



**Organised Violence & Torture Report**  
**January 2017**

**By the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum**

## **ACRONYMS**

CBD	Central Business District
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
GALZ	Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai
NAVUZ	National Vendors’ Union of Zimbabwe
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
OVT	Organized Violence and Torture
UYO	Unemployed Youth Organisation
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZimPF	Zimbabwe People First
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

## Introduction

The Zimbabwe social, political and economic situation remains fragile, which has a debilitating effect on citizens' livelihood and well-being. As the country moves towards the 2018 elections, stakes have risen and structures of violence are beginning to emerge. The Bikita West by- election pointed to potential violence in the upcoming 2018 presidential elections. The by-election was characterised by a violent pre-election environment. The electorate was subjected to many forms of violence, including harassment and intimidation, assaults, partisan distribution of food aid and farming inputs, disruption of political gatherings among other forms of violence.<sup>1</sup> According to Heal Zimbabwe, harassment and intimidation topped the list of violations. The Masvingo Provincial Affairs Minister, Shuvai Mahofa, threatened to unleash violence and abductions if the electorate voted against ZANU PF.<sup>2</sup>

Electoral violence and intimidation in Zimbabwe has a historical precedent. Harassment and intimidation was prevalent during the 2013 harmonised elections, in which the electorate was constantly reminded by ZANU PF supporters of the violent 2008 elections and threatened with a repeat of the same if they voted otherwise. Harassment and intimidation negatively impacts on the enjoyment of fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, association and assembly.

The economy is gradually sliding into the abyss of failure. The spiraling unemployment rate, exacerbated by the closure of industries, has relegated most Zimbabweans into abject poverty. Systemic corruption in the public sector by political elites worsened the situation, as national resources were diverted into the pockets of a few politically connected individuals, at the expense of the provision of essential public services to the majority of Zimbabweans. In the 2016 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index Zimbabwe was ranked 154 out of 176 countries.<sup>3</sup> On the social front there is poor service delivery, which in January resulted in the outbreak of typhoid. A total of two (2) deaths and over 132 cases of typhoid were officially reported. The Harare Municipal Police, with the assistance of the Zimbabwe Republic Police, continued with its clampdown on vendors in an operation meant to clean the city of Harare in an attempt to contain the Typhoid outbreak. However, the removal of vendors from streets did not deal with the root cause of typhoid, which is poor service delivery, and the shortage of clean and safe water.

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<sup>1</sup> See on Bikita West by –election report, Heal Zimbabwe, available on <http://www.healzimbabwe.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Bikita-West-By-election-REPORT.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2017/01/07/mahofa-threatens-election-violence>

<sup>3</sup> Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2016, available on [http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2016](http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016)

## Summary of Violations

In January 2017, **28** new victims of Organised Violence and Torture (OVT) were reported and documented from across the country. This figure includes 13 victims from Mbada Diamond Mine base, who were detained and tortured by members of the Police Support Unit. Other cases were of violence that occurred in the following areas: Bikita: two cases were documented following the assault on National Constitutional Assembly candidate for the Bikita West by- election Maddock Chivasa and his election agent Thomas Mudzamiri by ZANU PF supporters; Harare: nine cases were documented. Most of the cases involve the indiscriminate arrest and torture of vendors by ZRP, working with Harare Municipal Police. The clampdown on vendors was precipitated by the outbreak of typhoid in Harare. Some isolated cases of violence were also recorded in Chikomba, Chitungwiza, Epworth and Norton.

Violations during the month were in the form of torture, harassment and intimidation, violation of the right to equality and non-discrimination, assault and arbitrary arrest. The table below summarises cases of OVT for January.

