



***“What the eye does not see,  
the heart cannot grieve for?”  
The Effects of Organised  
Violence and Torture.***

**Research & Advocacy Unit (RAU)**

**Report produced for “Dealing with the Past: Local Dialogue on  
Operation Murambatsvina”**

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## Contents<sup>1</sup>

Introduction.....	3
Organised violence and torture (OVT) and its consequences .....	5
Displacement.....	8
<i>Displacement in elections</i> .....	8
<i>The land invasions</i> .....	9
Operation Murambatsvina .....	12
Conclusions.....	14
References.....	16
Organised Violence, Trauma & Mental Health .....	16
Operation Murambatsvina: .....	19

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<sup>1</sup> This report was produced by Tony Reeler, Senior Researcher.

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

The massive displacement of Zimbabweans in April 2005 provoked a strong and sustained response from the international community, with even claims that this constituted a crime against humanity. Whilst justified in its response, the international community reacted as if this was an unusual occurrence in Zimbabwe, and thus failed to make the linkages to previous mass displacements. Mass displacements have happened regularly in both the short history of Zimbabwe, as well as in the history of Rhodesia before Independence in 1980.

More than 35 years after the end of the Liberation War and the gaining of Independence, it can be difficult for any but those living during the 1970s to appreciate the ferocity of that war. Although the declaration of an armed struggle to free the country quickly followed the illegal declaration of independence by the Smith regime in 1965, the bulk of the fighting took place during the decade of the 1970s. For accurate purposes, the major fighting began in 1972 and was all over by the end of 1979 with the Lancaster House Agreement. In this time, war spread across the entire country, and scarcely a person was not directly affected by it. At its conclusion, approximately 60,000 people had died, more than 100,000 had been physically injured, about 750,000 people had been herded into “keeps”, and about an equivalent number had been turned into refugees. The forced displacement strategy of the Rhodesian Government, built upon Rhodesian soldiers’ experiences in Malaya in the 1950s, was explicitly aimed at cutting off the guerrillas from any kind of material support, and well as the folorn hope that the rural populations could be psychologically influenced to deny political and psychological support to the freedom fighters.

The violations of human rights were well-documented at the time by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. In two publications, which dealt mainly with events occurring in Mashonaland Central Province, the Catholic Commission provided strong evidence of the violations that were taking place at the hands of the Rhodesian security forces, which included summary executions, torture, intimidation, forced displacements, and various other violations.

In the first publication in 1975, *“The Man in the Middle”*, the Commission provided a detailed report on the operations of the security forces in the north-east of Zimbabwe, which included 37 statements about the torture, ill-treatment, and deaths that had been received at the hands of the Rhodesian security forces (CCJP.1975). Unsurprisingly, this report was not well-received by the Rhodesian Government of Ian Smith, and probably was one factor leading to the promulgation of the infamous Indemnity and Compensation Act later in 1975. This Act provided immunity for all acts carried out in “good faith” whilst defending the country against “terrorism” or in maintaining public order. Even more shocking than the creation of proactive impunity, was making the Act retrospective to 1<sup>st</sup> December 1972: this was the date after which guerrilla attacks began in the north-east in Centenary. The Act was widely attacked and condemned by all, but it began the long history of impunity that has afflicted the country subsequently.

The subsequent publication, *“Civil War in Rhodesia”*, was released in 1976, and showed that the consequence of impunity was an immediate escalation in gross human rights violations (CCJP.1976). Both publications were banned by the Rhodesian government in 1977, and the

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is based on two previous papers. Reeler, A.P (2006), *A People on the run: Displacement and its effects on Zimbabweans over the decades*. Paper presented to: Britain-Zimbabwe Society Annual Research Day, St Antony’s College, Oxford, 19 June 2006; Parsons, R, Reeler, A P, Fisher, J, & Mpande, E (2011), *Trauma and Mental Health in Zimbabwe*. November 2011. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

Government took action to curtail the activities of the Commission in an effort to silence the publication of further damaging reports.

The reports of the Commission highlighted a wide range of gross human rights violations, but centrally implicated the widespread use of torture by the Rhodesian security forces, with savage beatings, electrical torture, burnings, asphyxia, and other forms of torture being documented. The reports also demonstrated that the use of torture implicated virtually every branch of the security forces, and was carried out in a myriad of different settings, not merely in detention settings. In the years that followed, apart from the widespread use of torture, there were multiple reports of extra-judicial killings and summary executions, as well as a number of terrible massacres, both in Zimbabwe and the neighbouring countries of Zambia and Mozambique.

