

# BRIEF ON THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> – 16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2019 VIOLENT PROTESTS

## **1.0 Introduction**

From 14 to 16 January 2019, Zimbabwe witnessed an orgy of violent protests, mostly in Bulawayo and Harare, under the so-called "National Shutdown". The "National Shutdown" was a culmination of a series of events that were organised and orchestrated by the Opposition formations before and after 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 harmonised elections. The violent protests, were organised by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and other local merchants of regime change, which included Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CZC), Danish Christian Aid, Heal Zimbabwe Trust (HZT), and the Counselling Services Unit (formerly Amani Trust), **#Tajamuka/Sesijikile**, **#This Flag**, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), as well as a motley host of other hostile civil society organisations (CSOs), anti-Government social movements and hostile non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Also at play was the role of foreign Hostile Intelligence Services (HIS) and a well orchestrated plan for cyber attacks.

Although the protests were ostensibly in response to the increase in the price of fuel and the general socio-economic challenges besetting the country, the so-called "National Shutdown" was, in essence, an attempt by hostile elements to subvert the State by rendering the country ungovernable. The timing of the "national Shutdown" is instructive. The MDC deliberately chose to launch its violent protests at a time His

Excellency President E.D. Mnangagwa, was undertaking his re-engagement initiative to Eurasia and the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The violent protests were also aimed at coercing ZANU PF and Government to accommodate the political opposition, particularly the MDC Alliance, through the consummation of a Government of National Unity (GNU).

In addition, the violent protests exposed the Opposition's machinations to cause foreign intervention in Zimbabwe under the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Principle. If we consider the fact that in the aftermath of the protests, the MDC Alliance and its appendages have written to SADC and the AU. Relatedly, a South African opposition leader, Mmusi MAIMANE of the Democratic Alliance is threatening to write to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the UN Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR) requesting for their intervention in Zimbabwe.

## **2.0 Background**

**2.1** Since the violent demonstrations of April 2016, Zimbabwe has witnessed increasing agitation for the same by the MDC, Western-sponsored CSOs, hostile NGOs, as well as other local adjuncts of regime change. The calls for violent anti- Government protests became more vociferous ahead of the 30 July 2018 harmonised elections and after the MDC's colossal electoral defeat. Apart from advancing the "illegitimacy narrative" that sought to question His Excellency, President Emmerson Mnangagwa's election victory and its subsequent endorsement by

Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court, the opposition was keen to coerce Government to accommodate losing MDC Presidential candidate, Nelson Chamisa either in a so-called National Transitional Authority (NTA) or some form of an inclusive governance arrangement such as a Government of National Unity (GNU).

**2.2** Cognisant of the risk of strife and political tensions that are generated by electoral contestations, ahead of the 30 July 2018 harmonised elections, the Government of Zimbabwe put in place measures to ensure that the election would be a violent-free event. The measures included the deployment of Election Observer Missions (EOMs) from organisations such as SADC, AU, and the EU, as well as many other countries. The election observers who had unfettered access to all parts of the country were deployed well ahead of the elections to observe the pre-election field which in the past, the opposition had always complained was heavily skewed in favour of ZANU PF. Of significance is the fact the EU which had been denied election observation in the previous dispensation was accredited and in its assessment, the pre-election field was conducive to the holding of free and fair elections.

**2.3** On its part, the Government of Zimbabwe conducted an electoral security assessment of the pre and post-election phases, examining electoral conflict-risk factors, as well as the signals that were being emitted by the various political actors.

2.4 It was observed that, ahead of the elections, the MDC Alliance leaders, namely; Nelson Chamisa, Tendai Biti and Happymore Chidziva, made inflammatory statements, which were an overt incitement of their supporters to violence. The MDC Alliance psyched its supporters through social media and at political rallies, threatening that the country would descend into chaos if the election result was not in their favour. The mobilisation was done under the guise of the Alliance's constitutional right to stage peaceful demonstrations.

2.5 The threats of violence poisoned the political environment even before the polls. Mr Chamisa sought to derail the electoral process, boasting that "I will spoil the party". It is thus evident that the Alliance had planned to thwart a ZANU PF victory by any means necessary, including the use of violence.

