

Ceaseless abuse of our President: a major outstanding issue

By Tagwirei W. Bango

Any chief executive dreads the day when immediate subordinates and staff turn into a gadfly, especially with the tacit direction and blessing of the board. When internally generated executive abuse becomes visible to shareholders, striking at the heart of patience and motivation, it is folly for a model principal to remain silent in the forlorn hope that tomorrow shall sort itself out.

The essence of a legitimate and a successful national election is either a confirmation of the status quo or outright regime change. Even, in a traditional African setting, leadership succession in royal families is a given, positive step for communal and national stability. When Zimbabweans settled for President Morgan Tsvangirai as their first choice for leadership in the initial plebiscite whose results were clearly and deliberately distorted by the incumbent and his institutions last year, the people openly rejected the dominant political fiasco -- for regime change. President Tsvangirai has since been vindicated; his short record and copious patience in a clearly loveless union has spawned a temporary stabiliser; national temperance; and optimism, at home and even beyond.

For close to 270 days, President Tsvangirai – the man who won Zimbabwe's Presidential election on March 29, 2008 – has endured so much executive abuse that many thought he could throw in the towel within hours of his being sworn-in as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe. Cracks emerged early, hardly before the ink had dried up after the curiously called Global Political Agreement was signed.

Neither the abduction and torture of activist Jestina Mukoko and several of President Tsvangirai agents nor the confusion at his swearing in ceremony at State House and the first arrest of Roy Bennett achieved an expected effect.

The slow recognition of President Tsvangirai's new official role by security service chiefs attracted mealy mouthed attention and no sanction from expected quarters when convention and the Constitution are normally unkind to such foul public manners.

Commander-in-chief Robert Mugabe, who presided over the ceremony, seemed unable to notice the absence of his top military brass. To Zimbabweans that meant little compared to a record-breaking climb-down and a rare act of capitulation by one of Africa's remaining strongmen and a former liberation war idol. The people urged Tsvangirai on; reflecting a national sentiment that irked a trembling few. Since then, state-sanctioned and celebrated abuse on our President has never ceased.

Given the depth of the meltdown, perhaps President Tsvangirai erred in assuming unfettered political goodwill and an affirmative institutional hug to see through a process that mirrored the changing milieu. But eight months into a union, he remains officially homeless together with Speaker Lovemore Moyo and all his out-of- Harare ministers and officials. Suggestions for executive appointments in his office have to be vetted and approved; and so far only four out of the proposed 11 have passed. We are told, ad nauseum, and even by Mugabe himself that he runs a parallel state administration with only four civil servants officially accepted into his office thus far, in a country that employs more than a quarter of a million public servants.

Mugabe insists he must first clear President Tsvangirai's travel plans. But Mugabe never returns the favour, nor consults him on his numerous foreign forays. Mugabe determines the weekly Cabinet agenda, as all requests for public debate; policy clarity and national issues for inspection have to pass through the President's office.



"I have seen it all," President Tsvangirai seems to be saying to the recalcitrant officer

Unilateral Zanu PF decisions; sweeping policy shifts, positions and statements; dubious state-sanctioned actions and arrests of political activists; and partisan directives are often dumped on President Tsvangirai's desk devoid of courtesy or prior consultation. Government institutions are forced to mask a unique Zanu PF concern; symbols of change are either downplayed or simply put off; routine state business is either privatised or coated with Zanu PF paint; board and staff appointments at public companies are re-furrowed to an old boys' network; and policy generation and execution is still largely an exclusive Zanu PF affair.

A traditional Zanu PF bureaucracy still rules the roost, even though a ministerial portfolio may officially be under an MDC politician. Even at local government level, all the top executives are either Zanu PF activists or they sympathise with that party. They determine the agenda for action and implement decisions at a pace and under a strict direction of Minister Ignatious Chombo and Zanu PF because of deliberate legislative distortions.