**NB:** The following notes should be put into consideration when reading these cases:

- *Human rights violations contained in this report are derived from statements made to the Forum's Public Interest Unit, its member and partner organisations.*
- *The identities of victims whose names have not been published in the press and are not public officials are protected. This is done in order to protect the victim from further violence, intimidation and possible reprisals.*
- *The Report cannot be considered as the exhaustive record of all incidents of politically-motivated violence in Zimbabwe in the period under review. Nevertheless, every incident reported to the Forum directly or through its members is meticulously documented and included in the report.*

**Table 2: Reported Incidents of OVT January 2017**

Date	Violation	Violation Narration	Number of victims	Perpetrator
01 Jan	Assault	ZANU-PF supporters in Epworth assaulted an MDC-T activist. The perpetrators accused him of wearing MDC-T party regalia.	1	ZANU-PF Supporters
08 Jan	Torture	Three (3) men were severely assaulted by members of the Police Support Unit at Mbada Diamond Base in the Chiyadzwa diamond fields, after they were caught illegally mining diamonds	3	ZRP
09 Jan	Assault	A vendor who sells his wares close to Harvest House (MDC-T Headquarters) was attacked by ZANU-PF supporters, who	1	ZANU-PF Supporters

		were driving through the streets in a truck, chanting party slogans.		
12 Jan	Intimidation	ZANU-PF supporters threatened to burn down the homestead of an MDC-T ward official in Chikomba who had hosted an MDC-T meeting at her home the previous day.	1	ZANU-PF Supporter
16 Jan	Discrimination	A 20-year-old male member of Gays & Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) was threatened with physical harm by members of his own family on the basis of his sexual orientation.	1	Unknown
19 Jan	Torture	Members of the Police Support Unit at Chiyadzwa diamond fields tortured Six (6) people. The victims were accused of illegally mining diamonds.	6	ZRP
19 Jan	Assault	ZANU-PF supporters at Nyika Business Centre assaulted the NCA party candidate for the Bikita West by-election Maddock Chivasa and his election agent. Thomas Mudzamiri	2	ZANU-PF Supporters
20 Jan	Assault	Unknown assailants in Chitungwiza attacked a member of the Zimbabwe People First party.	1	Unknown
20 Jan	Torture	Two (2) men accused of illegally mining diamonds in the Chiyadzwa diamond fields were severely assaulted and detained overnight by members of the Police Support Unit.	2	ZRP
21 Jan	Torture	A man accused of illegally mining diamonds was severely assaulted by members of the Police Support Unit.	1	ZRP
22 Jan	Assault	An MDC-T supporter was assaulted by ZANU-PF youths at the 4 <sup>th</sup> Street Bus Terminus in Harare. The victim was wearing a ZimRights t-shirt, which carried a message against political violence. They accused him of supporting the MDC-T.	1	ZANU-PF Supporters
24 Jan	Assault	A vendor was assaulted by Harare Municipal Police near Harvest House, the MDC-T Headquarters, in Harare. The victim was selling books when he was attacked. All the books were taken away.	1	Municipal Police
26 Jan	Assault	A member of the public was assaulted by Harare Municipal Police officers for questioning the assault of a female vendor. He was taken to the Municipal Police headquarters where he was assaulted.	1	Municipal Police
26 Jan	Assault & arbitrary arrest	Members of the Harare Municipal Police in the Harare CBD assaulted a female vendor. She was then taken to their offices along Coventry road, where she was handed over to ZRP police officers, who released her, noting that they had no charges against her.	1	Municipal Police & ZRP
26 Jan	Assault	A female vendor was attacked by municipal police officers along Julius Nyerere Road, in Harare. She was only saved when members of the public intervened.	1	Municipal Police
29 Jan	Assault	ZANU-PF supporters in Kambuzuma suburb in Harare attacked a member of the Unemployed Youth Organisation. The perpetrators accused him of influencing people to vote against President Mugabe in 2018.	1	ZANU-PF Supporters
30 Jan	Torture	Gershem Wakapira and another vendor who sell their goods close to Harvest House (MDC-T Headquarters) were severely assaulted by members of the ZRP police in civilian clothing and Riot Police. One victim was attacked on the spot. He sustained serious wounds in the head. The other victim was taken to the Harare Central Police Station, where he was	2	ZRP

		severely tortured.		
31 Jan	Torture	Kudakwashe Makarutse a vendor was attacked by police officers at Harvest House (MDC-T Headquarters). The police officers broke his leg.	1	ZRP

