

# THE TRUTH ABOUT ZIMBABWE

## Hunting us down

Sunday 13th April 2008

Dear Family and Friends, I received a call early one morning this week from a friend in a small country town. Speaking quickly and quietly for fear of being overheard, he told me of the frightening events that were going on all around him. Eight double cab vehicles had arrived in the town. Armed men in civilian clothes alighted. They had lists of names of people who had been involved in the election campaign for the opposition MDC in the area.

"They are hunting us down," he said. "Each and every one of us is being sought out, beaten and punished for supporting the MDC." Some have had their homes burnt down, large numbers of people have been beaten and a local opposition organizer said : " it is terrible, there are injured people everywhere."

Later another call came, this time the story was of events on one of the few remaining commercial farms. Again the eye witness account was of armed men. There were youths too, many scores of them and they were clearly high on drugs and drink. The drumming, singing, shouting and intimidation carried only one message: there will be no change in Zimbabwe.

Scores of stories like this are coming in from all over the country. Armed men, drugged youths, lists of opposition supporters and activists, and a wave of fear sweeping over our country. None are being spared : men, women, children. Beating, burning, threatening and intimidating is the result of the brave voices of Zimbabweans across the country who voted for change.

While this goes on the economic and domestic situation for families everywhere has reached absolutely critical levels. In the fortnight since the elections food supplies in the shops have dropped to almost nothing. One major supermarket in my home town this weekend had lines and lines of scouring powder but no basics at all - no rice, pasta, flour, cereals, tin, jars or in fact anything edible. All fresh produce from milk and eggs to vegetables and meat has become virtually unobtainable as thugs and mobs close down farms, terrify workers and rob the nations shelves of the last few mouthfuls of food. A friend who helps feed children whose parents have died of AIDS, waited for almost 5 hours at the local Grain Marketing Board Depot while every single bag of the precious staple grain was loaded onto army trucks. She left empty handed and had also failed to find any beans, fish or even soya to buy for vulnerable children hungry and alone.

The reaction of our neighbours to the terror and tragedy unravelling Zimbabwe is beyond all understanding. South African president Thabo Mbeki emerged from an hour long meeting with Mr Mugabe saying: "There is no crisis in Zimbabwe." Fourteen African heads of state met for 12 hours in Zambia and emerged saying: "election results must be released expeditiously."

Of course we don't know what went on behind closed doors but it seems like quiet diplomacy has again been the convenient smoke screen for Africa's Big Men. It is no comfort whatsoever to us mums who can't find enough food for our families. It is no comfort to frightened men whispering on crackly telephone lines about men with guns on an opposition witch hunt. It is no comfort to farmers trying to grow food but faced with drugged, drunken youths who want what they've got.

Zimbabweans voted for change a fortnight ago, the MDC announced that it had been achieved but day by day that change is being painfully, brutally stripped away.  
Until next week, love cathy. 13<sup>th</sup> April 2008