Propaganda frames and blame abound - all directed at Tsvangirai – and, specifically to show all that nothing of significance in the area of governance has changed. Despite his commitment

to work, a deceptive, over-boiled line that kept Zanu PF together about President Tsvangirai's past is often beamed and repeated, to thread a restless and confused Zanu PF constituency together. New poisoned arrows point at his legitimacy and credibility daily, ready to wreak havoc on his executive authority.

The Council of Ministers (CoM) and the National Security Council (NSC) are the only two significant power centres and institutions set up under the GPA. Tsvangirai is supposed to chair the CoM and (on paper) is an indispensable player in the NSC. I shall leave discussion on the two to another date; suffice to say the old Joint Operations Command (JOC) is still very alive. The CoM has yet to cut its teeth into the political fray. The other important institution is JOMIC. With all due respect, it is pointless to bring this body into this debate.

President Tsvangirai faces an enormous character test to survive the vicious temper of a raging current as he swims against a well-honed and tested dose of political wickedness, insincerity and executive abuse. Zimbabwe is in danger as the terrain the country's Prime Minister is up against presents a fresh, irregular dilemma at every turn.

When a spouse packs a few bags and leaves a matrimonial home, the decision

hardly resides in a latest abusive event. Experienced conflict managers search deeper for telling words beneath the song before fostering counsel. President Tsvangirai maintains that he is still in the matrimonial home. He only came out of the closet to allow Zimbabweans and their neighbours access into a troubled home. Tsvangirai's most vocal, public critics should know better: almost all of them have performed dismally in their private, once voluntary marriages. They know from armpit experience the difficulties of voluntary marriages, let alone those of forced loveless unions.

As a genuine partner, President Tsvangirai needs space, sovereignty and sense of inclusion to remain true to his executive mandate. Zanu PF and Mugabe are unable to explain Zimbabwe today to their traditional supporters. Still trapped in the nostalgic view that they are still solely in power, the fear of regime change has become their belated war cry. When Mugabe dined with "tea-boy, chamatama Tsvangirai" in 2008, he realised late that he had swallowed his own bile by surrendering 28 years of unrestrained political supremacy. That day is historic in that Mugabe fully accepted an irreversible process towards regime change.

The GPA clearly identifies the political players in charge of the present caretaker regime in Zimbabwe. In the national interest, the inclusive government shall facilitate a new Constitution, a dispute-less election and a definite change of regime: a legitimate government from a visionary party.

Today's horse and donkey blend has given us a mule -- a mule cannot reproduce itself. President Tsvangirai can't change and replace a regime he leads. Mugabe can't change or replace a regime he is part of as a president by negotiation. And either will have to give way in a few moons time – for regime change! Slowly and frustratingly, but surely, change is definitely coming to Zimbabwe. 🙌

Letters to the Editor

Where is justice for Jestina?

Dear Editor

Jestina Mukoko and other activists were abducted, tortured and illegally detained on trumped up charges of banditry and terrorism. The state controlled media made a lot of noise about the charges. Today Jestina Mukoko walks free and the state controlled media has become deaf and dumb. Is this the Zimbabwe we want?

I am a Zimbabwean and this is not what I want. As a Zimbabwean I cant wait to see the day that the people responsible for tormenting Mukoko and others in court and who knows maybe having a life sentence hovering over them. I might not be well versed with the Zimbabwean laws but I believe these violaters of law deserve a life sentence as what they did was illegal and that is banditry at its best. It seems we have our own Bin Laden's in Zimbabwe walking around with state badges. We want security in Zimbabwe. I want to cast my vote without fear of victimisation.

If the people who are supposed to be protecting us are the ones victimising us then who do we turn to? As a Zimbabwean, I feel betrayed by Zanu PF. We all know that such thuggery can only emanate from Zanu PF.

We want real change, real freedom and real security. I put my hopes on MDC to deliver such and I urge real Zimbabweans to do so too without fear for God is on our side and democracy is in our hands.