2.6 To illustrate this assessment, while addressing a rally at Jerera Growth Point, Zaka in Masvingo, on 14 April 2018, CHAMISA threatened to **"bring into the streets, guys from Mbare Musika who were ready for violence"**. He further stated that he was **"ready to take power either through votes or by any other means"**.

2.7 Relatedly, addressing yet another MDC Alliance rally at Mkoba Stadium on 23 July 2018, CHAMISA said there **"will be serious consequences if my will does not prevail"**.

2.8 On his part, BITI, addressed a rally in Mabvuku/Tafara constituency on 26 June 2018, and declared that **"the Alliance would not accept**

election results if ZANU PF was the winner". He threatened to instigate civil disobedience in the event that ZANU PF won the polls. In an interview with the *Daily Maverick*, on 26 July 2018, BITI reiterated his threat to make Zimbabwe "ungovernable if the MDC Alliance loses the election".

**2.9** Just before the eruption of violence, on the morning of 01 August 2018, CHIDZIVA addressed MDC youths at Harvest House, the MDC Headquarters in Harare. CHIDZIVA urged the youths to engage in acts of public violence in the Harare CBD and to attack ZEC offices, the National Command Centre, ZANU PF offices and other key infrastructure such as Government buildings and service stations. As the 01 August 2018 events unfolded, these were some of the buildings that were targeted by the marauding MDC bands.

**2.10** In contrast to the threats of intimidation, violence and anarchy mainly from the MDC Alliance, other political leaders and stakeholders called for peace ahead of, during and after the elections. His Excellency, President Emmerson MNANGAGWA, consistently called for peace. For example, in his Independence Day message, President MNANGAGWA said "I wish to express to you my desire for us to have a peaceful election. You may be a ZANU PF member or a member of an opposition political party, the crucial thing we require of all our political leaders is peace". Similar sentiments were made by Vice Presidents, General (Rtd) Constantino Guvheya CHIWENGA and Kembo MOHADI, as well as MDC leader, Dr Thokozani KHUPE.

**2.11** The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) and other organisations such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) went out of their way to promote a peaceful and violence free election. The NPRC, among other activities, organised prayer meetings, while the ZCC issued a pastoral letter which implored the political leadership to restrain their supporters in order to prevent violence.

**2.12** From the above submissions, our assessment is that the violence of 01 August 2018 was not spontaneous, but had been pre-planned. During the pre-election period, the MDC activated its militia, the Order of the Vanguard, as well as the Democratic Residents Committees (DRCs). The activation of these quasi military groups was ostensibly to enable the MDC to "defend its vote".

**2.13** On 31 July 2018, MDC Member, Tendai Biti, announced unofficial results which showed that the MDC leader, Nelson Chamisa, was allegedly the winner of the presidential race. The illegal announcement of unofficial and inaccurate results was the curtain raiser to the orgy of violence that was unleashed by the MDC on 1 August 2018 purportedly in defence of, "the people's vote".

**2.14** On the eve of the demonstrations, CHIDZIVA circulated video, and audio text messages on MDC WhatsApp chat groups and other social media platforms, inviting youths to Harvest House for the violent protest. The MDC leadership also stockpiled drugs, specifically Broclear (Bronco) and alcohol to intoxicate the youths ahead and during the violence.

**2.15** It is noteworthy that the youths initially marched around town before returning to Harvest House. The specific order to destroy, burn and loot was issued by CHIDZIVA at a "strategic planning" meeting held between 0900hours and 1130hours at Harvest House on 01 August 2018. The idea was to instigate the violence from around lunch time in order to exploit the increase in the number of people in the CBD.

**2.16** It is also pertinent to note that one of the targets of the violent MDC protesters was the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Command Centre housed at the Harare Rainbow Towers Hotel. The idea was to torch down the ZEC Command centre so that the official results would not be announced as the MDC's parallel voter tabulation had shown that President E.D. Mnangagwa had won the presidential election.

**2.17** Responding to the violent eruptions of 1 August 2018, Presidential candidate, Dr Thokozani KHUPE of the MDC-T, condemned the MDC Alliance instigated violence.