In current times, this campaign of gross human rights violations could easily have been termed genocide, especially when this all incurred in the context of the explicit racial policies of the Rhodesian Government. Alternatively, a case could be made for war crimes having been committed by the Rhodesian security forces. However, all crimes were forgiven in 1980, after the Lancaster House Conference. In 1980 the British Administration passed the Amnesty (General Pardon) Act [Chapter 9:03]. This exempted from criminal liability acts done in good faith before 1 March, 1980, by persons fighting on both sides during the liberation war, both persons striving for majority rule, and persons resisting these efforts.

The amnesty was clearly necessary because both sides had committed gross human rights violations, and hence it was seen as necessary to the creation of peace that no prosecutions took place. Thus, the policy of reconciliation announced by Robert Mugabe in 1980 was underpinned by impunity, and impunity has become an institutional component of the Zimbabwean political since. One of the more enduring consequences of impunity is argued to be the lost opportunity for a country emerging from violent conflict to learn from its mistakes, and to set in place mechanisms, both legal and social, to prevent recurrences. For Zimbabwe, this has clearly been the case (Reeler.1998; Reeler. 2000).

One feature of this lack of learning can be seen in the recent return of so many aspects of the Second Chimurenga, and previously of these features during the violence in the 1980s during Gukurahundi (Sachikonye. 2011). This can be seen in both the blunt rhetoric of the Liberation War, with the characterization of ZANU PF's "political" opponents as "enemies", "sellouts", "agents of imperialism", "neo-cols", and the like. As during the Liberation War, the ordinary Zimbabwean becomes the "man in the middle" whose loyalty must be demonstrated without equivocation, and tested under extreme prejudice. And, of course, if loyalty cannot be guaranteed, then it can be obtained under extreme coercion.

The current political crisis has seen the return of "bases", "pungwes", loyalty testing, displacements, and, above all, a return to torture on a mass scale. Once again this occurs against the background of impunity, both the formal impunity of a General Amnesty and the informal impunity of the partisan position of the security forces. Once again the full resources of the State are marshalled against the opponents of the Government, and, much like the Smith regime, the Mugabe regime justifies this on the basis that it is fighting a war against an inimical enemy: this time it is not against communism, but against *imperialism*. Indeed, it might be said that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Displacement, control of food, and torture are the recurring themes of Zimbabwean political life for more than three decades now.

## **Organised violence and torture (OVT) and its consequences**

This section derives mainly from the reports issued by the Amani Trust during the 1990s (Amani.1997; Amani.1998). There is an immediate caveat to all these findings: the sample was clearly chronic, assessed nearly two decades after the original ill-treatment, and clearly chronicity brings all manner of problems to drawing any clear conclusions about the long-term adjustment of these survivors. Many factors may have intervened to affect the clinical picture seen decades later. Certainly the extreme poverty of many of the survivors could easily have contributed to the psychological disorders seen by the Amani Trust, and undoubtedly the interaction between the original trauma, the poverty, and the disability suffered by many survivors would be difficult to disentangle: cause and effect must be claimed cautiously.

At the outset, it was clear that the survivors seen by the Amani Trust conform demographically to what might be expected several decades after the Liberation War. They were older, poorly educated, and mostly [but not overwhelmingly] male. The ill-treatment reported also conformed to what might be expected: most were victims of the Rhodesian security forces, and most violations took place in the period 1975 to 1979, which was the period following the passing of the Indemnity and Compensation Act, but also the period in which the intensity of the war had increased. There were also a significant number [10%] of survivors who reported being victims of the guerrillas.

The survivors reported high rates of severe torture. The average number of different types of torture reported was 9.4, with high rates of both psychological torture and witnessing reported. However, the frequency of forms of Impact torture<sup>3</sup> was also high, and, interestingly, very little occurred in a formal detention setting. Much of the reported torture took place within the community, and hence in public. Hence, it is not surprising that 89% reported that a family member had also experienced some form of gross human rights violation, and that many of the members of the survivors' families suffered torture in particular. Considering that only 31% of the survivors reported being active supporters of the guerrillas, it is evident that neutrality was no protection against being ill-treated: this was the point made so strongly by the Catholic Commission at the time.

