

Victims of sexual violence in Zimbabwe say...

WE MUST STOP THE RAPE AND TERROR

by Jocelyn Craugh Zuckerman

JUST AFTER SUNDOWN IN EARLY June, Margaret was getting ready for bed when she heard vehicles pull up outside her home in eastern Zimbabwe. She knew who it was: government-affiliated thugs who had come to harass her for working for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the country's opposition political party. Rifle-wielding youths in fatigues burst into her house and shouted at her to hand over her political posters. She did. They forced Margaret into a truck, drove away, and eventually pulled off the road, yanking her out of the vehicle. "You are a sellout," the soldiers spat. "You are selling our country." Then they beat and raped her repeatedly.

Conditions in President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe have deteriorated dramatically over the past year. Inflation has rocketed up to 80 billion percent. A cholera epidemic has killed thousands. Hundreds of thousands are starving from food shortages. Last spring, in the run-up to a presidential election, Mugabe's ZANU-PF party unleashed an unprecedented wave of violence against supporters of MDC rival Morgan Tsvangirai. What is only now emerging is a particularly hideous element of that campaign: the brutal rape of hundreds—perhaps thousands—of opposition women and girls.

As I traveled around Zimbabwe recently, people shared stories with me of friends or relatives who had been abducted, beaten, or tortured. They often told me about rapes as well. The exact number of sexual assaults is impossible to pin down. Betty Makoni, a Zimbabwean activist and rape survivor, said

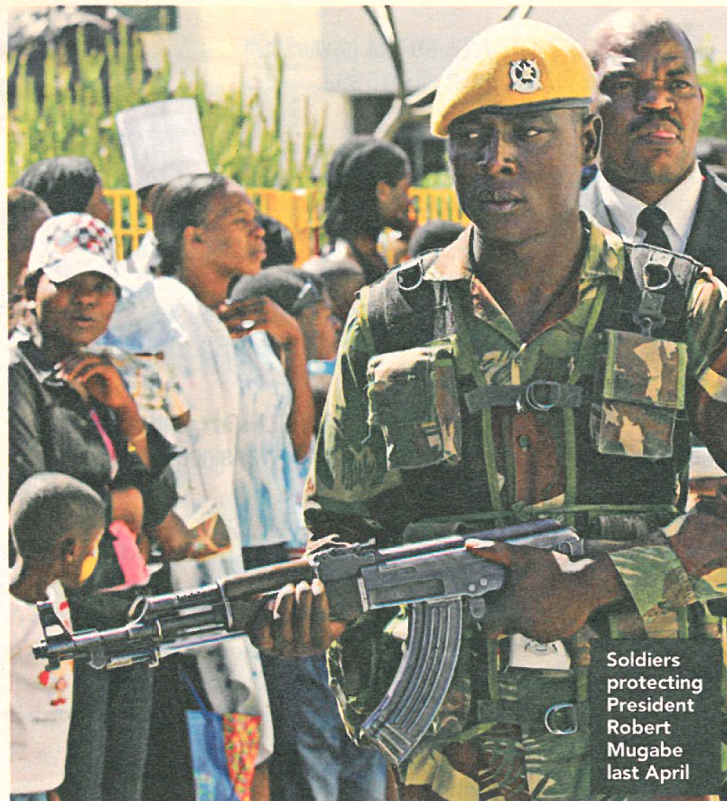
she knows of about 700 women, but she suspects the total is far higher. Some women are also thought to have contracted HIV from their assailants. (In Zimbabwe, 16% of the population is infected.)

Rape can effectively paralyze women, who are usually the ones who sustain their communities through farming, trading, cooking, and child-rearing. Paula Donovan, co-founder of the nonprofit group AIDS-Free World, is working with Makoni and others to collect testimony from victims in order to bring Mugabe to justice. "The bad guys, from the Congo to Zimbabwe to everywhere, have figured out that if you can't afford guns and bullets, and you have a political or military objective, the most effective, efficient strategy to employ is sexual violence," she said.

