

VICTIMS OF OPERATION MURAMBATSVINA IN GLEN NORAH C HOME INDUSTRIES LIVING DESTITUTE LIVES

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Harare: ABOUT 150 people displaced by Operation Murambatsvina are living destitute lives along Mukuvisi River and the area adjacent to Glen Norah C' where they drink contaminated water and use the bush as latrines.

This lifestyle goes on unabated yet the government of Zimbabwe has told the whole world that Operation Murambatsvina victims have been assisted with shelter and food.

The victims have built shacks using plastics and broken pieces of furniture which they use as their houses. They sleep together, irrespective of gender. It is the children sleeping together with their parents on the open ground covered with either plastics or cardboard boxes.

A tour around the area, the CHRA information officer was able to first-hand experience their lifestyle, fraught with misery. These people have lost hope and pray that the government allocates them land to build their houses.

John Maburutse, 63, from Mberengwa, his wife Beulah Mariki Maburutse, 49, live in the same shack with their eight children. He has kept records of the victims of Operation Murambatsvina between Glen Norah C' and Mukuvisi River.

Others who spoke of their problems are Onias Mhou, 44, from Jerera in Masvingo, used to survive on part-time jobs as a mechanic. This kept his family of three children well-fed. His wife Shelter Masirembwa, 36, now does manual jobs to supplement their meagre earnings.

"I have joined other women in the old home industries in digging out bricks for resale at \$1 million for a 1 000 bricks," Masirembwa said. "The situation is worse these days of heavy rains because the ground is muddy and sticky. Digging is a bit difficulty."

Admire Chuma, 31; of Gutu in Masvingo said they lived destitute lives. Blair toilets which the City of Harare had built for them were destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina. The open holes that remain in some cases are now being used as toilets by the victims.

In separate interviews, they said the Harare Municipality prohibited them from putting any structures around the 'toilets' but has instead demanded that they vacate from the place.

Charles Chinyepe, 35, from Zaka in Masvingo, who is a builder and carpenter by profession, said he lived in descent lodgings before the vindictive operation was launched. In the aftermath of the demolitions, he has found himself living in the shacks with his wife and three children. For several months they tried to find alternative accommodation but failed.

Asked how they were making a living after their industry was destroyed, Chinyepe said they were drinking water from small wells and boreholes they dug prior to the exercise.

"We try as much as possible to make an honest living but it is proving difficult," he said. "There are no jobs, construction work which was picking up has been destroyed and now we horde some agriculture produce for resale as a vendor.

The municipal police occasionally raid us and confiscate our wares and the police have also threatened us with arrests. We have no option but to continue struggling to make ends meet.”

Elizabeth Munyoro, 25, from Mutare works as a security guard with Watch Yard Security told this author that they have no food and enough blankets to warm themselves at night. She lives together with her workmate Mr Precious Nyakudya and both lived in Glen Norah A’ before Operation Murambatsvina was launched.

Nyakudya has a wife and two children.

There have been cholera outbreaks in the area which affected nearly 50 people. According to the shack dwellers, some people nearly died in October, November and December. The situation remains desperate.

Needs

Foods, accommodation, blankets, clean water, compensation for lost property and respect for their basic rights.

Conclusion:

Talking to the victims’ one is left with a feeling that these people might one unite and form a base for a calculated resistance against the Zimbabwe dictatorship.

Conmen have capitalised on the victims’ destitution for their benefit. At the beginning of the year, some men claiming to be home owners wrote down their names and collected \$20 000 from each person. But they soon disappeared leaving no trace of their whereabouts.

Another group came later with some forms and claimed to the victims that they would process their applications for residential stands but nothing materialised. They parted with their \$50 000 and remain exposed to more fraudsters masquerading as responsible citizens.

These people are some of the 700 000 who lost their livelihoods through Operation Murambatsvina as reported by the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka in her final report, rejected by the government of Zimbabwe as exaggerated and lacking truths.

The government has also rejected another independent report crafted by Action Aid in liaison with the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA), the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), and the Zimbabwe Peace Project which concluded that about 850 000 people had been left traumatised by the exercise.

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