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## Curfew and the ‘Man in the Middle’ in Zimbabwe’s War of Liberation with Special Reference to the Eastern Areas of Zimbabwe, 1977–1980

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### Introduction

This chapter examines one of the many tactics used by minority regimes in southern Africa to delay the process of democratisation in the region, that of curfew. It does so by discussing the application and enforcement of the curfew laws during Zimbabwe’s war of liberation with particular reference to the eastern areas of the country from 1977 to 1980. The central argument is that security forces and officers of the minority regime wantonly abused the curfew laws by turning them into a kind of licence to kill the ordinary and unarmed civilians, the so-called ‘man in the middle,’<sup>1</sup> with impunity, as the examples and the case studies below demonstrate.

The idea behind the curfew laws was to assist the security forces in dealing with people causing trouble in the rural areas. Unfortunately, the security forces took advantage of the unwritten part of the law and sentenced people to death as they had orders to shoot curfew breakers on sight if they did not respond to an order to stop. We argue that, on the contrary, curfew laws did not protect ordinary people, nor did they effectively deal with the guerrilla threat. Instead, the curfew laws, both written and unwritten, simply gave the security forces and officers of the regime the licence to kill civilians with impunity and to met out any kind of punishment they deemed necessary. Consequently, the civilians found themselves placed between two diametrically opposed demands of the contending forces: the Rhodesian security forces,

on the one hand, and the guerrillas, on the other.. Through the Marange, Makoni and Mutasa case studies we show the extent and nature of suffering by men, women and children who, through the curfew, were confined to their homes for a considerable period.

The bulk of the evidence for this research was drawn from parliamentary debates relating to ‘curfews and the reporting of terrorists’<sup>2</sup> under the Law and Order Maintenance Act (1974), and from oral testimonies captured during field research in October 1999 and January 2003.<sup>3</sup> The discussion is divided into three parts. The first section provides a brief chronological outline of curfew declaration in Zimbabwe, the second and third sections discuss the curfew laws and show that instead of combating terrorism, security forces indiscriminately killed civilians, with impunity.

### Curfew in context

Curfew generally refers to a time after which people must stay indoors and is usually enforced during wartime situations. According to *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* (1986), curfew refers to an order or regulation enjoining withdrawal of persons from streets, or closing of business establishments or places of assembly at a stated hour, usually, though not exclusively, in the evening. This is what the Rhodesian authorities did in most parts of the country in a move they thought would stamp out the guerrilla threat in the affected areas. It would appear the Rhodesians adopted this concept from Malaya from where they had copied the ‘protected village’ concept.<sup>4</sup> Just like people in the no-go areas, those in the protected villages were also liable to curfew, which ran from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.<sup>5</sup> The Rhodesian army had either closely studied or actually fought in the Malaya counter-insurgency operations in the 1950s. It is also possible that the idea of curfew was borrowed from Greece, as one MP told the Rhodesian Parliament in 1978 that curfew was nothing new by explaining how the British had tried to use it in Greece and that the moment curfew was on, ‘it assisted the military forces to come to terms with people that were causing the trouble’.<sup>6</sup> The MP, however, acknowledged that curfew caused a lot of hardships on the people of Athens at the time, just as it did for the people of Marange, Makoni and Mutasa, and also for all those whose areas were under curfew.

In Zimbabwe, the declaration of curfew is traceable to 1974 when in January, the Smith regime declared a curfew in certain Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) and African Purchase Areas (APAs) in the north-east of the country. In 1975, the curfew was extended to the entire length of Zimbabwe’s borders with Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia.<sup>7</sup> All this was done under the Emergency Regulation Powers (Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (1960) as

a measure, among other repressive legislation, to try to contain the escalating war, and possibly crush, once and for all, African nationalism. Under this law, certain areas adjoining the border were declared 'No-Go' areas within which any unauthorised person was likely to be taken for a guerrilla and shot on sight, regardless of the time of day or night.<sup>8</sup> Then, in April 1977, the curfew regulations applying to the Chipinga and Melsekwa areas were amended to prohibit the movement of all vehicles between sunset and sunrise. It was in January 1978 that the people of Marange and Mukuni African Purchase Area were told to observe curfew running from 6 p.m. to 12 o'clock the next day.<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that Marange was one of the few places where curfew ran from 6 p.m. to 12 noon the next day (See poster below). In Centenary, Mrewa, Mtoko, Mt Darwin, Mudzi and Rushinga areas, the curfew operated from between 5 and 6 p.m. to between 6 and 7 a.m.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, for Manicaland and, presumably, the whole country, the curfew was only applied to the then TTLs and APAs, and not to the European farming areas, notwithstanding that there were guerrilla activities in these areas as well. One African Member of Parliament wondered whether Europeans did not break the curfew, as he never heard of a European who was ever killed or lost his life as a result of breaking curfew laws, making it abundantly clear that curfew laws were aimed only at one section of the community.<sup>11</sup> But, MP Goddard was quick to counter this, by pointing out that the curfew could only be applied to such areas where the 'terrorist' presence warranted it, but '... because of the fact that European farming areas are better managed and better policed by the people living there, it is not necessary to have a curfew'.<sup>12</sup>

By the end of 1978, the dusk-to-dawn curfew, which covered large parts of the country, was further extended into the urban areas. The Smith regime announced that a 70 km belt of white farmland along the northern and eastern edges of Salisbury (Harare) outer suburbs, separating the city from the TTLs of Chinhamora, Musana and Chikwaka were liable to the curfew.<sup>13</sup> By about the same time, the curfew was also in force in some African townships of Bulawayo.<sup>14</sup> In the same year in September, the Smith regime proclaimed martial law and, by 1979, the whole country was subject to it. According to the authorities, martial law was supposed to lead to tougher and stronger measures against enemies of the state, with the ultimate aim of liquidating the internal organisations associated with 'terrorism'.