Thomas Toda
Harare

RIP Hon. Nyamande

Dear Editor

I want to extend my condolences to the Nyamande family, the people of Makoni Central, the MDC family and everyone who ever came across this gallant son of Manicaland. He was a fighter, a humble man who put the people first in all his dealings. His service to the party will for ever be cherished. He was a good man, a hard working educator, business man, father and brother. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Mbuya Myambo
Makoni

Kudos to The Changing Times

Dear Editor

I want to thank you for The Changing Times you are giving us free of charge. This paper is helping us here in Matuka village as it has become our own source of news. Keep it up. This paper is even allowing village leaders to sit down and discuss issues affecting our areas and how we can help develop our country from an informed position.

Rangarirai Tarubva
Bikita 🙌

MDC supporters denied aid in Goromonzi

GOROMONZI - Renowned Zanu PF members and AREX officials in Goromonzi West constituency, Mashonaland East Province are distributing aid along partisan lines, denying known MDC supporters food aid and agricultural inputs.

MDC supporters in Ward 4, have been denied agricultural inputs and food aid while ward 3 and 5, which are close to the farms and perceived to have a significant representation of Zanu PF members, received the aid.

The Farmers Communal Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ) is distributing

maize, fertilizer, 10kgs of sugarbeans, and two bags of top dressing to 3000 households in each rural constituency in a humanitarian intervention. AREX, which is responsible for submitting names of those that are supposed to benefit, has been tinkering with the lists, disenfranchising known MDC supporters from the scheme.

FTCZ national coordinator, Abraham Makoni, said AREX officials were deliberately excluding some well known MDC members in that area.

"I only received names from wards 3 and 5 from Mr. Matipano, the Goromonzi

Arex coordinator and we gave the aid to the names that were submitted to us" Makoni said.

The aid, which was meant to be given to female headed families and orphans, has been subjected to partisan distribution, with Zanu PF claiming credit for sourcing the aid.

Asked if there was anything that could be done to rectify this, Makoni said: "It is unfortunate that this year, our aid is finished. If there are any alterations and amendments, it will be for next year. We were not told why ward 4 was left out or why the aid was given in wards

instead of picking 3000 underprivileged families from the whole rural constituency," he said.


Councillor for ward 4 in Goromonzi West, Martha Nhamburo said the discrimination along party lines was unfortunate and unfair as this will cause more difficulty on the people of her ward.

"It is going to be very difficult for us to explain this to the people since everyone is eager to get the inputs following the previous year's drought."

Speaking to *The Changing Times* on condition of anonymity, one AREX

official said that they were given instruction to skip ward 4 as it is home to the MDC Minister for Public Works and Social Amenities Hon. Theresa Makone and her husband, Mr. Ian Makone, the permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Chinyika Village in ward 16, Goromonzi North, which is a stronghold of the MDC, was also left out in the inputs distribution scheme.

Reports suggest the practice is also rife in Masvingo province, where AREX officials are reported to be gathering names from Zanu-PF sympathizers for the distribution of farm inputs leaving out MDC supporters. 

MDC Ministers' Forum

Home Affairs Minister Mutsekwa speaks out

HARARE - The co-Home Affairs Minister, Hon. Giles Mutsekwa, says a number of sulking residual elements in the State security service are scuttling the work of the inclusive government by resisting the new political dispensation.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with *The Changing Times* in Harare on Tuesday, Hon. Mutsekwa said nine months after the formation of the inclusive government, he found it strange that State security agents continued to abduct, torture and arrest innocent MDC and human rights defenders across the country.

"There are so many arresting authorities in the country who are violating the Constitution by abducting and torturing people unlawfully. We have the police, the army and the Central Intelligence Organisation," he said.

"These three State security organs are involved in the abduction of innocent people who they pick-up, detain for torture then surrender them at a police station for them to be brought to court.