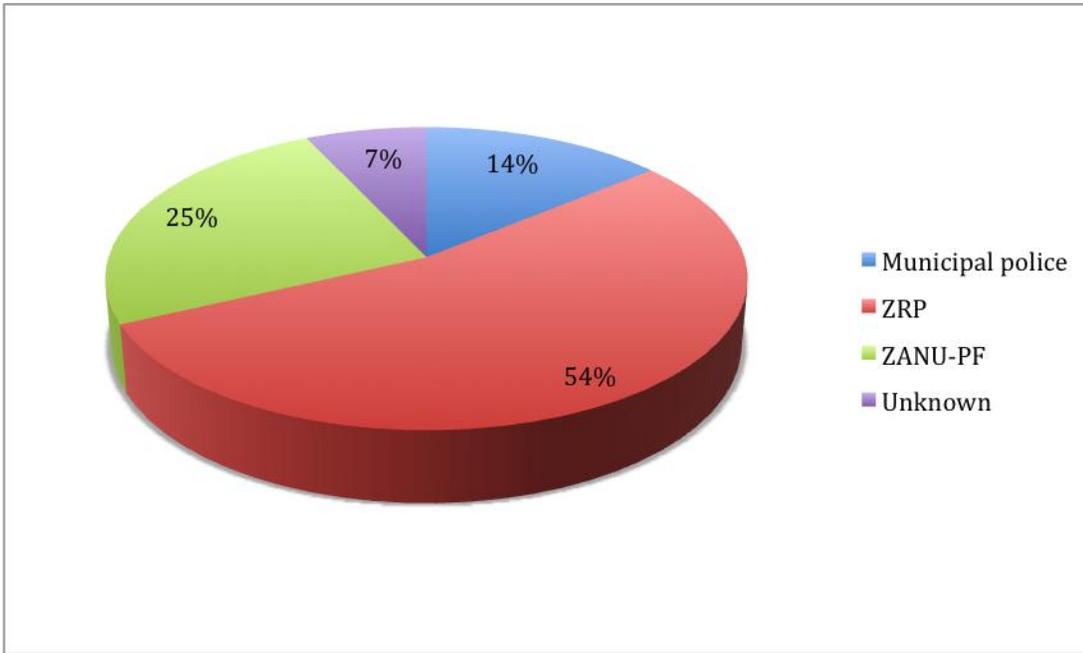
The nature of the violations, the victims and the perpetrator category are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Nature of violations**

Nature of violation	No of victims	Perpetrator category
Torture	15	ZRP
Assault	10	Municipal police, ZANU-PF supporters, and unknown
Arbitrary arrest	1	ZRP
Harassment & intimidation	1	ZANU-PF Supporters
Violation of the right to equality and non-discrimination	1	Unknown