### **Curfew Breakers: Killing with impunity or combating terrorism?**

This section provides a general survey of the application of curfew laws in the various parts of the country and concludes that security forces and other officers of the state killed ordinary civilians with impunity. This is particularly

**Poster Distributed by District Commissioner, February, 1978**

TO THE PEOPLE OF MARANKE TRIBAL TRUST LAND AND MUKUNI AFRICAN PURCHASE AREA

FOR A VERY LONG TIME YOU HAVE CONTINUED TO FEED, SHELTER AND ASSIST THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS TO CARRY OUT THEIR EVIL DEEDS. YOU HAVE DISREGARDED PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT WARNINGS OF THE BITTER TIMES THAT WILL FALL UPON OUR LAND IF YOU ALLOW THESE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS TO CARRY ON DECEIVING YOU.

THE SECURITY FORCES DO NOT WANT TO ALLOW YOU TO BE DECEIVED BY THESE PEOPLE ANY LONGER.

YOU ARE NOW WARNED THAT AS FROM DAWN ON THE 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 1978 THE FOLLOWING RESTRICTIONS WILL BE IMPOSED UPON ALL OF YOU AND YOUR TTL AND PURCHASE LAND.

1. HUMAN CURFEW FROM LAST LIGHT TO 12 O'CLOCK DAILY.
2. CATTLE, YOKED OXEN, GOATS AND SHEEP CURFEW FROM LAST LIGHT TO 12 O'CLOCK DAILY.
3. NO VEHICLES INCLUDING BICYCLES AND BUSES TO RUN EITHER THE TTL OR THE APA.
4. NO PERSON WILL EITHER GO ON OR NEAR ANY HIGH GROUND OR THEY WILL BE SHOT.
5. ALL DOGS TO BE TIED UP TO 24 HOURS EACH DAY OR THEY WILL BE SHOT.
6. CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS, AFTER 12 O'CLOCK, ARE TO BE HERDED BY ADULTS.
7. NO JUVENILES (TO THE AGE OF 16 YEARS) WILL BE ALLOWED OUT OF THE KRAAL AREA AT ANY TIME EITHER DAY OR NIGHT, OR THEY WILL BE SHOT.
8. NO SCHOOLS WILL BE OPEN.
9. ALL STORES AND GRINDING MILLS WILL BE CLOSED.

ONLY IF YOU CO-OPERATE AND ASSIST THE SECURITY FORCES IN ELIMINATING THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS WILL ANY CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO LIFTING SOME OR ALL OF THE ABOVE RESTRICTIONS. THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE ALREADY TOLD THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS THAT THEY ARE FREE TO GIVE THEMSELVES UP AND THEIR LIFE WILL NOT BE ENDANGERED.

YOU CAN ASSIST THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS CAN THEN RETURN TO THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS AND YOU HAVE PEACE.

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Source: Frederikse, J. 1982, *None But Ourselves: Masses vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe*, Otazi & Anvil Press, Harare, p.88.

so given that, under The Indemnity and Compensation Act (1975), civil or criminal proceedings could not be instituted or continued in any court of law against anyone who was believed to have acted in 'good faith' and for purposes of, or, in connection with, the suppression of terrorism.<sup>15</sup> This Act was also a licence to kill, maim and torture with the guarantee that almost anything was legal as long as it was done in 'good faith'. The Act actually gave protection in advance to acts of the executive and its officials and was, therefore, made to apply retrospectively from 1 December 1972. But under Chapter 65, Section 51, Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (1974), it was mandatory for all people to report as soon as possible and reasonably practical and, in any event, within 72 hours, any information people had concerning the presence of 'guerrillas'. The law read, in part: Any person who:

1. On or after the 16th February, 1973, harbours, conceals or assists in any manner whatsoever any person whom he knows or has reason to believe to be a person who is about to commit or has committed or attempted to commit an offence... or,
  2. having harboured, concealed, or assisted any person such as is referred to in paragraph (a) ... wilfully omits or refuses after that date to disclose to a police officer any information it is in his power to give in relation to any such person; or
  3. being aware, on or after the 16th February 1973, that a person such as is referred to in paragraph (a) is in Rhodesia, fails as soon as is reasonably practicable and in any case within seventy-two hours of that date... to report... any such person;
- shall be guilty of an offence and liable to be sentenced to death or to imprisonment for life.<sup>16</sup>

It is undeniable that while some people in the operational zones supported and protected guerrillas willingly, others did so under duress. For the colonial authorities, the ordinary civilians were not only supporting the guerrillas, but were also protecting and harbouring them. The Law and Order Maintenance Act (1974), chapter 65, section 51, officials believed, would therefore help them prosecute people withholding relevant information particularly concerning the whereabouts of guerrillas. But it is Section 53 subsection (1), (2) and (3) of the same law, which directly dealt with curfew and which is quoted here in full to show the dichotomy between the law and its practical application by officers of the state. It read:

1. [W]henver public disorder occurs or is apprehended, a regulating authority may, by order direct that, subject to any exemptions for which provision

may be made by order, no person in the area or in a specific part of the area in respect of which such authority is appointed shall, between such hours as may be specified in the order, be out of doors except with the written permission of such authority.