"That is why you find that most cases involving abductions and torture that are brought before the courts are thrown out due to lack of evidence," he said.

Minister Mutsekwa said torture of any kind was unforgivable.

"I know how painful and evil it is as I have in the past gone through that. It is deplorable and it should never happen" he said.

However, Hon. Mutsekwa said he was pushing for national reforms in the country and soon the National Security Council, which held its first and only meeting four months ago, would now meet every month as mandated in the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

"But what we really need to do is to come up with a new Constitution. We have three centres of power that govern the operations of the police. President Robert Mugabe and the Attorney-General can order police officers to effect an investigation and arrest without the co-ministers of Home Affairs knowing," he said.

Minister Mutsekwa is a co-Minister with Zanu PF's Kembo Mohadi.

He said when an MDC guest house in Chisipite, Harare, was raided on spurious grounds by over 50 armed police who had no search warrant last month, he only got to know about the raid after it had occurred.

"In any democracy, the minister of Home Affairs is the one who should give a directive for a raid. But in Zimbabwe we have an anomaly. That is why you find the police using live bullets against defenceless people after being given unprofessional orders," he said referring to the recent shooting of striking Shabanie Mine workers in Zvishavane by the police.

Touching on the performance of his ministry since he took over co-Home Affairs Minister, Hon. Mutsekwa said the period had been "some experience."

"The Home Affairs ministry was one of the ministries that brought arguments

and contestation during the distribution of key ministries and it is the only one of the ministries that is shared between the MDC and Zanu PF. That alone tells you it is not an ordinary ministry," he said.

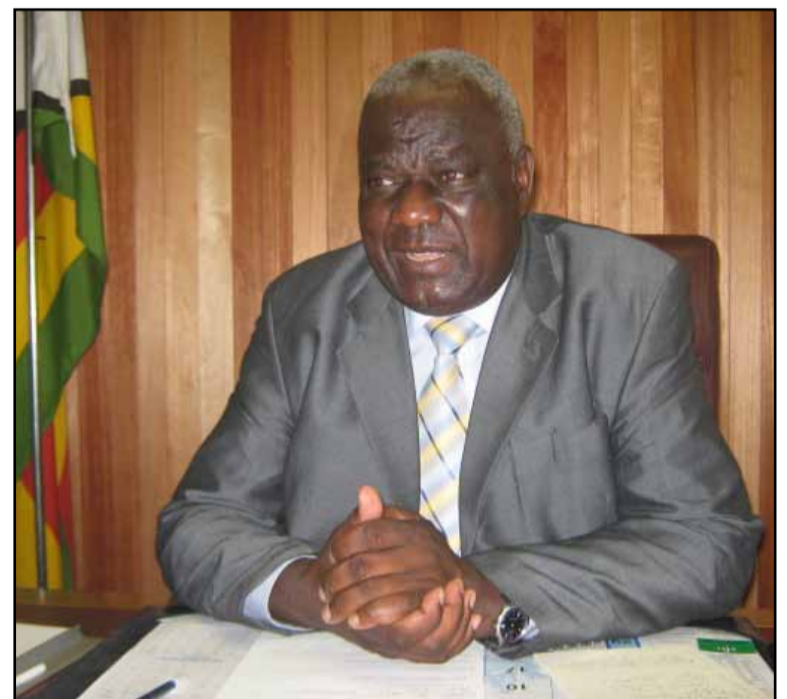
Other departments that are under the Home Affairs ministry are; the Registrar-General's Office, the Immigration Department and the Department of Museums and National Monuments.

"The entire civil service including the police had been purged when I got into office and those who were perceived to have MDC links were dismissed and this created problems when I got into office.

"However, this has changed as I have managed to fit in fairly well in the ministry. The majority of the civil servants now know that it is important to nurture the inclusive government because it is the only way that can bring real change to the country," he said.

Among his major achievements since getting into office has been the reduction of passports from an astronomical US\$650.00 to US\$160.00 and Minister Mutsekwa has promised further reduction before the end of the year.