**2.18** Responding to the tragic loss of life occasioned by the post election violence, on 3 August 2018, Dr KHUPE, in a statement released by her office noted **"initial reports suggest that this unwarranted loss of lives was as a result of reckless brinkmanship by a formation which believes in using violence as a means of securing political gains"**. The formation Dr KHUPE is referring to is the MDC Alliance, which in February 2018, had viciously attacked her together with MDC Secretary General Douglas MWONZORA, and then

deputy Organising Secretary, Abdenigo BHEBHE at the burial of the late MDC leader, Morgan TSVANGIRAI. As if that was not enough, at a Supreme Court hearing into the dispute of the ownership of the MDC party's name, on 22 May 2018, rowdy supporters of Nelson CHAMISA hurled insults and threatened to manhandle Dr KHUPE outside the Supreme Court.

**2.19** Following his defeat, CHAMISA, has been calling for the formation of a National Transitional Authority (NTA) that would supposedly address the so-called legitimacy crisis and the country's economic and political challenges. The same sentiments were shared by some members of the clergy.

**2.20** Pursuant to its subversive agenda, the MDC also activated its militias, namely; the MDC Order of the Vanguard, and the Democratic Resistance Committees (DRCs). These, together with the MDC Youth Assembly, would spearhead efforts to render the country ungovernable through violent protests.

### **3.0 The role of the hidden foreign hand in organising, funding and the execution of the protests**

**3.1** On its part, the west, in conjunction with its local adjuncts, had been stoking civil disobedience in Zimbabwe with a view to not only cause "National Political Dialogue", but also to establish an Inclusive Governance Arrangement. The West's road map towards forcing an inclusive arrangement began in December 2017, when it became



clear that ZANU PF did not favour a transitional arrangement, following the resignation of former President, Robert Mugabe.

**3.2** In April 2018, hostile CSOs under the banner of CZC initiated a series of meetings to strategise. Some of the CSOs, labour and student unions that were part of the process were Citizen Manifesto, **#This Flag**, Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), ZCTU, Justice for Women, Women Youth Forum (ZYF), Zimbabwe Youth Alliance (ZYA) and **#This Constitution**. The above subversive activities were not only bankrolled by foreign funded NGOs, but also had foreign resource persons.

**3.3** One such resource persons was a Serbian national, Sorien. Sorien gave instruction in what is termed as Dilemma Action Strategy. A dilemma action is a type of non-violent civil disobedience designed to create a response dilemma or lose-lose situation for public authorities by "forcing them to either concede some public space to protesters or make themselves look absurd or heavy-handed by acting against the protest". In the case of Zimbabwe, the Dilemma Action Strategy instead of being non-violent was exactly the opposite as would be demonstrated by the unfolding events that culminated in the 14 -16 January 2019 so-called Shutdown.

**3.4** From 10 to 11 May 2018, CZC organised a training workshop in Zimbabwe, where participants drawn from local CSOs received training in citizen mobilisation, handling social media, use of

propaganda through social media, initiating and controlling uprisings and intelligence collection.

**3.5** The mayhem organised by the MDC and CSOs under the so-called "National Shutdown", was supposed to have been instigated in November 2018, but was delayed due to some differences that emerged within the CSOs community. However, the CSOs exploited the announcement of the increase in fuel prices to launch their planned activities. The operations of the protests were co-ordinated by a group of CSO leaders, namely; ZCTU Secretary General, Peter MUTASA, CZC's Pride MUKONO, #This Flag Movement founder, Evan MAWARIRE, ZYA's Learnmore MAGORIMBO and MDC National Youth Assembly Secretary General, Lovemore CHINOPUTSA.

**3.6** Between 06 and 10 January 2019, United States (US) based NGOs, Global Network of Youth Action (GNYA) and Generation Citizen (GC) held mobilisation meetings in Bulawayo and Harare, respectively under the guise of a youth dialogue. The presence of GNYA representatives in Zimbabwe pointed to a deliberate strategy by the US government to target local youths to lead a "revolution" in line with its long term regime change agenda.

#### **4.0 Explaining the recent violent protests**

**4.1** The recent wave of protests began on 14 January 2019, with Bulawayo and Harare being the epicentres of the violence. The violence was supposedly triggered by the announcement of a 143 percent

increase in the price of fuel, beginning the night of 13 January 2019, with the pump price of petrol and diesel increasing to \$3.31 and \$3.11, respectively, up from about \$1.43 (petrol) and \$1.38 (diesel). However, tension and agitation for anti-Government protests had been brewing for some time. Labour unions, particularly ZCTU, as well as Teachers' Unions such as ZIMTA, PTUZ and ARTUZ, had for some time, been mobilising for industrial action.