2. any person who is found out of doors between the hours specified in an order made in terms of such subsection (1) without the written permission of the regulating authority shall be guilty of an offence and liable, on a first conviction, to a *fine not exceeding one hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months and, on a subsequent conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year* [my own emphasis].
3. an order made in terms of this section shall be published by notice distributed among the public or affixed upon public buildings in the area to which the order applies.<sup>17</sup>

This was the law in theory but, in practice, there was the unwritten part of it, which allowed security forces to sentence people to death on sight. This unwritten law carried a maximum death penalty since the security forces had orders to shoot curfew breakers on sight if they did not respond to an order to stop.

This was the unwritten part of the law, which was widely applied throughout the country in areas under curfew regulations. For example, between March 1975 and February 1976, twelve Africans were officially reported shot dead while breaking curfew.<sup>18</sup> However, it is important to note that the number of people shot during the same period could run into treble figures. This is because the authorities had the tendency to play down casualty figures, not only of civilians, but also those of the security forces, while at the same time inflating guerrilla casualty figures upwards. The security forces used this unwritten law to sentence people to death in the war zones rather than through the courts of law.

In practical terms, therefore, the curfew did not safeguard the ordinary person. If one looks at casualty rates in the TTLs and APAs, as MP, Maposa, pointed out, it was neither guerrillas nor the security forces who suffered, but ordinary people.<sup>19</sup> The curfew, therefore, did not protect ordinary people, neither did it effectively deal with the guerrilla threat. Instead it gave the security forces the licence to kill civilians with impunity. For example, in May 1977 in the Buhera TTL at Kandeya School, security forces flew four helicopters and one spotting plane and started firing at the school children and their teachers for allegedly failing to report the presence of guerrillas. In the process, one teacher and three school children were killed while several were injured.<sup>20</sup> In Chendambuya in the Makoni area, a Grade 7 boy, Simon Mututeku, was brought back dead after being taken for questioning by the security forces.<sup>21</sup>

The official report said that he was killed for breaking curfew. In the same area, a couple was shot when they went to assist their neighbour whose child was seriously ill.<sup>22</sup> Again, one woman was shot and seriously injured in the Zimunya TTL while working in her tomato garden. In Marange, a Mrs Tarondwa was shot dead for breaking curfew with the same fate befalling a businessman, a Mr Zvinoera, for breaking the curfew by just a few minutes.<sup>23</sup> Another two Africans were shot dead in Mzarabani Protected Village for breaking curfew.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, state officials could mete out any punishment they deemed fit on people who were allegedly harbouring or suspected to be harbouring guerrillas. For example, the people of Chiweshe were punished by closing down, among other things, facilities such as schools, shops, stores, mills, clinics, and beer-halls under the threat of 'tell us what you know about the guerrillas or else these facilities remain closed'. Then in July 1974, the entire population of Chiweshe, about 44,000, were put into 21 protected villages as further punishment. The same strategy was applied in Mrewa. Another example of collective punishment was that meted out to the people of Madziwa in 1974, when about 255 Africans were evicted as punishment for supporting and assisting guerrillas and taken to Beit Bridge. All their cattle were sold, while their crops and huts were destroyed.<sup>25</sup> In Buhera, a Mr John Zvoushe had his twelve cattle shot dead for failing to report the presence of guerrillas while a certain Machinya was rendered sterile after a severe beating for allegedly feeding guerrillas.<sup>26</sup> In Marange, a headman and a headboy had their nine sheep and five goats shot dead for failure to report the presence of guerrillas.<sup>27</sup> Apart from these routine punishments, and long prison terms, the government also promised substantial rewards to be paid to any person for 'true' information given to the security forces or any authorities on the whereabouts of 'guerrillas,' their helpers and their weapons.<sup>28</sup>

The above examples show that the ordinary person was in a very difficult position. He/she was caught between the wire and the wall. On the one hand, the ordinary civilian was ordered to provide food and to supply materials to the guerrillas, and, on the other hand, was required to report the presence of guerrillas to the police. While white MPs actually thought that the African people were to blame for not reporting the presence of guerrillas, African MPs wondered what happened to civilians who gave information under duress. Goddard, a white MP could not agree with those MPs who argued that it was the people's fear of guerrilla reprisals that accounted for their failure to report guerrilla presence. As far as he was concerned, the people were protecting guerrillas and the curfew law was, therefore, there to prosecute those withholding the relevant information. Thus, the demands of the security forces,



on the one hand, and those of the guerrillas, on the other, left the 'man in the middle' in a serious dilemma. One inhabitant of Chiweshe area in Mashonaland west aptly summed up this dilemma pointing out that, 'If we report to the police, the "guerrillas" kill us. If we do not report, the police torture us. Even if we do report to the police, we are beaten all the same and accused of trying to lead soldiers into a trap. We just do not know what to do'.<sup>29</sup> Even the Minister of Combined Operations admitted that it was an unfortunate aspect of all wars that innocent civilians had to suffer in bearing the burden of conditions that make war necessary, although, he was quick to shift blame to 'those terrorists, to their leaders, to these heads of African Governments and to the Communists...' whom he said were all supposed to share in the infamy of terrorism.<sup>30</sup>

MP Zawaira also told Parliament that the vulnerable position of the 'man in the middle' tended to ignore the fact that the civilian was not armed. He explained;