The types of torture reported were similar to those reported in most international studies and the research literature on torture. It was evident that the various forms of psychological torture were considerably more common than the various forms of physical ill-treatment. Whilst psychological torture may seem less harmful than Impact Torture, it is worth reiterating that international law and statutes do not draw a distinction between different forms of torture, and, furthermore, the research evidence suggests that psychological torture can be as harmful in its effects as Impact Torture. Eight of the ten most frequent forms of torture reported were forms of psychological torture, whilst the two most common forms of Impact Torture were beatings and severe beatings. Beatings of one kind or another were the most common forms of Impact Torture reported in most studies, but there were a very wide range of other forms of Impact Torture reported less frequently. There were significant correlations found between the various types of torture, and the overall torture score correlated significantly with the SRQ20<sup>4</sup>, indicating that severity of torture was related to the development of subsequent psychological disorder.

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<sup>3</sup> Impact torture is the term used by the Amani Trust to describe forms of physical abuse (beatings, electrical shock, etc) and deprivation (being denied food, water, medical care, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> The Self-Reporting Questionnaire [SRQ-20] is a 20 item psychiatric screening instrument, widely used in the Zimbabwean setting for identifying psychological disorder. See, for example,

As regards the health of these survivors, the sample reported a high degree of Social Adversity, and frequent recourse to health facilities and health practitioners, with traditional healers being the most frequently consulted of the latter. Depressive disorders [48%] and Common Mental Disorders [44%] were the most common diagnoses, but 35% were assessed as having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD]. Overall, the data described a group of survivors that had been subjected to severe torture, as had their families. The sample had a high prevalence [45%] of clinically significant psychological disorders, and, in those with psychological disorder, this was significantly related to the severity of torture.

There was a clear association between severity of torture and the development of subsequent psychological disorder, and this was extended by the finding that women were more likely to report more severe torture and be more likely to have subsequent psychological disorder. There was an association between detention and more severe torture, but this did not result in worse adjustment subsequently. Those who had more severe torture, especially those who had experienced Impact Torture, were more likely to have similar treatment experienced in another family member. Activists were more likely to have been drawn from the better educated, and, whilst activists were more likely to have had more severe torture than Non-activists, this was not the case for the better educated, who were no more likely to have had worse treatment than the poorly educated. The poorly educated were, however, more likely to have clinically significant psychological disorder, whilst the better educated and the activists were more likely to report more current symptoms.

The rationale for examining the effects of the Liberation War was to learn about the long-term effects on the survivors, and to see what relevance this has for Zimbabwe today. As was the case in the 1970s, Zimbabwe is the throes of a complex emergency with mass violence, the destruction of social capital, and the severe erosion of the all the socio-economic support normally available to citizens. Whilst it cannot be called a “war” in any strict sense, the situation in which so many ordinary Zimbabweans find themselves seems little different to that in which their parents found themselves in the immediate pre-Independence era. Here it must be remembered that at least half of the current Zimbabwean population was not even born at the granting of Independence and the ending of the Liberation War in 1980.

The findings of the Amani Trust generated a number of conclusions, and the kinds of effects brought about by OVT during the Liberation War have been replicated again and again in subsequent periods of OVT (Parsons et al. 2011; CSV.2009).

Firstly, it is very clear from the analysis that torture was widespread and carried out by many different groups. Although the Rhodesian security forces were the major perpetrators off the violations experienced by these survivors, they were not exclusively the perpetrators, and 10% of the sample reported violations at the hands of the guerrillas. It is significant here that only 31% of the sample reported being activists, and hence, in the battle for the allegiance of the ordinary rural people, there was no safe position that a non-affiliated person could take. As was evident in many of the histories taken for the survivors, being accused of being a supporter for one side or the other was sufficient cause for being tortured. There clearly was no neutral ground in Mashonaland Central Province, and indeed anywhere in the rural areas of Rhodesia.

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Reeler, A.P., Williams, H., & Todd, C.H, (1993), *Psychopathology in Primary Care patients: A four-year study in rural and urban settings*, Central African Journal of Medicine, 1-8.

Secondly, the torture reported was severe, with both psychological and Impact Torture being reported with high frequencies. Very little of this torture took place in detention settings, but, where this did happen, it was more severe than that which took place in public. There was the startling finding that women reported more severe torture than the men, which is surprising and may represent a subjective response to torture rather than a reality, but the more severe torture reported by women was significantly associated with women being more likely to have subsequent psychological disorder. Here it must be pointed out that there was also a strong and significant relationship between severe torture and subsequent psychological disorder for the sample as a whole, both men and women.