Minister Mutsekwa said he had also managed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with his South African counterpart to regularise the stay of millions of Zimbabweans who had fled the country due to political persecution at the hands of the Zanu PF regime and the crumbling economy.



Home Affairs Minister Hon Giles Mutsekwa

He also said there was an urgent need to update the national voters' roll as it was chaotic and in shambles.

"If you look at the current voters' roll, it is in shambles and Zanu PF was using it as the main rigging centre. There are lots of ghost voters, people who died a long time ago are still on the voters' roll and the Registrar-General's Office has not taken any effort to rectify that."


The minister also said the recent specification of the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange-listed Kingdom Meikles Limited group was very unfortunate and projected a bad picture to investors.

"The specification was against the government's policy of investment promotion. No country can survive without investors," he said.

"The government has agreed to revisit this law as it is not compatible with the modern world," he said.

Minister Mutsekwa also blasted the State media especially The Herald for telling lies that he had addressed the General Police of Interpol in Singapore and had said that sanctions were hurting the country especially the police.

"That story was purely a lie as I never said anything like that. Zanu PF is thirsty to have someone from the MDC to speak against sanctions. The issue of sanctions is a Zanu PF issue and I don't see them as sanctions but restrictive measures against senior Zanu PF officials," he said.

Turning to his relationship with his co-ministers, Minister Mutsekwa said it was not a good working relationship contrary to state media reports as they shared different views. 

Judgement on Gwezere remand Monday

HARARE - A Harare magistrate will on Monday deliver judgement on an application for refusal of further remand for Pascal Gwezere, the MDC transport manager facing trumped-up charges of stealing firearms and undergoing military training in Uganda 10 years ago.

Gwezere, is facing charges of stealing arms of war from Pomona Army Barracks in Borrowdale and undergoing military training at Soroti Training Camp in Uganda in 1999, allegedly to destabilize the country.

This is the second time his bail hearing has been deferred, after the State on

Monday requested time to prepare a response to the application.

On Wednesday the State lodged opposing papers against the application for refusal of further remand arguing Gwezere was a flight risk.

Magistrate Archie Wochiunga adjourned the case to Monday, saying he needed time to consider arguments from both State and defence teams.

Meanwhile, Gwezere appeared at the Harare Magistrates' Courts with an escort of 14 armed prison officers and in handcuffs and leg-irons. He was sent back to remand prison, where prison

authorities continue to refuse granting him access to medical attention.

Gwezere has been moved from Harare Remand Prison to Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison, where again the prison doctor has been told not to treat his torture wounds. Gwezere, who had visible scars sustained from the grievous torture he suffered when he was kidnapped, was limping when he walked into the courtroom.

His lawyer, Alec Muchadehama, said Gwezere's left leg was becoming septic because of the infections.



Pascal Gwezere (circled) is brought to court

The prison officials also refused to remove leg irons from Gwezere despite an appeal by Muchadehama and the consent by the State and magistrate to have the leg irons removed while in court.

Chebundo acquitted

GWERU - Regional Magistrate, William Bhila, on Tuesday acquitted MDC Kwekwe Central MP, Hon. Blessing Chebundo on trumped-up rape charges.

Bhila acquitted Hon. Chebundo saying that the State had failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the MDC legislator had indeed raped the minor.

The evidence that was given by the complainant was not credible, the Magistrate ruled, as the 14-year old girl claimed that she was a virgin when she was raped, contradicting a medical



Hon. Blessing Chebundo report by a doctor that showed that she had been sexually active.

The magistrate also said the delay by the minor in reporting the rape charge had complicated the case and made it

impossible to prove her case. There was no evidence that the alleged rape took place.

Hon. Chebundo is the third MDC MP to be acquitted by the courts in a week.

