



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 January 2019

Any information regarding the state police and intelligence services and the tracking of citizens by these agencies on the basis that they are against the current regime.

A report published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, in a section titled “Civil Society Organisations” (paragraph 3.41), states:

“The type and level of harassment and intimidation of CSOs, activists and human rights lawyers has changed since 2008. Earlier, individuals at all levels were more likely to experience harassment, arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance. While this has declined, the National Prosecution Authority has brought legal proceedings against all major CSOs in Zimbabwe, and regularly prosecutes individual human rights lawyers for contempt of court and obstruction of justice. Human rights organisations have told DFAT that since 2013 authorities have mostly targeted high-profile human rights advocates through surveillance, arrests and spurious legal proceedings.” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) (11 April 2016) *DFAT Country Information Report: Zimbabwe*, p.12)

The 2017 US Department of State report on religious freedom in Zimbabwe states:

“There were reports from religious and civil society groups of government monitoring or harassment of church congregations and religiously affiliated NGOs and their members perceived to be critical of the government. Instances included surveillance by security officials and denial of police permission to hold public events. Christian aid organizations and local NGOs focused on memorializing victims of the 1980s Gukurahundi mass killings said security officials also monitored their activities with increased frequency, particularly in areas considered strongholds of the political opposition.” (US Department of State (29 May 2018) *2017 Report on International Religious Freedom – Zimbabwe*, p.4)

The 2017 US Department of State country report for Zimbabwe, in a section titled “Freedom of Expression”, states:

“Security authorities restricted freedom of speech and arrested individuals, particularly those who made or publicized comments critical of President Mugabe or made political statements opposing ZANU-PF or the government’s agenda. CIO agents and informers routinely monitored political and other meetings. Authorities targeted persons deemed to be critical of the government for harassment, abduction, interrogation, and physical abuse.” (US Department of State (20 April 2018) *2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe*, p.16)

The 2018 Freedom House report for Zimbabwe, in response to the question “Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?”, states:

“Zimbabweans enjoy some freedom and openness in private discussion, but official monitoring of public gatherings, prosecution of offenses like insulting or undermining the president, and the threat of political violence serve as deterrents to unfettered speech. In October 2017, the ministry for Cyber Security, Threat Detection, and Mitigation was established, with the government saying it was needed to respond to threats against the state posed by the purported abuse of social media. Soon after, police arrested Martha O'Donovan, a project manager for the online station Magamba TV and a U.S. citizen, for a tweet that allegedly insulted Mugabe. She was charged under the CLCRA with subversion and insulting the president, and was free on bail at year's end.” (Freedom House (15 March 2018) *Freedom in the World 2018 – Zimbabwe*)

A Voice of America news report states:

“Some members of missing Itai Dzamara, leader of Occupy Africa Unity Square, pressing 91-year old President Robert Mugabe to step down, say they are now living in fear as they are being allegedly followed by people suspected to be members of Zimbabwe's national spy network, the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO).

These fears come at a time when President Mugabe is on an official visit to South Africa where protestors are demanding that he should find Dzamara.

Dzamara's close associates and the National Youth Action Alliance told Studio 7 that the harassment allegedly intensified during the Easter weekend and some of them had to spend the holiday away from their homes.

Stephen Sibanda of the Mavambo Kusile Dawn party, who worked closely with Dzamara, said some unidentified people have been visiting his home since last Thursday and he is now fearing for his life.” (Voice of America (7 April 2015) *Suspected CIO Surveillance Instills Fear in 'Abducted' Dzamara's Colleagues*)

A report from the South Africa publication African Independent states:

“As the battle to succeed President Robert Mugabe intensifies, Zimbabwe's intelligence apparatus has increased surveillance on senior ruling Zanu-PF party and government officials, leaving them jittery and wary of their communication habits and movements.

State security agents, comprising the spy agency the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and military intelligence, are at the forefront of snooping on their colleagues as well as supposed adversaries. High-ranking government officials said intelligence gathering by security agents has reached unprecedented and worrying levels as the succession battle intensifies.

Some of the intelligence gathered, officials say, is being used to promote factional agendas rather than to advance the country's security. 'You are no longer free to have a conversation on your phone because every conversation is listened to.

You are not free to have a conversation in your car or office because they are bugged. Even our homes are bugged,' a cabinet minister said.'" (African Independent (7 July 2017) *Paranoia soars in Zim as state now spies on its own*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

African Independent (7 July 2017) *Paranoia soars in Zim as state now spies on its own*
<https://www.africanindy.com/news/paranoia-soars-in-zim-as-state-now-spies-on-its-own-10158569>
(Accessed 10 January 2019)

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) (11 April 2016) *DFAT Country Information Report: Zimbabwe*
<https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/country-information-report-zimbabwe.pdf>
(Accessed 10 January 2019)

Freedom House (15 March 2018) *Freedom in the World 2018 – Zimbabwe*
<https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ab8bd1726.html>
(Accessed 9 January 2019)

US Department of State (29 May 2018) *2017 Report on International Religious Freedom – Zimbabwe*
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281048.pdf>
(Accessed 10 January 2019)

US Department of State (20 April 2018) *2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Zimbabwe*
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277307.pdf>
(Accessed 9 January 2019)

Voice of America (7 April 2015) *Suspected CIO Surveillance Instills Fear in 'Abducted' Dzamara's Colleagues*
<https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/itai-dzamara-friends-live-in-fear-as-of-men-trailing-them/2710213.html>
(Accessed 10 January 2019)

Sources Consulted:

Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
UK Home Office
UNHCR Refworld
US Department of State