
Post-election violence leads to new waves of displacement in Zimbabwe (No. 2)

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Following the elections in Zimbabwe on 29 March 2009, Mugabe's ZANU-PF party has unleashed a campaign of state-sponsored terror to punish MDC activists and voters who are suspected of having voted for the opposition. The violence is resulting in new waves of internal displacement in Zimbabwe.

In a statement released on 29 April 2008, a group of six United Nations human rights rapporteurs said that intimidation, violence and torture were being used to retaliate against supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) after last month's presidential elections in Zimbabwe. They said that as a result of the violence, which has been taking place mainly in rural areas, townships and farms, hundreds of families and individuals, mainly women and children, have been displaced internally or are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries ([UN News Service, 29 April 2008](#)).

Below is a list of documented instances of new displacement in Zimbabwe from 24-29 April 2008.

Information on internal displacement caused by post-election violence in Zimbabwe from 29 March to 24 April 2008 can be found [here](#).

- On 24 April, the Zimbabwe Independent reported that hundreds of people from rural areas throughout Zimbabwe had fled their homes and sought refuge at the MDC headquarters in Harare, Harvest House. An MDC official who requested anonymity was quoted as saying that by Tuesday 22 April, 240 people from all over the country slept at the party headquarters, while several others had sought refuge at the party's provincial offices and at "safe houses" ([Zimbabwe Independent, 24 April 2008](#)). The Zimbabwe Independent provided a number of individual testimonies of displaced people at Harvest House:
 - Among those at Harvest House were children of school-going age who also claimed to have been victims of the state-sponsored political violence. A 12-year-old boy from Shamva, who sought refuge at the opposition party's headquarters with his parents, said he sustained a deep cut on his shin when Zanu PF members attacked his family's home and stoned them. "We were attacked by some people who were dressed like gold panners," said the boy. "We fled when they torched our houses and I was stoned when we were fleeing from the attack".

According to Ndaipa Kaphazi, who stood as an MDC candidate for councilor in Shamva but who lost the election, more than 50 homes were set on fire in Shamva on Sunday 20 April, and livestock was lost.

- Lovemore Mafemera, an MDC polling agent at Nyamaganhu-Charehwa ward in Mutoko North, fled to Harare soon after suspected ZANU-PF youth and war veterans stormed his home and assaulted him for supporting Tsvangirai and the opposition party.
- Phineas Nyandoro of Gutu West, Masvingo, was attacked with an axe by ZANU-PF supporters, who then set his home on fire. Nyandoro, who is 60, said that he was abducted and held in captivity for two days.
- Didymus Bande, who was elected an MDC Councillor in Epworth on the outskirts of Harare, said he came to the MDC's headquarters to seek refuge on Tuesday 22 April after he had received threats that he would be "eliminated".
- Another MDC member who spoke on condition of anonymity said his home had become a no-go area since 13 April. He claimed that he had been shot in the leg by a ZANU-PF businessman at Jaravaza shopping centre in Gokwe because of his support for the MDC. "It is now close to two weeks since I last saw my family, but I am informed that my wife and children have returned to her maternal home," he said. "I was shot on April 13 and since then I've never returned home. The businessman who shot me told me that MDC members were not allowed in the ward."
- On 25 April, armed police officers raided the MDC headquarters in Harare. More than 200 people who had sought refuge there were arrested ([International Herald Tribune, 25 April 2008](#), [Associated Press, 25 April 2008](#), [New York Times, 26 April 2008](#)).
- On the same day, Human Rights Watch expressed grave concern for the welfare of an estimated 500 people, including more than 100 children, who were believed to be sheltering in the MDC's regional headquarters in Mutare to try to escape state-sponsored violence.

Human Rights Watch also quoted eyewitnesses who said that in Chivi South constituency, in Masvingo province, five days after the election a group of war veterans burned down a number of homes of MDC supporters. On April 18, a group of army and police officials arrived in Chivi South and at a meeting with the traditional chief and village headman demanded that the village headman compile a list of all known and suspected MDC supporters in their village. Army troops burned more homes of suspected MDC voters the day after the meeting. ([Human Rights Watch, 25 April 2008](#)).

- Human Rights Watch also reported that, for the first time since the post-election crackdown in Zimbabwe started, the organisation had documented several incidents of retaliatory violence by MDC supporters, although the scope of these incidents bears no comparison to the widespread state-sponsored violence by ZANU-PF and its allies. Eyewitnesses told Human Rights Watch that in parts of Mashonaland East and Manicaland provinces, MDC supporters had burned homes of known ZANU-PF supporters and officials ([Human Rights Watch, 25 April 2008](#)).
- On 27 April 2008, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Dr. Jendayi Frazer, said that the US Embassy in Zimbabwe had received documented evidence of about 1,000 people who had been displaced ([BBC, 27 April 2008](#)).
- On 28 April, the New York Times reported that a three-person team from the American Embassy in Harare drove to Manicaland Province on April 19-20 and captured images of homes which had been burned and demolished by gangs of ruling-party members. The photographs and videos focused on the more than 200 people made homeless in that campaign to terrorize those who voted for the opposition. “At the time of our visit to the Mutare M.D.C. office, there were 106 children under the age of 12 and 113 adults (many of whom were elderly) camped in the open at the office grounds (sharing one toilet and with running water only for several hours at night),” the team wrote on its return to Harare ([New York Times, 28 April 2008](#)).
- On 27 April the Sunday Times reported that the campaign of state-sponsored violence referred to as "Operation Where Did You Put Your Cross?" had prompted thousands to flee from their homes in an attempt to escape the so-called war veterans, who were attacking people and burning down hundreds of houses for voting “incorrectly” in last month’s elections ([The Sunday Times, 27 April 2008](#)).
- On 28 April MDC spokesperson Nelson Chamisa claimed that Zanu-PF youth militia and soldiers had burned down more than 3 000 houses of MDC supporters, and that 5 000 families had been displaced ([Mail and Guardian, 28 April 2008](#)).
- The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) stated that the organisation had compiled numerous incidents of violence and destruction of property in the election aftermath. “What we are witnessing constitutes a form of rigging,” Kucaca Phulu, Chairperson of ZimRights, told a press conference. “We don’t know what’s the fate of the presidential elections results and our fear is that if there is a re-run, what is of grave concern is that all these displaced people will not be able to return to their home areas to vote.” Phulu claimed that the incidents documented by ZimRights represented “just a tip of the iceberg of what’s happening in our country” ([Mail and Guardian, 29 April 2008](#)).

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