Thirdly, much of the torture was publicly witnessed by both adults and children, and hence it is evident that the climate of fear and terror must have been intense in the extreme. Here the finding that those who experienced more severe torture were more likely to have had other members of their families experience similar ill-treatment is significant. Clearly, if one was suspected, then logically it was likely that this would be assumed of other family members: either being a suspected guerrilla supporter or a “sellout” could have terrible consequences. It is sometimes conventional to draw a distinction between “primary” and “secondary” victims, meaning a distinction between those who directly experience torture and those who live with torture victims. This data shows that the number of “primary” victims – those who experienced torture as well as those who witnessed it – is very high indeed. In these terms, it seems evident that the whole community was comprised of victims, and this must have had serious implications for the post-war adjustment of the community.

Fourthly, the data indicate that the post-war adjustment of these survivors was poor. A significant number, 45%, had psychological disorders of one kind or another. This is the kind of prevalence rate that would be expected in the aftermath of a war. This is a much higher prevalence rate of psychological disorder than would normally be expected in a rural Zimbabwean community, where rates of ordinary psychological disorder are generally in the range of 10-20% of overall morbidity. Those who had experienced more severe torture were worse off, with women and the less educated significantly worse off.

The Amani Trust made comprehensive recommendations for the rehabilitation of the survivors (Amani. 1998), but none of the recommendations were implemented outside of the programme mounted by the Amani Trust itself, in partnership with the health services in Mashonaland Central Province [and subsequently in Matabeleland South Province]. Not even in the aftermath of the scandal over the use of the War Victims Compensation Act was a policy put in place to address the needs of the survivors.

Now these findings have been subsequently reported for all the other periods of OVT since Independence in 1980. They were found in the survivors and victims of the Gukurahundi (CCJP & LRF.1997), the Food Riots (Human Rights Forum. 1998; Human Rights Forum. 1999), the violent elections in 2000 (Human Rights Forum.2001), in 2002 (Amani.2002; Human Rights Forum.2002), and in 2008 (CSV.2009; Human Rights Forum. 2008). They are also found in a variety of other reports, dealing with violations against commercial farm workers, (GAPWUZ. 2009), commercial farmers (JAG.2008), teachers (PTUZ. 2012), women activists (WOZA. 2010; NCA.2008), and refugees (SACST. 2008). In fact, the reports of human rights violations and their consequences are so numerous that a review of displacements can only give a brief flavour as has been done here.

Displacement has had less attention over the years, which is the aim of this report.

## Displacement

Displacement, or more precisely *forced displacement* means the coercive movement of people from their home or home region. This can result in people becoming Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), or refugees if they move out of the country, as several million have done in the past decade. In the introduction, using the Liberation War as the first example, it was pointed out that rural Zimbabweans were displaced through coerced placement in “protected villages”, as well as being forced out of the country and becoming refugees, mostly in the neighboring countries of Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia. We will not concern ourselves with refugees in the current period, which has been well-described in a number of reports (SACST. 2008), but will focus on the other category, the creation of IDPs.

### *Displacement in elections*

Whilst displacements took place during the Liberation War and subsequently during the Gukurahundi period of the 1980s, it is clear that these were displacements that took place within a civil war setting, and during events in which displacements commonly occur. This has not been the case since 1987 and the Unity Accord between ZANU PF and ZAPU. Since 2000, however, there has been a sustained and very subtle form of displacement taking place, and this involves the systematic expulsion of “anti-government” elements from the rural communities around Zimbabwe.

The most comprehensive source of data is derived from the Political Violence Monthly reports of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, which published both cases and statistical information of human rights violations since July 2001. From July 2001 to June 2009, the Human Rights Forum reported a total of 44,392 violations, which may correspond to the number of people affected. This may be either an underestimate or an overestimate, since a single person may report more than one violation, but equally many of the reports are of multiple persons being affected by a single violation. However, the total number of violations reported is not trivial, whether the actual prevalence and incidence of gross human rights violations is known or not.

The case reports since 2000 indicate a very specific pattern to the displacements, with perceived opponents of ZANU PF being assaulted, tortured, abducted, their homes and property destroyed, property stolen, crops and livestock destroyed, family members threatened, and other family members suffering similar violations. A similar strategy can be seen during the Liberation War, where loyalty was a crucial commodity, which if not given voluntarily, was obtained by coercion, and this was a tactic of both sides to the struggle.