**4.2** ZCTU Secretary General, Japhet MOYO, had written to the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Sekai NZENZA, urging Government to address the socio-economic challenges besetting the country, especially the escalating prices of goods and services. ZCTU also demanded the introduction of measures to curtail the price hikes, the scrapping off of the two percent Intermediated Tax and that workers be remunerated in United States Dollars (US\$). ZCTU, which is an MDC appendage, threatened to mobilise Zimbabweans for a national strike if the above demands were not met. The country's civil servants also rejected Government's offer of a 10 percent salary increment and resolved to go on strike, beginning 22 January 2019.

**4.3** However, on 13 January 2019, ZCTU, together with transport associations, MDC elements and regime protest movements such as **#Tajamuka/Sesijikile** and **#This Flag**, resolved to mobilize people not to report for work, beginning 14 January 2019 as part of the "National Shutdown", ostensibly in protest against the fuel price hikes. In order to prevent the commuting public from going to work, the protest organisers resolved to burn service stations that were selling fuel

at the new prices, and to prevent commuter omnibuses from ferrying passengers.

**4.4** In the meantime, the MDC Youth Assembly, on 13 January 2019, held a meeting in Harare to strategise on the "National Shutdown". The MDC Youth resolved to participate in the violent protests with a view to exert pressure on Your Excellency, to dialogue with CHAMISA. They also resolved to barricade roads leading into city centres across the country, while some MDC youths, masquerading as Government officials, would move around instructing shop/business owners to shut down. MDC leaders who played a key role in mobilising for the violent protests included Member of Parliament (MP) for Mabvuku/Tafara Constituency, Taurai CHIDHAKWA; Deputy Treasure General, Chariton HWENDE; Councillor for Mabvuku, Barnabas NHIRA; as well as activists; Denford NGADZIORE, and Learnmore MAGORIMBO.

**4.5** Meanwhile, in Harare, in the MDC strongholds of Epworth, Budiro, Kuwadzana and Mabvuku, soon, the "National Shutdown" turned into an orgy of looting and violence, including attacks and burning of shops, as well as Police Stations and Posts. In Bulawayo, the rowdy and marauding thugs went on a looting spree, targeting Choppies Supermarkets in the city's western suburbs, particularly in Sekusile, Lobengula Street and Entumbane Shopping Centres. Over 60 shops were looted in Bulawayo alone. Pharmacies were also ransacked, while houses and vehicles belonging to ZANU PF officials were destroyed or burnt. One of the targets was ZANU PF Bulawayo Women's League

Chairperson, Eva BITU. The protesters also assaulted teachers and learners at Ihlati Primary School.

4.6 In Harare, the MDC-led protesters burnt down the Skyline Tollgate along the Harare-Masvingo Road, and stole some cash; assaulted members of the Security Forces and stoned their vehicles; besieged and torched Makoni Police Station; burnt three buses and eight private vehicles at Makoni Shopping Centre, and also looted supermarkets.

4.7 MDC leaders coordinated violent demonstrations in other provinces, including Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Matabeleland South, Manicaland and the Midlands Provinces. At the end of day on 14 January 2019, the organisers of the "National Shutdown" held a meeting at CZC offices at Number 10 Longden Avenue, Belvedere, Harare to "review operations" and map the way forward. Attendees included Concerned Citizens Agenda (CCA) representative, Tineyi MUNETSI; ZCTU Secretary General, Peter MUTASA; **#This Flag** movement founder, Evan MAWARIRE; Zimbabwe Youth Alliance (ZYA) representative, Learnmore MAGORIMBO; MDC National Youth Assembly Secretary General, Lovemore CHINOPUTSA; and Rashed MAHIYA of CZC.

4.8 The meeting resolved to continue with the violent protests, employing the "Popcorn Strategy", which they had been taught by the Germans and Americans at a meeting by rogue NGOs that was held at Wild Geese Lodge, Harare in December 2018. The strategy involved blockading roads in high density residential areas in order to coerce the

general populace to join the violent protests. Targeting these areas would also stretch the capacity of the Police to contain the situation. The strategy was informed by the realization that the idea of a National Shutdown had failed to gain traction among the populace. The meeting also reiterated that the object of the protests was to force Government to enter into negotiations with CHAMISA.