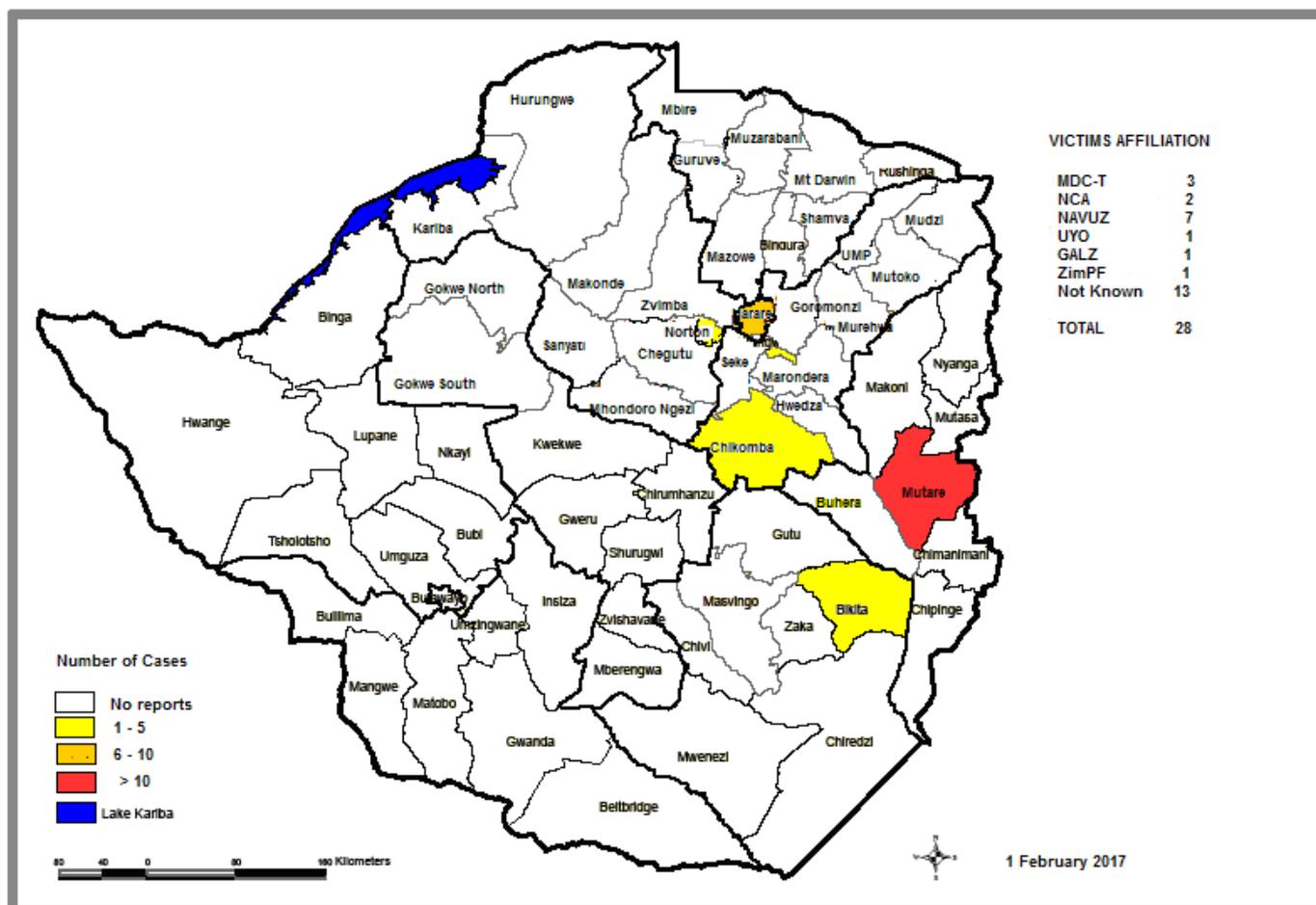
The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) was the main perpetrator of violence during the month. The violence attributed to the ZRP shows evidence of torture, a crime prohibited in International Human Rights Law. Torture violates an individual's self-worth and the right to personal liberty, human dignity, personal security and freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment; rights that are all protected in the Constitution of Zimbabwe. It is sad to note that, although the Constitution of Zimbabwe outlaws torture, the government is yet to criminalize torture and ratify the United Nations Convention Against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and its Optional Protocol. It also remains a cause of concern that rights continue to be violated with no justice being done to the victims. For example, in the case of Chivasa and Mudzamiri, the case was reported to the police but neither investigations nor arrests were made although the perpetrators were identified.

**Figure 1: Perpetrators of violence by institution affiliation**



The ZRP accounted for 54% of the violence that occurred in January, followed by ZANU-PF which accounted for 25%, the Harare Municipal police and unknown accounted for 14% and 7% respectively.

Figure 1: Map showing the distribution of OVT in Zimbabwe January 2017



## **CONCLUSION**

The violent scenario that prevailed during the Bikita West by elections held on 21 January to March points to the potential for violence in the general elections to be held in 2018. The political environment was characterized by intolerance as demonstrated by the harassment and intimidation of opposition political supporters, activists and individuals. Resorting to violence is aggravated by the prevailing impunity for perpetrators of violence, which continue to be a threat to the enjoyment of civil and political rights. The government must also prioritize the ratification of UNCAT and its Optional Protocol in order to halt the use of torture by State agents.