**Table 1: Displacements reported between July 2001 and June 2009**

*[source: Political Violence Monthly reports of the Human Rights Forum]*

Year	Total no. of cases.	Displaced	%
2000	2964	1724	58.2
2001	2285	472	20.7
2002	3155	1041	33.0
2003	3295	413	12.5

As can be seen from Table 1, displacements are a significant proportion of the violations reported, and particularly in the years in which national elections took place – 2000, 2002, and 2005. Displacements are 14% of the total violations reported in election years as opposed to 7% in other years, and displacements as a whole are 11% of the total violations recorded by the Human Rights Forum. The point made above

2004	2656	383	14.4
2005	4170	688	16.5
2006	5751	121	2.1
2007	8765	41	0.5
2008	10257	1162	11.3
2009	1094	53	4.8
<b>Total:</b>	<b>44392</b>	<b>6098</b>	<b>13.7</b>

should be repeated: this cannot be taken as a measure of the number of people affected since the records are of violations and not the number of people affected. Neither can these figures be taken to reflect the national picture as they are from a select sample of victims that were willing to report their violation and most did not bother or were too frightened to do so.

Unfortunately, the data from the Human Rights Forum do not allow much further analysis than this, but access to a data base of victims seen by medical practitioners did allow more detailed analysis. A total of 573 cases for the period 2000 to 2002 were available for analysis, of which 155 [27%] cases involved a displacement from the community. There was a very wide distribution of the cases geographically, but unfortunately no data from Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South Provinces. The three Mashonaland Provinces accounted for nearly 40% of all these cases. The geographical spread showed a decided skew in favour of rural as opposed to urban constituencies, with over 80% of these cases coming from rural constituencies.

Overall, 54% of the displaced sub-sample were displaced and suffered ill-treatment because of the elections in 2000 and 2002. Additionally, a small number were displaced during bye-elections held during 2001. These victims reported very high frequencies of witnesses to their ill-treatment by adults and children, as well as other family members having experienced similar treatment to the victims.

There were no differences found in the health and social consequences between rural and urban groups, or the group as a whole. 27% of the whole sub-sample showed significant psychological disorder, with a marginal trend towards more cases being found in the rural as opposed to urban group. This is probably unsurprising, since both groups had been displaced.

So, what then does this brief analysis of displacements tell us? Firstly, that the victims were more likely to have come from a pre-dominantly rural than an urban setting. Secondly, that they were more likely to be displaced as a consequence of elections than any other reason. Thirdly, that persons from the rural areas were more likely to have experienced their ill-treatment at the hands of ZANU PF supporters, and, finally, that targets were more likely to be better educated and employed than most people in the rural areas. Given that the MDC has been drawing its support from the young, the unemployed, and the better educated, none of this is surprising, and strongly suggests an organized campaign. It is not as dramatic as either the displacements due to the land invasions or *Operation Murambatsvina*, but it is certainly more sinister, and, given that the MDC alleged in 2008 that over 50,000 of its supporters had been internally displaced, and that there were also large numbers in 2002, the numbers are probably not trivial.

### ***The land invasions***

In this section, there will be no analysis of the rights and wrongs of the land reform process since 2000. There are a number of excellent reviews of this process (Hammar, Raftopoulos & Jensen. 2003; Raftopoulos, B., & Savage, T. 2004) and the merits and demerits of the highly controversial policy of land nationalization have been covered in enormous detail. However, it is incontestable that many people were displaced during this process, although there is very

little hard data on the consequences for the displaced commercial farm workers. This displacement, which presages *Operation Murambatsvina*, has been argued by the Zimbabwe Government to be an unfortunate, but necessary consequence of economic development. Similar arguments were advanced for *Operation Murambatsvina*.

However, in common with other earlier displacements, the dispossession of the commercial farmers and the displacement of the commercial farm workers also had an explicitly political purpose. By 1999, eleven million hectares of the richest land were still in the hands of about 4,500 commercial farmers, virtually all of whom were white. It was estimated that there were about 320,000 full-time farm workers on these farms, supporting a population of about 2 million persons (Sachikonye. 2004). Many of these farm workers were Zimbabweans whose origins were in Mozambique or Malawi, and few had any right to land outside the farms on which they lived and worked. Thus, for this population the increasingly acrimonious debate over the need for land reform in the late 1990s had a very personal salience. In this debate, the endless discussion was over the need to reduce overcrowding in the communal lands, and scarcely any conversation about what would happen to the farm workers. The possibility that a change of government would be protective of their interests provided a fertile recruiting ground amongst these farm workers.