**4.9** During the violent and destructive stay away, the protestors committed the following crimes and infringements of other people's rights:

- Attacked CIO vehicles and Police officers, motor vehicles and Police stations in Harare, Makoni Police Station in Chitungwiza and a Police Post in Southlea Park and Marondera (Dombotombo), which resulted in the death of Constable MAUNE of Bulawayo;
- Barred emergency service providers such as ambulance and funeral services from accessing injured or dead people to provide assistance or remove bodies, respectively;
- Assaulted teachers and school children who were going about their normal business as happened in Chitungwiza;
- Forcibly used innocent children as human shields when they (the perpetrators) were confronted by the Police;
- Attacked houses and property belonging to ZANU PF members. For example, ZANU PF Bulawayo Provincial Women's League Chairperson, Eva BITU had her Sizinda home stoned and three

motor vehicles, a Ford Ranger pickup truck, a Nissan Hardbody pickup truck and a Toyota Vitz hatchback damaged;

- Set on fire ZANU PF Offices in Rimuka, Kadoma;
- City of Bulawayo's Tshabalala Housing Office and Clinic were stoned;
- Set up illegal road blocks on some roads in Harare and Chitungwiza where they extorted amounts of money ranging from \$2 to \$5 from motorists in exchange for safe passage. One area where this happened was at the Manyame River bridge along the Seke Road near Chitungwiza;
- Forcibly took over the Skyline Tollgate along the Masvingo Road, where they extorted various amounts of money from the motoring public before torching the tolling infrastructure;
- Looted goods from supermarkets such as Choppies outlets in Pumula, New Lobengula, Entumbane and Nkulumane in Bulawayo, Mkoba in Gweru, Mabvuku in Harare and in Chitungwiza, among others. A total of nine Choppies branches were looted or burnt. The looters also ransacked most shops at Entumbane Shopping Mall in Bulawayo. TM Supermarket at Machipisa Shopping Centre in Highfield, Harare, was emptied and a Zuva Petroleum Service Station at the same place was vandalized, with the rioters claiming that it belonged to His Excellency, the President. This is not true as the petroleum company is owned by Wobble Investments (Pvt) Ltd, whose main shareholder is John MUSHAYAVANHU. Platinum Health Pharmacy in St Mary's in Chitungwiza was ransacked as the youthful rioters targeted cough syrups such as Histalix, which are

abused as recreation drugs. It is noteworthy that during the violence of 01 August 2018, the MDC provided similar drugs, as well as dagga and Bronclear to rowdy youths. Tanza Centre entertainment establishment in the same town was looted as the rioter's targeted alcohol.

- A Chicken Inn shop at Makoni Shopping Centre was plundered, while a TM/Pick n Pay Supermarket at the same place had its windows shattered;
- Blockaded public roads using objects such as rocks, disused motor vehicle body parts and truckloads of sand as was the case at the Kuwadzana traffic roundabout on 14 January 2019, to prevent the free movement of traffic and force people to stay at home. The use of sand to block traffic was reminiscent of CHAMISA's threat to play spoiler ahead of the elections; and
- The forced shutdown is estimated to have cost businesses \$300 million in revenue losses over the three days, according to the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI), while the Confederation of Zimbabwe Retailers (CZR) puts its sector's loss at \$500 million. Given that the figures do not include informal sector players, who are in the majority.

## **5.0 Role of social media in instigating protests**

**5.1** The organisers of the violent protests exploited the internet and social media platforms, particularly *WhatsApp*, for their mobilisation, misinformation and disinformation campaign. The MDC Intelligence Department, on 14 January 2019, began circulating names, pictures,



address, phone numbers and other personal details of members of the Defence and Security Forces, who were to be targeted for attacks by the protestors. This compromised the personal security of the concerned officers.

**5.2** Apart from using the internet to sustain their disinformation and misinformation campaign, as well as organising, coordinating and mobilising for their protests, social media platforms were used to share knowledge on arson attacks. In particular, the MDC circulated a manual on how to produce Molotov cocktails or petrol bombs. These would be used to bomb gas stations, Police Stations/Posts, ZANU PF Offices and other vital Government installations across the country.