Last week, MDC Youth Assembly chairperson and deputy Youth Minister, Hon. Thamsanqa Mahlangu and Bikita West MP, Heya Shoko, were acquitted on trumped-up charges of stealing a cellphone and abusing the government farming implements scheme, respectively.

The charges being laid against MDC officials have nothing to do with the rule of law but are purely political.

Bennett trial judge asked to recuse himself

HARARE - Lawyers representing the MDC treasurer-general and deputy Agriculture minister designate, Senator Roy Bennett on Thursday asked the presiding judge, Justice Chinembiri Bhunu to recuse himself from the trial.

Justice Bhunu, will on Monday make his ruling in an open court on whether he wishes to continue with the case or recuse himself.

Senator Bennett's lawyer, Beatrice Mtetwa said the defence team became aware of a bail judgment made by Justice Bhunu in the Peter Michael Hitschmann case in 2006, which they believe could be prejudicial to Bennett.

Hitschmann, who was tortured and implicated Bennett in a plot to kill President Mugabe, is the key State witness in the trial.

"Given the fact that the State is considering Peter Michael Hitschmann as an accomplice witness, we believe the comments made by the judge in denying Hitschmann bail will definitely prejudice our client," Mtetwa told journalists after a meeting with the judge and State prosecutors in chambers yesterday.

Mtetwa said in the Hitschmann judgment, Justice Bhunu dismissed the bail application with costs insisting the accused person was facing "very serious charges".

In the same bail ruling, Justice Bhunu said the evidence against Hitschmann were overwhelming.

"We believe the comments made by the Judge in the Hitschmann case do apply to Bennett since the State is considering him an accomplice in



Hon. Roy Bennett leaves the High Court

this matter," Mtetwa said. "In this case we don't want to come to court with a client whose fate is already determined. This is why we are saying the judge should recuse himself."

Although the Attorney-General, Johannes Tomana did not speak to the press, the State prosecutors argued before the Judge that the defence team was now raising technical issues.

"The State tried to block us from raising the issue citing the judge's ruling on Wednesday," said Trust Maanda, another member of Bennett's defence team.

Earlier on Wednesday, Justice Bhunu ruled that allegations that Hitschmann was tortured can be raised during the trial, throwing out attempts by the prosecution to keep the details off the court record.

Justice Chinembiri Bhunu said the defence would be allowed to argue Hitschmann was tortured into confessing and implicating Bennett.

But the judge also rejected a defence application to stop Hitschmann from being a state witness, and have his disputed "confession" declared inadmissible.

Emotional send-off for Nyamande

RUSAPE - Thousands of MDC supporters who included President Morgan Tsvangirai, yesterday thronged Chemusango Village in Rusape, Manicaland province to pay their last respects to Makoni Central MP, Hon. John Nyamande.

Hon. Nyamande died in a horrific car accident on Saturday along the Harare - Mutare Highway.

He was on his way from Makoni Central when he rammed into the back of a stationary Mazda T35 truck at the 25km peg in Ruwa.

Speaker after speaker described Hon. Nyamande as a fearless fighter for democracy.

President Tsvangirai described how Hon. Nyamande had decided to leave his wife, family and business in the UK



The late Hon. John Nyamande

in 2007 to contest in the March 2008 parliamentary elections.

In the elections, he managed to beat Zanu PF heavyweight, Patrick Chinamasa.

President Tsvangirai was accompanied by his deputy, Hon. Thokozani Khupe,

secretary-general, Hon. Tendai Biti and deputy national organiser, Senator Morgen Komichi.

Also present at the funeral were the party spokesperson, Hon. Nelson Chamisa, several Cabinet ministers, MPs MDC supporters, friends and relatives.

Hon. Nyamande was born on 10 September 1952. He joined the MDC in 1999 but left the country in 2000, where he continued serving the party as the Information and Publicity secretary for Southern branch.

He was later elected to the position of MDC chairman for the combined UK and Ireland branches.

Hon. Nyamande is survived by his wife five children and several grandchildren.