A 13-year-old girl was raped just to intimidate her parents

13-year-old ("someone even incapable of putting a paper in the ballot box") who was raped to intimidate her parents and of a pregnant woman who was raped and had all her food stolen. A counselor spoke with concern about a group of pregnant students at school, almost all of them due to give birth nine months or so after the election season.

One of my most upsetting encounters was with a grandmother who was also an MDC official. As six small children listened, she recounted how she'd



Soldiers protecting President Robert Mugabe last April

hidden in her ceiling for three days to escape the ZANU-PF thugs who showed up one night. Her eyes half-mad with terror, she said that she expected them to return and kill her. She and her family were living without food (aid was withheld from the opposition) and shunned by friends. "The moment I talk to other people, those people will be taken away," she said. Asked if she knew of other women who were tortured, killed, or raped, she replied, her eyes pooling with tears, "I know so many of them."

According to Makoni, nearly all of the women were told that they were targeted because they were "agents for selling out the country" and the opposition leader's "whores." Wives and female relatives and friends of anyone who was even suspected of siding with the opposition were marched off to one of the ZANU-PF base camps. At these makeshift outposts, in addition to being ordered to cook and clean, the women were humiliated, abused, and often raped. The wife of an MDC official described to me how she was harassed by phone for weeks and warned, "When we catch you, we are going to kill you." Another MDC sympathizer—betrayed by a ZANU-PF supporter she'd been living with—told me of armed men seizing her at home at 4 a.m., bringing her to a base camp, and beating her, along with the 100 or so other women there, with sticks.

She was then held for three days without food or water.

Women sexually assaulted by Mugabe's supporters have been slow to speak out. In Zimbabwe, as in many other countries around the world, rape is taboo. Victims are scared of being ostracized or punished for bringing shame on their families; husbands commonly disown their wives. "The stigma is so huge that people will go to the police and report everything else that's happened to them, but they won't say that they were raped," Paula Donovan said. Tellingly, of the 26 women who have given their affidavits so far, only one was accompanied by her husband.

The women who've been brave enough to go to the police have found no help. A former police officer told me in a whisper that half of her crime register before the June runoff consisted of rape cases. She and her colleagues reported most of them, but their superiors kept them from following up. They were also told that "it would be a crime" to give medical-request forms—necessary to get care at hospitals—to people who had been beaten or raped.

Zimbabwe government spokesman Sikhanyiso Ndllovu told me in a phone interview that allegations of mass rapes were "created from outside to try to smear" his country. The idea that women were kept from reporting rape was

"hogwash," he said. "Such diabolic activities are not tolerated by government. It's not part of our culture in Zimbabwe to permit such things."

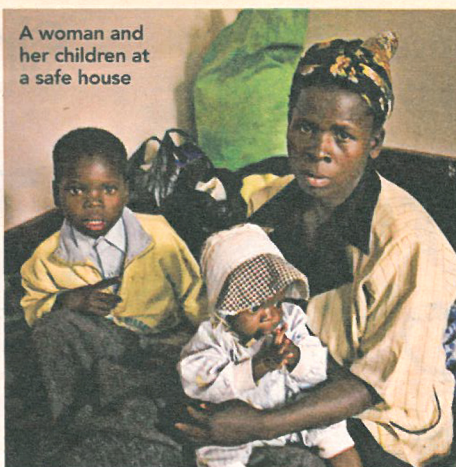
Sexual violence is as effective a weapon as guns and bullets, activists say

FEW SIGNIFICANT trials for war crimes have been based upon sexual violence. But in 1998, Rwanda's Jean-Paul Akayesu, who supervised the rapes of

dozens of Tutsi women during the 1994 genocide, was convicted by a U.N.-backed special court. He was found guilty of crimes against humanity—including rape—and sentenced to life in prison. Betty Makoni and AIDS-Free World aim to put Mugabe on trial and demonstrate that the rapes committed against civilians in his name were systematic or widespread—the characteristics that define crimes against humanity.