**5.3** In response to the blatant abuse of social media platforms in furtherance of this subversive agenda, Government was forced to temporarily disconnect internet access. However, POTRAZ was later advised to open the internet to allow for essential services, but *WhatsApp, Facebook* and *Twitter*, were to remain disconnected. To circumvent this, the protestors made use of *Telegram* and *VPN* to access the *WhatsApp* social media platform. On 21 January 2019, internet connectivity, together with *WhatsApp, Facebook* and *Twitter*, were restored, following a High Court ruling.

**5.4** It is important to note that the country is currently serviced by 11 Internet Access Providers (IAPs), which in turn provide service to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) for downstream connectivity to

consumers. A number of the ISPs are not licensed and cannot readily be accounted for.

## **6.0 Counter measures for restoration of law and order**

**6.1** It is the constitutional mandate of Zimbabwe's security forces to maintain law and order in the country. Section 24 of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) places an obligation on organisers of demonstrations to notify and seek clearance from the Police at least four days ahead of the planned protests. The idea is to accord the Police adequate time to put in place, the requisite measures that would prevent breaches of peace and public order. The Section also seeks to enhance rapport and create room for liaison between the Police and organisers of demonstrations. Such liaison helps to guarantee the constitutional rights of other citizens who are not party to the protests.

**6.2** It is also pertinent to note that efforts are underway to align POSA with the 2013 Constitution. In addition, Government is also alive to the Constitutional rights of the citizenry, including the right to protest, as enshrined under Section 59 of the Constitution. The above notwithstanding, the above rights can be constitutionally derogated from a citizen on the basis of Article 86 of the Constitution, which provides for limitations on rights and freedom for the public good.

**6.3** It is important to note that the organisers of the "National Shutdown" made no effort to secure clearance from the Police as required by the country's laws. As such, the "demonstrations" were illegal. On the basis of the intelligence at hand, and in view of their

constitutional mandate, the Security Forces made the necessary deployments to ensure law and order. As the protests became violent, Government activated all State Security Apparatus in order to restore law and order, protect life and property. Swift response by the Security Forces resulted in the arrest of hundreds of the violent protestors and their ring leaders, including MAWARIRE, MAGORIMBO and Amos CHIBAYA. Efforts are underway to account for other Vanguard elements, the DRCs and other kingpins.

## **7.0 Overcoming challenges occasioned by the protests**

**7.1** Meanwhile, mindful of the economic challenges occasioned by the protest, Government deployed measures to alleviate same targeting civil servants, the commuting public and the citizenry. To ease pressure on the commuting public, Government, on 20 January 2019, introduced ZUPCO buses to carry passengers at fares ranging from \$1 to \$2, compared to the \$4 to \$8 charged by commuter omnibuses for Harare routes. More buses are to be deployed across the country. Efforts are also underway to re-introduce the "Freedom Train", following the capacitation of National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ). Meanwhile, Police deployments remain on the ground in order to re-assure the citizens of their security. This is particularly so, given the fact that the MDC and other local merchants of regime change are planning to carry out further violent protests under the so-called "National Shutdown II".

### 8.0 The call for Dialogue

8.1 In justifying the protest, the oppositions formations proffered a number of motivational factors. Depending on the audience, the most immediate cause for the protest was given as the fuel price increase. The protestors also indicated that they had taken to protest action to cause dialogue between Government and the opposition. This reason for the protest belies the fact that it was Government that initiated efforts to engage in dialogue with the opposition. On the side lines of UN General Assembly in New York, USA, in September 2018, His Excellency President ED Mnangagwa is on record having informed the global leaders that Zimbabwe was creating an Office of the Leader of the Opposition. This Office was intended to provide the frame work and platform through which the opposition leader, Mr Nelson Chamisa would formally interact with the executive arm of Government on matters of policy and any other pertinent political and economic issues. To the chagrin of all and sundry, Mr Nelson Chamisa rejected the proposal, insisting that he was the President elect.