In an overall population of about 14 million, 320,000 people is a significant number of potential voters, and, more importantly, a very high percentage of these potential voters lived in the three Mashonaland Provinces, where plantation agriculture was prevalent. These 3 Provinces were undoubtedly the heartland of support for ZANU PF, and, in previous elections, no opposition party had ever made any significant inroads there. Indeed, in 1995, ZANU PF was returned unopposed in 22 of the 34 constituencies, and won the remaining 12 seats with majorities in all cases of more than 80% (Makumbe & Compagnon. 2001). The MDC would not have seemed to present a threat to this hegemony, but there were small indications from the results of the 2000 referendum on the proposed new constitution that all was not well with the support for ZANU PF.

When the land invasions began a week after the results of the referendum were announced, many speculated, and the Zimbabwe Government confirmed this, that this was due to the rejection of the constitution, including the controversial “land clause”. Here it is worth pointing out that land was not a major concern for Zimbabweans: in both 1999 and 2004 very small numbers – 1% and 4% respectively – mentioned land reform as a priority issue (Afrobarometer. 1999; Chikwana et al. 2004). However, despite the Government’s rhetoric and the propaganda about a “people-driven” process to re-claim the land, the scale and the levels of organization suggested something more sinister (Human Rights Forum. 2001). In particular, the levels of violence associated with the invasions suggested something more than mere land acquisition. Although the invasions took place around the country, it seemed clear that there was a focus on the constituencies in which a “no” vote had been returned in the constitutional referendum, but there was also the surprising violence in the 3 Mashonaland Provinces. Why should violence happen in constituencies that had always previously supported ZANU PF? The answer is simple: the commercial farm workers were shifting allegiance and could easily swing the vote away from ZANU PF. Quite simply the smokescreen provided by land reform allowed massive intimidation to take place that otherwise would have been wholly unacceptable: resisting “land reform” provides more acceptable explanations for the violence than refusing to vote for the party in power.

When the MDC, despite massive levels of intimidation and violence, still won 57 seats, it seemed unlikely to many observers that, with the more problematic Presidential election to

come in 2002, that the pretext for organized violence and torture provided by the land reform process would cease. Whilst the manoeuvring for political power continued, a massive displacement was continuing.

By the so-called “end” of the land reform period, 2004, more than 180,000 farm workers had lost their jobs, whilst the number of commercial farmers had dwindled from 4,500 to about 600. By 2004, farm workers’ income had dropped from Z\$15 billion in 2000 to about Z\$2 billion a year. Worse than this, few had other homes to go, and had become internally displaced, a situation not helped by the inability of many commercial farmers to pay the statutory severance packages: the commercial farmers were not being compensated themselves for the loss of their farms.

The effects on the commercial farmers has been excessively well-covered by pressure groups and the media, but not so the plight of the commercial farm workers. One small study of the latter group provides an indication of the suffering experienced, and the suffering that continues to be experienced. Here it is well to remember that many of these farm workers have been subsequently displaced again by *Operation Murambatsvina*. In 2002, the Amani Trust published a small report on the experiences of 139 farm workers that had been displaced from 5 farms in Mashonaland East Province (Amani.2002). The results of this small survey were startling.

A very high percentage (71%) reported an experience of torture or repressive violence, whilst 65%, had had some experience of organized violence or torture prior to being displaced. The sample also reported that many adults in their family had witnessed their torture. 59% had had other adults witness their torture, and 55% reported that other family members had also experienced violence. More disturbingly, children were not exempt, 55% reporting that children in their families had witnessing the violence.

Whilst much of the ill-treatment related to the experiences during “pungwes”, it was also clear that there were also multiple cases of individual ill-treatment, usually of farm workers that held some form of responsibility on the farm, but also those farm workers or farms that were seen as being supportive of the MDC. It was the occurrence of torture at the “pungwes” that led one international organization to describe this as “mass psychological torture” - (IRCT.2000). Psychological torture is frequently under-estimated both in the frequency of its occurrence and in its effects, and forms of psychological torture were the most frequent forms of torture reported. It should not be assumed that this is a lesser form of ill-treatment, but, in the context of frequent physical torture, and the mass meetings at which torture frequently took place, the long-term effects of psychological torture cannot be minimised.

Psychological disorder is the most common short-term and long-term effect of torture, whether the torture is physical or merely psychological. In this survey, 81% reported scores in excess of 4, which was considerably higher than any comparable primary care population, including populations containing survivors of torture. It is even in excess of the prevalence obtained in a Zimbabwean refugee setting, the prevalence found in a war veteran group, and even the prevalence found as a result of *Operation Murumbatsvina* [see below].