MDC, labour bodies demand release of ZCTU officials

HWANGE - The president of Zimbabwe's umbrella trade union body and worker union members remained jailed here yesterday following their arrest Sunday.

Matombo was arrested together with the whole ZCTU district executive and the labour union's staff members, Michael Kandukutu, Dumisani Ncube, Nawu Ndlovu and Percy Mcijo. They were taken to Hwange where they were still held.

They have been charged with contravening the draconian Public Order and Security Act for allegedly holding a meeting without notifying the police.

This meeting was the first stop in a tour of the country to meet ZCTU structures.

The MDC, which is labour-backed, this week approached Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai seeking his intervention in securing the labour leaders' release.

Meanwhile international trade union bodies, roundly condemned the arrest, with the International Trade Union Council, ITUC, firing off a letter to Robert Mugabe warning him against abusing labour rights.

In a letter sent to Mugabe, the ITUC, which represents 170 million workers in 158 countries, advises President Mugabe that the International Labour Organisation, ILO, Commission of Inquiry will be informed of the latest serious violations of ILO Convention 87, and urged him to immediately release the arrested trade union leaders.

"The ITUC is especially alarmed at the unwarranted arrest of the president of the ZCTU and the many recent incidents of trade union rights violations despite the ongoing ILO Commission of Inquiry into violations of fundamental workers rights," said the letter to Mugabe, seen by The Changing Times.

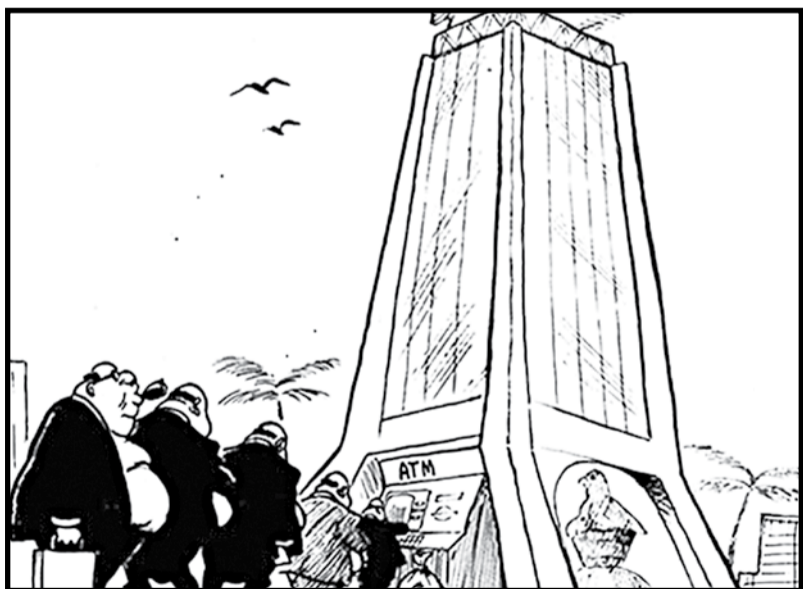
"The ITUC had hoped that the creation of an inclusive government with a

commitment to human rights reform would have made severe trade union repression become a thing of the past. Unfortunately, in view of the continuing repression and now the arrest of the president of the ZCTU, it is clear that elements within the government are not willing to undertake reform."

The umbrella global labour body reminded Mugabe about his commitment to freedom of association and the right to organise, and described the arrest as "unwarranted."

The arrest of the trade union leaders comes hardly a week after the reported attack on the house of ZCTU council member Gertrude Hambira of the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ).

"I wish to remind you that all new incidents of trade union rights repression might influence the outcome of the ILO Commission of Inquiry negatively," warned ITUC in its letter to Mugabe.



The MDC as a people's project, values your opinions. Please feel free to send news, alerts or letters expressing your views and comments to MDC Information and Publicity Department or email: mdcnewsbrief@gmail.com