8.2 Despite the opposition leader spurning the offer of the leader in opposition office which would have been established by the Constitution, His Excellency the President has kept his doors open for dialogue. Against the backdrop of the insistence by Mr Nelson Chamisa that he won the Presidential Election, Government is ready for dialogue that is predicated on two fundamental issues - the 30 July 2018 election results – which results were confirmed by the highest Court in the land, the Constitutional Court and non- violence

## 9.0 Lessons and conclusions

9.1 Anti-Government protests are an instrument of choice for subversive elements, particularly the MDC, rogue NGOs, hostile CSOs and Hostile Intelligence Services (HIS), keen to either effect regime change in Zimbabwe or force the consummation of a GNU or an NTA. The opposition's penchant for violence is also well documented. The idea is to cause foreign intervention in Zimbabwe under the R2P Principle. The concerns by the US, Britain and other western capitals over developments in Zimbabwe could embolden the opposition to escalate their violent protests. It should be mentioned that the protests were timed to influence next month's EU's Summit to review sanctions on Zimbabwe.

9.2 One of the key narratives that have been advanced by the political opposition, CSOs, human rights organisations, as well as the pro-opposition local press and international media, is that the protestors were innocent victims of alleged excesses by Security Forces. The narrative deliberately ignores the fact that the protests were never peaceful. They began with unprovoked violence, the mammoth scale of the violence, the looting sprees, wanton destruction of property, the burning down of Police Stations, the stoning to death of a Police Officer in Bulawayo, the use of children as human shields, and the attacks on teachers and learners by the MDC and its surrogates. The violent protesters who had no regard for the constitutional rights of other citizens and who had the audacity to besiege Police Stations, are portrayed in international media, and by the West, as well as so-called human rights defenders, as victims of abuses by the State.

9.3 This exposes the hypocrisy by the west, human rights organisations and the international media. While CSOs under the banner of CZC, were quick to write to the AU, on 17 January 2019, calling for the bloc to cause the "immediate restoration of internet service provision in Zimbabwe", they ignored how CZC member, Pride MUKONO, used the *WhatsApp* social media platform to educate violent protestors on how to make Motolov cocktails. The omission is evidence of efforts to effect regime change in Zimbabwe.

9.4 Exclusive focus on alleged abuses and the use of excessive force by the Security Forces occludes a more nuanced understanding of the threat posed by the protestors to National Security. The Security Forces' response was proportional to the threat posed. Unfortunately, some lives were lost, including that of a Police Officer, who was stoned to death. The provocation was extreme, and the Officers had a constitutional duty to prevent further loss of lives, including their own. However, some misguided elements within the system and Security Forces committed excesses and the law is taking its course.

9.5 The above notwithstanding, it has been observed that in efforts to discredit the security forces, some protestors have been masquerading as members of the security services, committing wanton acts of violence and destruction of property. In this enterprise a narrative has been penned, accusing members of the security forces of innocent and helpless women. Through the use of an opposition –inclined domestic media and a sympathetic foreign press, this narrative has gained

traction. However, one of the most critical NGOs, the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) which purportedly provides sanctuary and practical assistance to victims of rape and violence has, through its leader Jenni Williams, noted that to date, it is not aware of any rape victim.

**9.6** Relatedly, the Zimbabwe republic Police has through radio, television and the print media, invited women who claim to be victims of rape perpetrated by members of the security forces to report to the police. The invitation has received no takers.

**9.7** It has been observed that in every conflict situation, the first victim is the truth. Recent events in Zimbabwe bear this observation. The MDC and its appendages have crafted a political narrative of the events in Zimbabwe that is calculated to present themselves as victims of what they caused to happen. The narrative underscores the perceived heavy-handed response by Government, thereby shifting the blame from the MDC and imputing it on Government and in the process glossing over what the MDC did – lootings, beatings, destruction of property and life.

**9.8** Additionally, the narrative propagates the theme line that there is an open-ended harassment of civilians by the security forces. Nothing can be further from the truth. The law and order agencies are targeting known suspects who participated in the 14- 16 January carnage. These fugitives from justice have been invited to present themselves to the police but they continue to be in hiding. When law enforcement

agencies visit their places of abode be it during the day or at night, they are accused of human rights violations. This line of attack seeks to alienate Zimbabwe from its regional partners. As noted, the MDC has taken its case to SADC and the AU. The objective is to bring Zimbabwe under the international spotlight on the eve of the EU Summit in early February 2019 to review the renewal of the EU sanctions on Zimbabwe. Ultimately, the added bonus would be to have the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the UN Human Rights Commission pronounce themselves on developments in Zimbabwe and if possible, recommending UN intervention under the Right to Protect Principle.

**Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe**

30 January 2019