Most of these findings were subsequently corroborated in a later study on commercial farm workers (GAPWUZ. 2009), and it is important to note that the violations against farmers and especially farm workers took place over an extended period, even continuing to date.

## Operation Murambatsvina

This has been the most dramatic displacement, and probably the most notorious in view of the UN Special Envoy's report on the displacements. The notoriety, sparked by the UN Special Envoy, derived obviously from the scale, but also from the raising by the Special Envoy of the notion that this displacement might constitute a crime against humanity, well as the somewhat oblique raising of the Responsibility to Protect. Neither of these latter two points have been sufficiently canvassed subsequently, although the Oxford Pro Bono Publico Unit did provide, in 2005, an opinion supportive of the crimes against humanity argument.

The grounds offered by the Zimbabwe Government for *Operation Murambatsvina* were several-fold and largely unconvincing. In an African country that has one of the lowest percentages of informal settlements and shanties, the argument that this massive displacement was in the multiple interests of re-housing people, lowering crime, and protecting public health seemed specious. More probable were the alternatives raised in the press and by commentators: *Operation Murambatsvina* had the triple focus of destroying urban civic structures, wiping out the informal economy and forcing economic life back into the formal economy, and pre-empting civic and political action.

The best data on *Operation Murambatsvina* has come from a number of studies conducted by ActionAid International, and, in particular, a report specifically examining the consequences of the mass displacement on the victims' psycho-social well-being (ActionAid. 2005). The following section draws mostly on the last report.

A first point to make is that the data from the ActionAid International studies suggested a much greater number of persons affected than that suggested by the UN Special Envoy. Based on a sample of 23,511 households, the ActionAid survey suggested an affected population of about 1.2 million people as opposed to the 700,000 suggested by the UN Special Envoy. This is clearly a different order of magnitude, but the discrepancy between the 2 estimates has drawn little comment.

A second point to make is that the ActionAid data is based on actual surveys as opposed to estimates constructed from secondary sources, as is clearly the case in the report of the UN Special Envoy. This is not to criticize the conclusions of the UN Special Envoy's report, but merely to point out that there may be more reliable estimates for basing conclusions.

The study attempted to obtain an estimate of the degree of trauma experienced by the victims of *Operation Murambatsvina*, and also to get some kind of comparison between this event and other periods of violence.

**Table 2: Trauma over the years: Percentage of persons reporting trauma Experience per year.**

[source: ActionAid.2005]

	Harare	Bulawayo	Mutare
<1980	27.40%	45.10%	46.40%
1980-1987	30%	58.30%	47.30%
1990-1997	57.40%	62.40%	70.30%
1998-2000	80.50%	65.30%	89.50%
2001-2004	88.90%	81.60%	97.90%
2005	97.40%	93.30%	100%

There is a significant difference seen between Bulawayo and the other 2 sites for the period 1980 to 1987, which would be expected in the light of reports on the Gukurahundi (CCJP & LRF. 1997). Furthermore, there is the dramatic increase in trauma reported from 1998 onwards, which again would be expected in the light of all the reports from this time onwards.

The study also inquired into the types of violations experienced over the years, and the frequency of trauma types again corresponds to the events that were taking place during these times. For example, in the period 1980 to 1987, there were increases, all associated more strongly with Bulawayo, in deprivation of food, murders, severe beatings, and torture: most types of trauma are elevated in comparison with the pre-1980 period. The items related to gross human rights violations were grossly elevated from 1998 onwards, peaking in the period 2001 to 2004, whilst items related to displacement – *being short of food, lack of access to medical care and shelter, confiscation or destruction of property, and feeling dependent on others* - were most frequent in 2005.

The analysis conducted by ActionAid shows quite clearly that this last was associated with *Operation Murambatsvina*, but also demonstrated the contributions of different forms of trauma to the development of subsequent psychological disorder. There are very strong correlations developing between trauma scores and psychological disorder as measured by the SRQ-8<sup>5</sup>, and these increased in recent years, as would be expected from all the human rights reports on Zimbabwe.