And here you will find people who are armed coming into the TTL village with deadly weapons asking you to cook food for them, and where is the co-operation when a man pointing a loaded gun at my head, and he is saying 'cook...?' Where does this element of co-operation come in? If it happened that Europeans... were to... go to the TTLs... they would cook faster than we do.<sup>31</sup>

When R. Sadomba, MP for Nemaikonde, asked the Minister of Defence, P.K. Van de Byl, to apply strict discipline to his soldiers who shot curfew breakers indiscriminately, he drew the wrath of the Minister who responded in no uncertain terms, 'I have no intention of attempting to do anything about this and as far as I am concerned, the more curfew breakers that are shot the better, and the sooner it is realised everywhere the better. We are fighting a war and this is not some gentle exercise, which we are doing for the fun of it'.<sup>32</sup>

This response was not only a clear testimony of the atrocities his forces were committing, but also a vindication of them. Notwithstanding this arrogance, black parliamentarians continued to demand that the House deplore the laws governing curfew in the light of the continued indiscriminate shooting of people. On 22 February 1978, MP Mabika, together with MP Nyandoro, tabled a motion asking the House to deplore the laws and regulations relating to the curfew and the failure to report the presence of guerrillas. MP Mabika asked Parliament for certain amendments to be made to the curfew laws. He demanded:

We feel that... adjustments or amendments may be made whereby... each particular case should be reviewed or examined by the security forces



concerned and, in certain circumstances, it will be better if this particular law is waived slightly in which it will be better to punish or arrest the curfew-breaker concerned instead of shooting him right away. We find in this country – and in other countries – that a person who commits murder is brought before the courts of law. We feel that it will be justifiable for the people breaking curfew laws on a circumstantial basis to be arrested, charged, or brought before the courts of law.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, these calls counted for nothing as the security forces continued to kill with impunity. Yet, something must be said about the contradictions within the curfew laws. For example, while making it mandatory to report the presence of guerrillas, distance was never taken into consideration. The people of Marange, for instance, stayed 39 km from the nearest police camp at Odzi, while those in Makoni and Mutasa stayed even further away. In the absence of buses and bicycles, it is hard to imagine how this distance could be covered, therefore, making it impossible to report within the stipulated period. Moreover, one may ask, how was one supposed to go and make a report without breaking the curfew and without risking being shot? Again, curfew laws and regulations did not guarantee the safety of disabled people—blind, deaf or otherwise, let alone the elderly. It was in the light of some of these inconsistencies that many MPs from the opposition, mainly black parliamentarians, called for realistic legislation, which did not create criminals, but which allowed people to observe the law.

It must also be mentioned here that the struggle to win the 'hearts and minds' of the 'man in the middle' is at the centre of every struggle. In Rhodesia's war, just like in any other war, the 'man in the middle' was the jewel of both the guerrillas and the government. From the revolutionaries' perspective, the war was being fought on behalf of the people, and, therefore, that expected all African people to support the war. It was in this context that the guerrillas saw all those who did not lend the necessary support as 'enemies of the people' and lackeys of the regime who, therefore, deserved to be attacked, whether armed or not. This explains why the guerrillas, just like the security forces, sometimes used force, punishment and terror tactics in order to force people to render them the necessary support. While the intention was to subvert the confidence of the people in the regime and, hopefully, hasten its collapse, the guerrillas also worsened the suffering of the people. MP Mabika pointed out that 'they too [the guerrillas] are not guiltless of the blood, nor the misery that has been the lot of so many of our innocent civilians'.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, the incumbent regime held unrealistic views concerning the role the people must play in eliminating terrorism. The regime expected

everyone to be law-abiding and that all had a legal obligation to assist in combating terrorism. If by commission or omission, they failed to in this duty, or if they actually appeared to support the 'rebels', then they were also treated as terrorists, thus becoming real objects of counter-insurgent attack, as the examples cited here have shown. Thus, it is no wonder why the security forces killed civilians with impunity and in the name of combating terrorism.

### **Curfew laws and the people of Marange, Makoni and Mutasa**

Drawing largely from the oral testimonies collected from eastern Zimbabwe, this section discusses how the ordinary person, 'the man in the middle', understood and experienced the curfew in these administrative districts.<sup>35</sup> It discusses the practical experiences of the curfew by the people of Marange, Makoni and Mutasa districts particularly between 1977 and 1980. And again it can be shown that through human and livestock casualty figures, that security forces continued to kill with impunity. This part of the paper also discusses the various implications and consequences of the curfew. Of course, this section does not pretend to cover the three districts in equal breadth and neither does it claim to do the same even for a single district.<sup>36</sup>

As already mentioned, in Marange, the curfew was declared in February 1978 through a poster distributed by the Marange District Commissioner. The poster stated, among other things, the imposition of restrictive conditions. These included the human curfew from dusk to 12 o'clock daily, cattle, yoked oxen, goats and sheep curfew from last dusk to 12 o'clock daily, closure of all stores, schools and grinding mills, a ban on all vehicles, bicycles and buses in the area. Dogs were to remain tied for 24 hours each day. Furthermore, no person was allowed to go on or near high ground, and only adults were allowed to herd cattle, with all children below 16 years banned from going out of their village area at any time, day or night.<sup>37</sup> Anyone who violated these 'regulations' was shot on sight and without warning, and yet the law allowed for a maximum prison sentence not exceeding six months, and on a subsequent conviction, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year.

