

Zimbabwe: Death threats and violence against opposition continues

Violent attacks and death threats against members and supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party following the 25 June parliamentary election in Zimbabwe are continuing, Amnesty International said today.

Amnesty International is particularly concerned by reports of soldiers beating civilians in suburbs of Harare and Kwekwe because they live in areas where people voted for the opposition.

Death threats have reportedly been made by high ranking ruling party officials against Bulawayo South MDC Member of Parliament (MP) David Coltart and others. In light of the pre-election violence, during which at least 30 MDC members were killed, Amnesty International takes these threats seriously.

In Kwekwe, an MDC ward chairperson -- Mutyanda Mandishona -- was beaten to death on 28 June. In the period leading up to the election, the MDC MP for Kwekwe, Blessing Chebundo, was severely intimidated and his house totally destroyed by fire. Similarly, his campaign manager, Abraham Mtshena, had his family beaten and his house destroyed by fire. One of his sons suffered from burns and had to be hospitalized. All these cases have been reported to the police, who to Amnesty International's knowledge has yet to take any action.

On 28 June, three days after the elections, Edwin Mushoriwa, the MDC MP for the Harare constituency of Dzivarasekwa, and MDC supporters were beaten by members of the army. At a rally authorized by the police, around 100 MDC supporters were celebrating their election victory when a truckload of soldiers arrived and beat them with rifle butts. At least five MDC supporters were hospitalised.

These cases are part of a disturbing pattern of violence and intimidation against real and perceived government opponents in the post-election period. The security forces are reportedly involved in some of the violent incidents and intimidation.

"Recent moves by the opposition to contest some of the election results may lead to more violence by government supporters. Thousands of Amnesty International members are writing to the government of Zimbabwe appealing for protection of opposition supporters and members," the organization said.

Amnesty International is calling on the Minister of Defense to investigate reports of soldiers beating civilians and to bring perpetrators to justice.

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