

ZADHR
Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights
Cases of Post Election Violence Continue to Escalate
18 April 2008

ZADHR issued a statement on April 15th concerning 157 cases of organised violence and torture (OVT) documented by members of the association. As of end of day April 17th this total is now 242. Forty-two cases were seen and treated on April the 17th alone; six of these were women, one a boy of 12. Of the 42, 19 of the incidents occurred in Mashonaland East (Murehwa, Mutoko, Mudzi and Maramba) and a further 19 in or near Harare (Dzivarasekwa, Kuwadzana, Tafara, Budiro, Glen Norah, Epworth and Chitungwiza).

Most of these cases continue to be of soft tissue injury, especially of the buttocks but often in other parts of the body including the breast of women. The extreme force of the injuries is demonstrated by the common occurrence of superficial blistering and deep, sometimes extensive, haematoma formation. Haematomas are substantive collections of whole blood, as distinct from "simple" bruising which is blood in amongst other tissues.

In 15 of the cases of soft tissue injury, there were documented "tram tracks" on the overlying skin. This is a classic sign of assault with a hard thin object such as a stick or baton. Three more cases had fractures of the forearm or hand (right ulna, left radius and ulna, two left metacarpals). The patient with fractured right ulna also sustained fractures of ribs on the left side of his chest associated with a left haemothorax (blood in the space between the lungs and the chest wall).

There have been reports of several deaths but because these do not usually present to ZADHR members, only one case (of multiple stab wounds to the chest and abdomen) can be confirmed. This was a brother of a patient from Karoi, previously reported as having been admitted to hospital in Harare.

ZADHR remains deeply concerned that no measures are being taken by the authorities to prevent further violence and by allegations that security forces are now increasingly involved in assaults and torture, particularly in Harare.

These cases suggest a disturbing trend of systematic violent assault and torture, and with more victims possibly unable to access medical attention in rural areas, urgent action is required to prevent the situation deteriorating further. It is essential that the United Nations, African Union and SADC take urgent and decisive steps to engage the Zimbabwean authorities and all stakeholders to end this crisis.

ZADHR reiterates its call for an end to violence by all political parties and the security forces