Systematic human rights violations rife in Zimbabwe

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ZIMBABWE’S law enforcers have been accused of committing several human rights violations in contrast with the Police Service Charter.

Critics have accused state apparatus such as police, military and intelligence services of being partisan and used to crush dissent against President Robert Mugabe’s 35-year rule. A research titled Human Rights and Policing: A case study of Zimbabwe which was published in the International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2012 details police brutality and impunity.

“These (methods of brutality apply) during investigation, interrogation, detention, when dealing with the vulnerable groups and when policing political activities. The ZRP has been accused of violating human rights through torture, excessive use of force, unlawful arrest and detention,” reads part of the report.

The research was done by David Makwerere, a Bindura University lecturer, Tafadzwa Chinzete from the Institute for Young Women Development and Collen Musorowegomo, who was a Master of Science student in peace and governance at Bindura University at that time.

“There have been many reported cases of excessive use of force by the police in arrests and in response to civil disorder. Inadequate training in minimum force techniques and inappropriate equipment can be the cause of the problem. Use of force often leads to injury or death. By using lethal force the police have violated the principles of necessity and proportionality,” reads the report.

Amnesty International in 2011 reported the rampant use of excessive force by the ZRP who were implicated in numerous cases of torture, assault and ill-treatment of especially members of the political opposition and those critical of government.

Organisations such as Zimbabwe National Students Union, National Constitutional Assembly, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Women of Zimbabwe Arise, among many others including journalists have experienced police brutality.

“Ill-treatment and even deaths in custody have been reported since 1980 in Zimbabwe. Deaths in police custody or detention are common. Some of those who have died have been in formal custody while others have not been registered as detainees in police records. Some deaths have been due to torture and negligence while some were summarily executed,” the research further says.