

Mugabe tells ZANU PF youths to fight back

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MASHONALAND WEST – President Robert Mugabe at the weekend urged youths of his ruling ZANU PF party to fight back should the opposition become violent.

Addressing about 10 000 supporters at Mwami rural business centre, about 240 km north-west of Harare, Mugabe said he could not fathom ZANU PF youths losing in a violent confrontation against their rivals from the main opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party.

“There is no way I can take it that some of the ZANU PF youths can be beaten by those from the opposition... You have to fight back, why are you so lazy (to fight),” Mugabe told the youths at the rally held to celebrate the ruling party’s victory in the disputed March 31 parliamentary election.

This is not the first time that Mugabe has called on his party to use violence against the opposition.

During the violent invasion of white-owned farms by ZANU PF militants and self-styled veterans of Zimbabwe’s 1970s independence war, Mugabe ignored court orders to arrest the illegal farm invaders and instead publicly encouraged the invasions saying they were genuine demonstrations of land hunger.

At least seven white farmers were murdered during the farm invasions and several hundreds of their black workers beaten up by the war veterans and ruling party supporters.

Church and human rights groups have in the past also accused ZANU PF youth militias of hunting down perceived MDC supporters in remote rural areas such as Mwami and raping, torturing and murdering them. ZANU PF denies the charges and says it does not encourage violence by its youths or members.

Mugabe also told the villagers, most of them facing starvation after poor harvests last season, that his cash-strapped government had bought enough maize from neighbouring South Africa to ensure no one starves.

An estimated 1.2 million tonnes of the staple maize are required for four million people, a quarter of Zimbabwe’s 12 million people, will starve.

The government, which last year banned international food agencies from giving aid to Zimbabwe and told them to take their food elsewhere because the country had enough, backtracked last month allowing the World Food Programme to resume general relief operations in the country. - ZimOnline