"The tendency in dealing with indictments is always one of war crimes around the use of guns," said Stephen Lewis, a former deputy executive director of UNICEF and a co-founder of AIDS-Free World. "What we're trying to convey to the world is that these conflicts have two components: guns and rape. And rape is as important as guns."


In the six months since AIDS-Free World began hearing testimony from victims of sexual violence, it has gathered affidavits from women representing five of Zimbabwe's 10



A woman and her children at a safe house

provinces. The organization plans to amass reports from a total of 50 women in order to form the basis of a strong criminal case.

Some people believe that 85-year-old President Mugabe will not run in the country's next election, which is expected to be held within 18 months. But while his power eventually will end, the mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters of Zimbabwe will carry scars from his regime forever. In putting their cases before the world, Lewis, Donovan, and Makoni hope to bring them some peace.

"These women who have been raped are seeking justice," Lewis said. "We must somehow get it to them." 

Legal Notice

If You Purchased a Bluetooth Headset Manufactured by Motorola, Plantronics or GN Netcom / Jabra, A Proposed Class Action Settlement May Affect Your Rights.

A Proposed Settlement has been reached in a class action lawsuit involving Bluetooth headsets manufactured by Motorola, Inc.; Plantronics, Inc.; or GN Netcom, Inc. / Jabra ("Defendants").

What Is the Lawsuit About?

The lawsuit claims that Bluetooth headsets manufactured by Defendants create a risk of hearing loss and that Defendants acted wrongfully when they did not warn consumers of the alleged risk. Plaintiffs claim that consumers were misled into buying Bluetooth headsets and paying more than they would have if they knew about the alleged risk. Defendants deny their headsets are unsafe or that they did anything wrong but have agreed to settle the case to avoid the cost of a trial.

Am I a Member of the Class?

You are a member of the class if you purchased a Bluetooth headset manufactured by Motorola, Plantronics or GN / Jabra in the United States from June 30, 2002 through February 19, 2009.

What Does the Settlement Provide?

There will be no monetary recovery for Class Members. It is not practical to provide benefits directly to individual Class Members because the Class is very large and the amount each Class Member would receive is very small.

However, Defendants will add acoustic safety information to their websites and to the product manuals included with new Bluetooth headsets. Defendants will also donate \$100,000 to one or more non-profit organizations that focus on preventing hearing loss.

What Are My Options?

- **Do nothing.** If you wish to stay in the Class, you do not need to take any action.
- **Exclude yourself.** You will keep your right to sue, or continue to sue, the Defendants about the claims resolved by this Proposed Settlement. Your written request for exclusion must be received by **June 9, 2009.**
- **Object or comment on the Proposed Settlement.** If you remain a member of the Class, you may write to the Court about why you don't like the Proposed Settlement or any part of it. You may also request in writing to appear in Court. Your written objection or request for appearance must be received by **June 9, 2009.**

The Court has appointed Counsel to represent everyone in the Class. Counsel will seek an Order from the Court awarding them up to \$800,000 in attorneys' fees and up to \$50,000 in costs. The Defendants will pay Counsel; there is no cost to you. You can also hire your own attorney at your own cost, if you wish.

The Court will decide whether to approve the Proposed Settlement and Counsel's motion for attorneys' fees and costs at a Fairness Hearing on **July 6, 2009 at 1:30 p.m.** at the United States District Court for the Central District of California, Roybal Federal Building, Courtroom 840, 255 East Temple St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.

This is only a summary of the Proposed Settlement. For complete information:

Visit: www.BluetoothHeadsetLitigation.com Call: 1-888-952-9087

**Or Write: Bluetooth Class Action Settlement Administrator
PO Box 1158, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1158**