In Makoni and Mutasa, no official declaration was made either through a circular or poster, as the law required, yet the people of these two districts were supposed to observe the curfew from 6 p.m. to 10 a.m.<sup>38</sup> In fact, District Commissioners differed in the manner in which they enforced the curfew. In some areas, curfew times were from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., in others, it was from 6 p.m. to 9 a.m., while in yet others; it was from 6 p.m. to 11 a.m. It was, therefore, the prerogative of the District Commissioner to spell out curfew times in his area. But as already mentioned, the people of Marange and Mushawasha observed the longest known curfew in the country. One of the

interviewees from Marange, Mrs. Chikambiro Marange, had the following to say about the curfew in her area: 'it was a terrible time indeed. We were told that we were restricted to just the cleared areas around our homes (*chivanzwe*), at any time before 12 o'clock. We were also told that we could not graze our cattle before 12 noon, neither could we go to the fields before that time'.<sup>39</sup>

While most people interviewed could remember very well when curfew was declared, 1977 in Makoni and Mutasa, and 1978 in Marange, they tended to vary in their understanding of the intentions of the curfew declaration. The curfew imposed upon the people of Marange, Makoni and Mutasa and their livestock was a form of 'house arrest'. For the people of Marange, it lasted 18 hours (6 p.m.–12 noon the following day), while for those of Makoni and Mutasa, it lasted about 16 hours (6 p.m.–10 a.m. the following day). The official intention of curfew declaration, as already stated, was to assist the military forces to deal with the people that were causing trouble and, in the process, helping or protecting the rural population. In Mrs Chikambiro's view, this is the reason why the security forces shot on sight any person who dared move a few metres from his/her homestead outside the regulated time. They (security forces) also moved from house to house, in search of 'guerrillas', shooting anyone whom they regarded as one or anyone who sympathised with them. It is interesting to note that some informants tended to buy the idea that 'guerrillas' could easily disappear or transform themselves into several forms of life. These ranged from changing into a cow, a donkey, a goat, a dog, a cat, to a hare, a small girl, woman or even a cabbage.<sup>40</sup> However, this was hardly so, and, in any case, the Rhodesian security forces were a professionally trained and highly skilled fighting unit to believe this kind of myth.

It is important to point out some of the implications of this myth, bearing in mind that both the security forces and the guerrillas were involved in myth-making for their own ends. First, for the guerrillas, it gave them some degree of sophistication by being seen as people capable of performing mysterious things. And, secondly, for the security forces, it allowed them to use excessive force and to kill willy-nilly because, for them, they would maintain that it was impossible to make a distinction between who was or was not a guerrilla. According to both Mrs Chikambiro and Morgen Tichafa Tarugarira, the first soldiers who came to Marange, and who often painted their faces in black tar, had this silly belief that a guerrilla or 'terrorist' was something totally different from a normal human being. 'If soldiers were to ask what a guerrilla looked like', reminiscences Mrs Chikambiro, 'we would conveniently say a guerrilla looks like a hare'.<sup>41</sup> This had the effect of reinforcing further the myth of mutation, and possibly gave the security forces an alibi to kill indiscriminately.

The exact number of people shot dead for breaking curfew in Marange, Makoni and Mutasa is difficult to say, and so are the figures for livestock. Causality figures varied from one informant to another, even for the same locality and from as low as twenty to as many as several thousands. For Marange, casualty figures varied from as few as fifty to as many as several thousands.<sup>42</sup> But disparities aside, all the informants pointed out that many of those shot dead were shot on sight and without warning. The security forces' philosophy seemed to be 'shoot first and ask questions later' as the confession by Gordon Wood, an ex-Grenadier Guardsman and deserter from the Rhodesian Army, shows. 'One soldier called me a murderer for shooting two men who turned out not to have weapons. But they were out during curfew, and you can't say: "Excuse me, have you got a grenade or a gun?" You shoot first and ask questions after if you want to continue living. Even so it is all wrong'.<sup>43</sup>

Gwani Kashaya from Marange claims to know several people who were shot dead for breaking the curfew in Marange, including one man who was shot in broad daylight while fetching water from a nearby stream. According to Kashaya, the man intended to administer the water to his patients, as he was a faith healer.<sup>44</sup> There were also those who were shot while on their way home, from a beer drink/party.<sup>45</sup> In Mapararikwa, Kashaya remembers six girls being shot dead, four of them on their way home from a nearby stream where they had gone to do some laundry. The security forces assumed that the young girls were *chimbwindos* (women collaborators) who were on their way to a guerrilla base. The fifth one, about seven years old, was shot for attempting to flee after catching sight of soldiers who were carrying guns. The sixth was shot a few metres from her homestead after she had attempted to sneak out before time to go and see her grandmother who was seriously ill.<sup>46</sup> Other innocent lives were also lost while gathering wild fruits in order to supplement their food.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of livestock, people in the three districts were unanimous that very few cattle were shot for 'breaking' curfew, although they say that several of their cattle were never found after going astray as the curfew militated against any follow-up system once cattle went missing. 'As far as I know I don't remember any cattle which were shot dead by the soldiers for breaking curfew except those which were mistaken for the enemy particularly during the night'<sup>48</sup> said Tarugarira. Several people said that the soldiers did not particularly mind animals except when they suspected that guerrillas were using cattle as a form of cover to enter the locality.

Yet, besides the indiscriminate shooting of curfew breakers, there were other problems and hardships associated with the curfew in these areas. For instance, the curfew obviously disrupted the normal agricultural cycle, and,

consequently, people were faced with the threat of starvation. However, none of my informants could remember ever hearing of anyone who starved to death because of the curfew. The curfew also meant that baboons and other wild animals could destroy the green maize fields at will, as people could not 'step out' to chase them away without risking being shot. Equally true, cattle could break out of their pens and devour the green maize without anyone doing anything as long as it was before the gazetted time as anyone who dared to 'step out' was sure to be killed.

