

Zimbabwe COVID-19 Lockdown Weekly Monitoring Report 6 to 11 February 2021, Days 32 to 38

1. Introduction

This report covers the period Saturday 6 February to 11 February 2021 of the national lockdown period that was declared by the Minister of Health and Child Care, Vice President Constantino Chiwenga on 2 January 2021 and subsequently extended to 15 February 2021. As of Thursday 11 February 2021, the confirmed number of COVID-19 cases had increased to 34 949, with 85 new cases being reported on the same day. The death toll increased to 1 382, with 18 deaths being reported on the day.

2. Methodology

This report encompasses data gathered nationally by the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), Counselling Services Unit (CSU), and excerpts from a report generated by the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR).

3. Cabinet Decision Matrix (9 February 2021)

Cabinet received updates on the procurement and roll out of COVID-19 vaccines in Zimbabwe by the Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care, in conjunction with the Minister of Finance and Economic Development on 9 February 2021. The following developments were highlighted:

- That Zimbabwe's national vaccination strategy as it relates to the choice of vaccines to be acquired, needs to be science-based, with adequate research and findings guiding decision-making and the course of action to be taken.
- That Zimbabwe will make its decisions independently and in the national interest, without undue influence.
- That the acquisition of vaccines will be State funded and available to the public at no cost.
- That frontline essential staff, the elderly and those with specific health risk considerations will be prioritised in the first phase of inoculation.
- That the People's Republic of China has donated 200 000 doses of the Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine to the State. The donation and initial batch of purchased vaccines are expected in Zimbabwe by 15 February 2021 and the first week of March 2021, respectively.
- The Ministry of Health and Child Care plans to vaccinate about 60% of the country's population to achieve herd immunity (10 million people)
- The government has set aside US\$100 million for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines and the Treasury will continue to ensure funding for the procurement of other medical supplies that include medicines and personal protective equipment (PPEs) in the fight against COVID-19.
- The administration of the COVID-19 vaccinations in Zimbabwe will be on a voluntary basis.
- That 32.8% of COVID-19 related deaths have been occurring in communities, while the remaining 67.2% have occurred in health facilities. In light of the high percentage of community deaths, the government is working on updating guidelines to inform the public on how to manage cases involving isolation at home and those that require medical attention at health facilities.
- The measures relating to the imposition of the nation lockdown will be reviewed at the end of 15 February 2021 extension.

4. General updates

Bulawayo provincial welfare officer, Fanwell Dzoma revealed that all COVID-19 quarantine centres have been closed owing to the shortage of public space to accommodate returnees. Meanwhile, commercial truck drivers and cross border transporters are expected produce a certificate when they arrive at any Zimbabwean border post indicating that they have tested negative for COVID-19. A failure to produce the said certificate will result in a mandatory 10-day period in quarantine whilst testing arrangements are made. However, it has been reported that truck drivers have been able to transit in and out of the country without the requisite COVID-19 clearance certificates.

Beitbridge police officer, Mtokozisi Ndlovu (33) was arrested last week for unnecessary movement during the national lockdown at the Zimbabwe Beitbridge Border Post. Ndlovu was moving around the border area whilst off duty and without an exemption letter, when he ran into security personnel who effected his arrest. Ndlovu was subsequently referred to Beitbridge Police Station where he was asked to pay a fine of \$500.

In Mvurwi, on 8 February 2021, police officers fired warning shots at persons who were allegedly violating the national lockdown restrictions. No one was injured. The offending persons were gathered at a homestead in Mvurwi when police officers fired shots in an attempt to stop them from escaping.

Reports from Nyamupfukuta village in Guruve indicate that there are numerous violations of the national lockdown regulations in that area as large groups of people gather to conduct cleansing ceremonies that are presided over by traditional healers (Tsikamutandas). The intimate gatherings do not adhere to COVID-19 regulations.

5. Arrests

The Forum verified the arrest and detention of two adults in Harare for allegedly contravening national lockdown regulations. What has sparked public outcry is a circulating image of two minors in a holding cell alongside adults, one of whom has been identified as the children's mother. The incident took place at Rhodesville Police Station in Harare on 10 February 2021. Investigations by the Forum revealed that the mother and 2 minors were released from custody on the same day.

On 11 February 2021, police officers arrested journalist Simbarashe Sithole while he was on duty. Sithole was detained at Machipisa Police Station for over 5 hours despite producing his press card. Sithole was charged with unnecessary movement and it was alleged that his face mask was not properly placed as it left his nose exposed. Sithole, who is an accredited journalist, was covering skirmishes between the police and illegal foreign currency traders when he was arrested and detained. He elected to pay an admission of guilt fine as he expressed concerns over the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the police cells.

