wind of his appearance in court and was able to interrupt proceedings, thus forestalling the police's apparent intention that Ndlela should plead guilty. The following day Ndlela was released on bail.

Newman Ndlela is a former member of the minority Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) who was detained without charge in the early 1980s. In December 1987 ZAPU agreed to merge with the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Ndlela opposed the unification and in 1989 set up the Zimbabwe Active People's Unity, with the same acronym as the old ZAPU. However, in the election he threw in his lot with the main opposition party, ZUM, which was formed in April 1989.

In the general elections on 28-30 March ZANU-PF won all but three out of 119 seats contested. According to independent reports the polling and counting of votes appears to have been conducted fairly, but the election took place in an atmosphere of sustained harassment and intimidation of ZUM. In a memorandum to

President Robert Mugabe before the start of the election campaign, Africa Watch listed a number of cases of detention without charge of ZUM members, as well as repeated bans on the party's public meetings. The memorandum also cited evidence of an internal police meeting at which it was decided to recruit special constables from ZANU-PF "so that we have enough force for the next coming general elections."

During the election campaign President Mugabe publicly threatened to fire civil servants who voted for ZUM and castigated the ZANU-PF youth for being too docile. "Don't you have fists?" he said. An independent human rights organization, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, reported a number of violent attacks by ZANU-PF members against the opposition and criticized the ruling party for the inflammatory tone of its speeches and election advertising. One ZANU-PF television advertisement showed a car crash. The voice-over said: "That is one way to die. Another way to die is to vote for ZUM. Don't commit suicide. Vote ZANU-PF and live."

Since the election large bands of ZANU-PF members have demonstrated in a number of towns, burning houses belonging to known ZUM members and demanding their dismissal from their jobs. Such demonstrations have taken place in Chegutu, Rusape and the massive township of Chitungwiza, just outside Harare. Police are reported to have stood by and refused to intervene to defend ZUM members and their property. In similar post-election violence in 1985 several members of the then opposition party, ZAPU, were killed by ZANU-PF mobs.

The stated intention of President Mugabe and ZANU-PF is to use the result of the election as a mandate to introduce a one-party state, possibly on the tenth anniversary of Zimbabwe's independence on 18 April or shortly thereafter. Africa Watch fears that the introduction of a single party system could be the signal for the widespread detention of opposition supporters.

What you can do to help

Please write politely worded letters to the Zimbabwe government authorities listed below:

- calling for the unconditional and immediate release of Paul Razika;
- urging the immediate investigation of the beating in custody of Kembo Dube Bango and Soft Nhari, with a view to awarding them compensation and bringing criminal charges against those responsible;
- calling for an independent judicial inquiry into the full

circumstances surrounding the shooting of Patrick Kombayi, as well as a speedy conclusion to police investigations and the bringing of criminal charges against those responsible;

- urging that the government state clearly and publicly its abhorrence of violence and witch-hunts against opposition supporters and that the police take all necessary action to protect the lives and property of ZUM supporters, including criminal prosecutions of those responsible for the threats and arson which have so far taken place.

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Africa Watch is a non-governmental organization created in May 1988 to monitor human rights practices in Africa and to promote respect for internationally recognized standards. Its Executive Director is Rakiya Omaar; Richard Carver is Research Director; Alex de Waal is Research Consultant; Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen are Research Associates.

Africa Watch is part of Human Rights Watch, an organization that also comprises Americas Watch, Asia Watch and Helsinki Watch. The Chairman of Human Rights Watch is Robert L Bernstein and the Vice-Chairman is Adrian DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, the Deputy Director is Kenneth Roth, Holly Burkhalter is Washington Director, Susan Osnos is Press Director and Joyce Mends-Cole is Counsel to Human Rights Watch.

Africa Watch publications on Zimbabwe

- * Lawyer and opposition politicians detained (News from Africa Watch, 13 June 1989)
- * Release of Detainees (News from Africa Watch, 4 July 1989)
- * Trade unionists and politicians detained; Government closes university, arrests student leaders (News from Africa Watch, 12 October 1989)
- * Government defies courts to hold trade unionist, students; University reopened but student activity curbed (News from Africa Watch, 23 October 1989)
- * *A Break with the Past - Human Rights and Political Unity* (Africa Watch Report, October 1989)
- * Harassment of opposition party members; Africa Watch calls for election safeguards (News from Africa Watch, 21 March 1990) bans on the party's public meetings. The memorandum also cited evi