For pregnant and expecting mothers and the sick, the curfew was the last thing they ever wanted to hear.<sup>49</sup> For example, while the Marange Clinic remained operational throughout the curfew period, it was also subject to the same times, 6 p.m.-12 midday. This meant that the sick or any other people requiring urgent medical attention could only be attended to after 12 midday for those in Marange, and after 10 a.m. for those in Makoni and Mutasa. This presumably led to deaths, which could have been avoided, although my interviewees do not remember any such deaths. When an African MP stated in Parliament that many pregnant women had died because of the curfew, he drew wrath of the white Minister of Health, who told him, 'Surely the honourable Member is aware that the closure of these services was not the fault of this Minister, or indeed this Government. It was the cause of the vermin who made it impossible to continue running these services and of the local people who supported these vermin'.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, the curfew also meant that proper burials of the deceased became a thing of the past. Most of the informants said that the curfew had made the burying of the dead difficult. The deceased were buried in shallow graves hastily dug in order to keep within the framework of the curfew. For the urban dwellers, or at least those who worked in town, it sometimes became impossible to attend the funerals of their close relatives. Clifford Chingwende failed to attend his father's funeral because he could not get transport from Mutare where he was working.<sup>51</sup> Serina Marange said that her aunt's funeral was poorly attended, with no people staying behind to console the bereaved family, as everyone was worried about getting home before 6 p.m.<sup>52</sup> She says that her aunt, a mother of five children, had been shot for breaking the curfew a few minutes before 12 o'clock. MP Nyandoro also told Parliament that Mr Zvinoera, a businessman from Marange, lost his life when he met a security man who looked at his watch and said, 'It is ten minutes to twelve. Why are you out?', before shooting him dead.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the security forces did not permit anyone shot for breaking curfew to be buried outside the main curfew time table, nor his/her body to be collected for burial outside the stated times unless they sanctioned it. By implication, for anyone shot just after 6 p.m.

his/her body spent the whole night at the mercy of the vultures.<sup>54</sup> At times the security forces prevented the burials of those who would have been killed on the suspicion that they were guerrillas. For instance, security forces are said to have prevented the burial of two bodies they had dumped at Marange Township, claiming that the two were guerrillas. For two weeks the bodies were left in the open to decompose, until Chief Marange had to take the law into his own hands and ordered their burial.<sup>55</sup> Informants say that chief Marange was lucky to get away with a caution for defying security forces' order.

The banning of the herding of cattle by the juveniles implied several things. While some interviewees felt that this move was harsh, others applauded it. Those who felt it was harsh pointed to the shortage of labour, not only to till the fields, but for the various other day to day activities. It meant that adults had to herd the cattle while the kids remained confined to the homestead. Those who applauded it did so for two reasons. Firstly, they felt that children were likely to run away upon coming across people carrying guns, thereby risking being shot unlike adults, and, secondly, that children were not better placed to find enough pastures for cattle within a period as short as six hours. 'Can you imagine something that feeds for twelve hours each day now being restricted to less than six hours. Do you think kids would be able to find better pastures in so short a time?'<sup>56</sup> asked Chandaoneswa Marange. Given the short grazing hours, the quality of cattle naturally deteriorated, while the death rate was frightful due to inadequate grazing time.<sup>57</sup> In the view of one informant, the young boys and girls were banned from herding cattle as they were regarded as 'mobile phones' by the security forces. Furthermore, the curfew prevented any search for any livestock that would have gone astray.

A further consequence of the curfew was to force people to come up with alternative survival strategies. In this regard, the role played by women stands out clearly. With no grinding mills around, the women did everything they could to produce maize-meal. The two options, which were open to them at the time, were equally taxing to say the least. The first option involved making/drilling holes through an iron sheet using nails. Then the rough side of the sheet would be used to make maize-meal, which would collect into a sack or dish or winnowing basket placed underneath the sheet.<sup>58</sup> This maize-meal would then be turned into a finer form through the grinding stone or, alternatively, through the use of a sieve. The other option, which has been in use from time immemorial, was the use of a pestle and mortar, before subjecting the resultant maize-meal to the grinding stone. Of course, this method worked better with bulrush millet (*mbunga*) than with maize.

Again, according to several informants, the other consequence was that many youths were pushed into the war and into 'guerrilla' training because



they could not withstand the shocking, callous and heartless murder of innocent people whose bodies would be displayed for everyone to see. In many cases, it turned out that victims were *mujibbas* (male war collaborators). The security forces thought that by publicly displaying bodies of the so-called 'guerrillas', people would be deterred from joining 'guerrilla' training. Instead, several young men left en masse for training. But it must also be pointed out that curfew had a regulating effect on the social behaviour of people, especially on drinking patterns. People were now getting home early to avoid breaking the curfew laws.

The resultant hardships brought upon the people of Marange, Makoni and Mutasa, whether as a direct or indirect result of the security forces or the guerrillas, as far as the inhabitants of these areas were concerned, succeeded in hardening their attitude towards the security forces and the incumbent regime. Consequently, curfew laws and regulations proved counterproductive, as they tended to increase the resistance of the people to the government and therefore hastened the collapse of the Smith regime.