6. Assault and torture

On 6 February 2021, police officers fired teargas canisters into a moving commuter omnibus vehicle along Seke Road in Harare, which had passengers on board. It is alleged that police officers threw four teargas canisters into the commuter omnibus. It is further alleged that police officers were trying to deter the driver and passengers from using the bus stop along Seke Road as a pick up and drop off point. This comes after the government banned private commuter omnibus operators and restricted public transport access to ZUPCO transport services. The resulting effect being a decreased capacity to adequately ferry citizens.

A male victim has alleged that he was assaulted by police officers with baton sticks in St Mary's, Chitungwiza. Reports indicate that the victim was walking towards Chigovanyika Shopping Centre, where he was going to replenish his groceries, when a truck full of police officers descended on vendors who were selling their wares on the roadside. The police officers fired teargas during the melee, during which the victim temporarily lost his sight as he tried to flee, resulting in the assault.

In a related incident, soldiers assaulted a male victim identified as Mlambo with booted feet and fists and harassed his elderly mother in Glenview. It is alleged that soldiers descended on Mlambo accusing him of throwing a stone missile at a ZUPCO bus which was ferrying the soldiers. The victim's mother was also violently pushed away leading to her sustain a leg injury as she tried to protest her son's innocence. Reports indicate that police officers refused to open a docket citing that the victim could not properly identify the soldiers.

7. Court update

High Court judge, Justice Felistas Chatukuta struck off the roll an urgent chamber application filed by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), seeking to compel the government to provide a national vaccination rollout plan. ZimRights had filed an urgent chamber application, through its lawyer Tendai Biti of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), seeking an order to compel President Emmerson Mnangagwa, Health Minister Vice-President, Constantino Chiwenga and Finance Minister, Mthuli Ncube to publicise regulations relating to public policies and measures dealing with the registration, acquisition and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Justice Chatukuta indicated that the ZimRights application had been removed from the court's roll of urgent matters as there was no urgency in the case presented to her. The reasons that she gave were that the government had declared a national lockdown in March 2020, yet the budget was presented to Parliament in November 2020. Justice Chatukuta also said that ZimRights should have acted two months ago upon realising that the national budget had not made provisions for the purchase of vaccines when other countries had started receiving them in December 2020 and early January 2021.

ZimRights filed an urgent chamber application to nullify the recent increase in fines charged at roadblocks. In the application, ZimRights, together with Sheila Frances Jarvis, cited Justice Minister, Ziyambi Ziyambi, Finance Minister, Mthuli Ncube, Home Affairs Minister, Kazembe Kazembe and the Parliament of Zimbabwe as respondents. According to the application, ZimRights were made aware of an increase in the standard scale of fines through Statutory Instrument 25 of 2021 which was published on 25 January 2021. According to the scale, the fines for levels one to three were increased from \$500 to \$5 000. These constitute fines paid at police stations for offences such as public drinking, failure to wear a face mask and common assault. The highest fine was pegged at \$1.6 million for level 14 violations. In her affidavit, Jarvis said she approached the court after realising the increase was unfair.

The High Court ordered the government to widely disseminate comprehensive and adequate information on COVID-19 testing, isolation and treatment at public and private institutions. This follows an urgent application filed by the Media Institute for Southern Africa (Misa) Zimbabwe, through its lawyer, Rudo Magundani, of Scanlen and Holderness, arguing that the information being disseminated was uninformative and inadequate. High Court judge Justice Mary Dube also ruled that the Ministry of Information and Publicity and the Ministry of Health and Child Care ought to communicate COVID-19 statistics in relation to immigration and cross-border travel to the public, adding that such reports should include the number of returning residents and their COVID-19 statuses. Magundani had argued that the information being currently disseminated in the country was incomplete, uninformative, and

inadequate. Misa Zimbabwe contended that the information being disseminated currently failed to take into consideration the requirements of all Zimbabweans, and that its quality was poor and was short-changing the citizens on issues of the new strain of COVID-19.

8. Summary of Violations

The table below summarises COVID-19 related human rights violations documented by the Forum Secretariat and Forum Members from 5 January 2021 to 11 February 2021.

Nature of Violation	Number of Victims	Location
Assaults and Torture	23	Hwange, Binga, Bulawayo, Chipinge, Fig tree, Gweru, Mt Darwin, Harare, Beitbridge
Arbitrary arrests	28	Gweru, Nkulumane
Attacks against journalists	2	Harare

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