**Table 13: Correlations between SRQ-8 and Total Trauma [Experiences] score per year.**

*[source: ActionAid.2005]*

<1980	1980-1987	1990-1997	1998-2000	2001-2004	2005
0.034	0.022	0.064*	0.098**	0.11**	0.113**

\* $p=0.01$ ; \*\* $p=0.05$

Overall, nearly 70% of the sample reported scores in excess of 4 on the SRQ-8, which translates, according to the ActionAid report, into a probable population of about 800,000 persons with psychological disorders. It is worth repeating here the major conclusions of the ActionAid study, where the following were found:

- *A significant relationship between current psychological disorder and the number of trauma events reported;*
- *A significant relationship between current psychological disorder and trauma due to OVT [organized violence and torture];*
- *A significant relationship between current psychological disorder and trauma due to displacement events [OM items];*
- *A significant relationship between current psychological disorder and repeated exposure to trauma.*

The other findings were no less important, especially those relating to the population with HIV/AIDS, where the data indicated that those persons with HIV/AIDS were likely to have

<sup>5</sup> The Self-Reporting Questionnaire [SRQ-8] is an 8-item psychiatric screening instrument developed in Zimbabwe for identifying cases of psychological disorder in a primary care setting. It is not a self-report instrument as such, but given as an interview. All scores of 4 and above are indicative of psychological disorder.

lost both access to medical treatment and care of various kinds. The study also provided evidence that this was not characteristically a slum-dwelling population and a population that had suffered significant economic losses, both from the loss of their housing as well as their livelihoods. The reports from ActionAid strongly corroborated the report on the UN Special Envoy, and extended it many important respects. Subsequent reports on the effects of *Operation Murambatsvina* further support the previous findings (SPT. 2005(a); SPT. 2005(b); Human Rights Forum. 2002(a); Human Rights Forum. 2005(b); Human rights Forum. 2006), and, taken together, these reports conclusively refute the Zimbabwe Government's view that *Operation Murambatsvina* was an action taken to advance the living conditions of Zimbabwean citizens.

## Conclusions

This necessarily brief review over the past three decades of displacements and the gross human rights violations associated with these points to a number of conclusions.

The first is that displacements are invariably accompanied by serious violations of human rights, and obviously displacement is itself a serious human rights violation. In the case of *Operation Murambatsvina*, it has even been argued that this displacement was a crime against humanity, but similar arguments might be raised in respect of the other displacements covered in this review. The issues around the land invasions are complex since the displacement of the commercial farm workers was a long process rather than an event like *Operation Murambatsvina*, but there is no doubt that people were forcibly displaced, and that this was accompanied by serious violence. Whether this would conform to the definition of a crime against humanity is a debate for another paper.

Secondly, there was organised violence and torture in all these periods, with the most serious violence occurring, as might be expected, during the Liberation War. War will always occasion the worst brutality, but it is unwise to minimise the brutality of the other periods described in this paper. The effects of violence are not merely objectively defined, and the subjective perception of violence by the sufferer is equally important, especially when the most persistent and long-standing consequences are psychological in nature.

Thirdly, psychological disorder is the most probable consequence of experiencing OVT and even of witnessing this (Parsons et al. 2011), and this has been shown for all the periods under review here. The evidence from decades of study is irrefutable, but there has been an over-concern with certain forms of violence, particularly that which would be characterised as being "impact" in nature. This is changing however, and recent work suggests that a distinction can be made between psychological disorder due to a direct experience with political violence and living in a state of terror due to the possibility of political violence (Steel et al. 2009). The former will mostly likely lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the latter to Depression, and both were found in the survivors of the Liberation War (Amani. 1998). It is evident from this last work that time does not cure in itself.

Fourthly, living through displacement has been minimised in comparison with the violence that frequently accompanies this, and as seen for *Operation Murambatsvina* the rates of psychological disorder were extremely high. Lest it be thought that this was an overestimate, a subsequent indirect study found that people reporting *having property confiscated* were 14 times more likely to have psychological disorder than the general population (CSU.2006). Reporting an experience of violence also increased the risk of psychological disorder, increasing with the number of occasions of violence.

Finally, and as suggested above, time does not of itself heal, and this has been well-described by the work done with the survivors of the Liberation War. It is a matter of concern that people were still suffering from significant psychological disorder more than two decades after the original violence. It is of concern that despite all that has been done in understanding the effects of organised violence and torture in Zimbabwe that there are no formal, government-driven programmes of rehabilitation, and most support for the victims continues to come only from non-governmental organisations. And, it is of the greatest possible concern that the government allows the process of creating new victims to go on.

Putting an end to political violence is critically important. When we have yet to deal with the burdens of the past, and this will not be simple given the probably numbers that have been affected over the decades, it is irresponsible in the extreme to allow any more political violence.

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