### Conclusion

The main arguments of this chapter is that curfew was used by officers of the regime as a licence to kill ordinary civilians with impunity. It has also been shown that there were serious contradictions within the laws and regulations governing the curfew, both in theory and in practice. Through the voices of the people of Marange, Makoni and Mutasa, the chapter has not only captured the peoples' sad memories and experiences, but also demonstrated the very delicate and difficult position of the 'man in the middle.'

### Notes

1. The paper's title is borrowed in part from the Catholic Institute for International Relations 1975 publication entitled *The Man in the Middle: Torture, resettlement and eviction*. Here, the 'man in the middle' was seen as that unarmed ordinary civilian who had to contend with demands of the Rhodesian authorities, on the one hand, and the guerrillas, on the other. It must, therefore, be stated that the so-called 'man in the middle' was not as neutral as the term seems to imply as the ordinary person either sided or sympathised with the regime or the guerrillas.
2. The terms 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' are of recent date. According to a French Dictionary published in 1796, the Jacobins had on occasion used the term when speaking and writing about themselves in a positive sense. After the 9th Thermidor, 'terrorist' became a term of abuse with criminal implications and it is in this context that the Rhodesian state used the term. However, in this paper the term 'guerrilla' will be used where previously terrorist had been employed. During the period under study the Rhodesians did not accept the term 'guerrilla'. For instance, MP Dewa, for Matojeni, was asked by the Speaker of Parliament in February



1978 to withdraw the words 'guerrilla forces' in a motion on the subject because in his view it implied 'an aura of respectability to guerrilla activities...' 'See Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, February, 1978, col. 2327. See also Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 89, January, 1975.

3. The initial fieldwork had its bad memories. On 2 November 1999, I lost about 270 hours of interview tape in a car accident on my way back from the field. I also lost my Mazda 323 in that accident. It was then that I realised I should have taken David Henige's advice seriously as he warns researchers, 'many historians have heard tales about field notes that were lost or destroyed through water damage, fire, mechanical error, errant mails, etc... The most obvious and necessary precaution is making a second tape and keep these in a different place than the originals', writes D. Henige, *Oral Historiography* (Longmans, London, 1982), p. 50.
4. P. L. Moorcraft, *Contact II: The Struggle for Peace*, (Sygma Books, Johannesburg, 1981), p. 66. According to Moorcraft, the Rhodesian army had either closely studied or actually fought in the Malaya counter-insurgency operations and had also learnt their lessons from the British as their army was based not only upon British traditions, but it also employed British tactics as well as Israel Entebbe-style raids.
5. For example, a district assistant shot two Africans in Mzarabani Protected Village for breaking curfew. Moreover, those in the protected villages were not allowed to take food with them to their fields for fear that they might end up giving it to the guerrillas. Thus, people naturally went the whole day without food, causing serious hardships on the people who would have spent the whole day in the fields.
6. Southern Rhodesia, *Rhodesia of House Assembly Debates*, vol. 97, February, 1978, col. 2259-2260.
7. Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), *The Man in the Middle: torture, resettlement and eviction*, (CIIR, London, 1975), p.1-18; See also M. Mushonga, 'The Formation, Organization and Activities of the Catholic Commission for Justice Peace in Zimbabwe: With special reference to the Rhodesian War, 1972-1980', Unpublished B.A. (Honours) Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, History Department, 1990, p.18.
8. For example, Raymond Kunaka and George Gunda, both Form 2 students at Mazoe Secondary School, were shot by security forces for allegedly being found in the no-go areas in 1975. See Box 322, Jesuit Archives (JA), Prestage House, Harare. See also M. Mushonga, 'The Catholic Commission', pp. 16-17; 58-60.
9. The 6 p.m. to 12 o'clock curfew also applied in the Mushawasha area of the Victoria Province (Masvingo). See Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, February, 1978, col. 2274; International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), *Racial Discrimination and Repression in Southern Rhodesia*, (CIIR, London, 1976), p.67.
10. Ibid.
11. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Rhodesia Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, February, 1978, col. 2243. MP Bwanya also pointed out that there was no curfew along certain sections of the tarred roads, for example between Featherstone and Enkeldoorn because Europeans frequently used them. He thus deplored the variations in curfew regulations.

12. Ibid., col. 2300.
13. National Archives of Zimbabwe, MS 590/10, Rhodesia Security, 1973-1978.
14. Ibid. Maybe the reason for declaring curfew in the African townships of Bulawayo is closely related to the belief that Zipra had an urban warfare approach in its operational areas as opposed to Zanla. James Muzondidya, in his discussion of Coloured feelings of marginality vis-à-vis the 1979 Lancaster House Constitution shows that security in the Coloured areas close to African townships such as Thorngrove had deteriorated as the war intensified and curfew seemed to be the answer. See. J. Muzondidya, 'The most obscene fraud of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?' The Lancaster House Constitution, African majority rule and Coloured peoples' feelings of marginality', Seminar paper presented to the Human Rights and Democracy Seminar Series, History Department, University of Zimbabwe, 5 October 2000. See also City of Bulawayo, Mayor's Minutes for the year ended 31 July, 1979.
15. Southern Rhodesia, *Statute Law of Rhodesia*, Acts 1-47, 1975, pp. 446-7.
16. Southern Rhodesia, *Statute Law of Rhodesia*, Vol. 2, Chapter 65. col. 251.
17. Ibid.
18. ICJ, *Racial Discrimination and Repression in Southern Rhodesia*, p.59. Two of those twelve shot dead were students from Mazoe Secondary School. A statement by the Rhodesia Ministry of Information alleged that the two were shot in the Nyamaropa border area, 125 km north of Umtali. Investigations later revealed that the two were not shot in the Inyanga area but somewhere in the Mazoe area. See Jesuit Archives, Box 322, Raymond Kunaka File, Prestage House, Mt. Pleasant, Harare. See also M. Mushonga, 'The Formation, Organisation and Activities of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia: With particular reference to the Rhodesian War, 1972-1980', B.A. Honours (History) Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1990. pp. 16-17.
19. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Rhodesia Assembly Debates* Vol. 97, 1978, Col. 2266.
20. Ibid., col. 2234. Bishop Donal Lamont, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Umtali (Mutare) and President of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) in Rhodesia and his staff at Avila Mission should have faced the same fate for failing to report the presence of guerrillas. Instead, Lamont was simply deported. The offence committed by Lamont carried a possible death sentence or life imprisonment but the Government neither sentenced him to death nor sent him to prison as they felt that would have given him 'spectacular martyrdom'. According to Lamont, he purposely defied the law in order to focus international attention on the dilemma facing priests and the 'man in the middle' in the Rhodesian war zone.
21. Ibid., col. 2344.
22. Ibid., col. 2245.
23. Ibid., col. 2246-7.
24. Ibid., col. 2270.
25. M. Meredith, *The Past is Another Country; Rhodesia 1890-1979*, (Andre Deutsch, London, 1979), p.136.
26. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, 1978, col. 2235-2236.
27. Ibid., col. 2235-2236.

28. J. Frederikse, *None But Ourselves: Masses Vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe*, (Otazi, Harare, 1983), pp. 90-91. See also Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, col. 2248. MP Nyandoro pointed out that there were many Africans serving long and heavy jail sentences because they failed to report guerrillas, and yet the government did not have the mechanism to say whether or not one failed to report deliberately. Again he made it clear that it was difficult to report the presence of 'our own daughters and sons'.
29. ICJ, *Racial Discrimination and Repression in Southern Rhodesia*, pp. 86-7; See also M. Mushonga, 'The Catholic Commission', p. 18.
30. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, 1978, cols. 2304-2305.
31. *Ibid.*, Col. 2272.
32. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 90, 1975, col. 1706.
33. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, 1978, col. 2234.
34. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Rhodesia Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, 1978, col. 2232.
35. Real names of people who gave evidence are used here as none of them requested anonymity. However, my sincerest apologies to them if what I record here was taken out of context.
36. This is because in all the three districts research was confined to within 500 to 1000 metres accessible by road given the small car this researcher was using.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Interview with Violet Serede, an ordinary villager in Chikumbu village, Mutasa, 27 January 2000; Alexander Nyamatanga, Chemhere village, Makoni, 27 January 2000. One Group interview I had also confirmed this.
39. Interview with Mrs Chikambiro Marange, the wife of the incumbent Chief Marange, Marange homestead, 28 October 1999. See also Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, 1978, col. 2274.
40. Interview with Mrs Marange, 28 October 1999; Violet Serede, 27 January 2000; Alexander Nyamatanga, 27 January 2000; Interview with Morgen Muchafa Tarugarira, Marange Township, 29 October 1999. As if to confirm the myth, Never Gandira Marange, in an interview, Marange homestead, 28 October 1999, says that the curfew did not particularly affect them as his late father had the magical powers to suddenly 'disappear' once confronted by the Rhodesian security forces.
41. Interview with Mrs Chikambiro and Mr Tarugarira, 28 October 1999.
42. Never Marange put the figure at 1000, Morgen Tarugarira at 270, Clifford Chingwende at 47. Violet Serede at 4, Alexander Nyamatanga at 23.
43. National Archives of Zimbabwe, MS 590/10, Curfew breakers shot, May 1977.
44. Interview with Gwani Kashaya, 28 October 1999.
45. The following were given to me by Never, Jebwede, Chandaoneswa and Morgen as names of some of those who were shot dead while at /or coming from a beer drink/party. Their names are Gede and his son, Manzwi and his son, Dekete, Kauzini, Benjamin, Kwenga, Gibson Pundo, and Gedion and his son.
46. Interview with Kashaya, 28 October 1999.
47. Interview with Mrs. Chikambiro, 28 October 1999.
48. *Ibid.*

49. While I have no statistics from my case studies of mothers who died as a result of pregnancy related pains, Hansard of 1978, Vol. 97, records a one such woman in the Hurungwe North area, Mashonaland West.
50. ICJ, *Racial Discrimination*, p.64.
51. Interview with Clifford Chingwende, Marange, 30 October 1999.
52. Interview with Serina Marange, Marange Township, 30 October 1999.
53. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, 1978, col. 2248.
54. Interview with Morgen, 29 October 1999.
55. Interviews with Never, Jebwede, Morgen and Chandaoneswa Marange, 29 October 1999.
56. Interview with Chandaoneswa, 29 October 1999.
57. Southern Rhodesia, *House of Assembly Debates*, Vol. 97, 1978, col. 2274-2275.
58. Interviews with Lydia, Mrs Chikambiro, Jebwede and Tarugarira, Marange, 28-30 October 1999.

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- Chandaoneswa Marange, 29 October 1999
- Clifford Chingwende, Marange, 30 October 1999
- Mrs Chikambiro Marange, Lydia, Jebwede and Morgen Tarugarira, Marange, 28-30 October 1999

Gwani Kashaya, 28 October 1999

Violet Serede, Chikumbu Village, 27 January 2000

Never Gandira Marange, Marange Homestead, 28 October, 1999

Archival Material(s)

National Archives of Zimbabwe, MS 590/10