

19 February 2007

22 Police Officers 'Protest' Over Poor Pay

MASVINGO – At least 22 police officers based at Masvingo Central Police Station stunned their superiors last week when they refused to sing the national anthem in protest over poor salaries.

According to highly placed sources within the police, the disgruntled officers, who include two inspectors and five members of the Criminal Investigations Department, staged the protest for almost an hour arguing that singing the national anthem “will not bring money into their pockets.”

The protest by the uniformed forces is the first of its kind since the country’s independence from Britain in 1980 suggesting that all was not well within the country’s security forces.

Sources within the police said a shaken Officer Commanding Masvingo Province, Assistant Commissioner Charles Makono, initially “fired” the police officers over their “near mutiny.”

Senior police officers in Masvingo are said to have since written a letter to Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri seeking guidance on how to handle the crisis.

The Officer in Charge at Masvingo central police station, Inspector Kenneth Kondo would neither confirm nor deny the incident telling us to ask his superiors as they had “all the information on the matter.”

Police spokesman for Masvingo province, Phibion Nyambo, refused to comment on the matter referring all questions to Makono.

“Even if it happened, it is a police internal issue which has nothing to do with the media,” is all what Makono could say when he was approached for comment at the weekend.

Morale within Zimbabwe’s security services is said to have hit rock bottom over the past few months forcing security chiefs last year to tell President Robert Mugabe to hike salaries for security forces ten-fold to boost morale among the security forces.

In a clear sign that all was not well within the security services, the government last month began giving out food rations to junior officers in the army and police contain rising discontent within the army and the police.

The lowest paid junior officer in the army and police earns about Z\$75,000 per month, an amount that is way below the Z\$460,000 that the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe says an average family of five needs per month to survive.

Hundreds of soldiers and police officers have resigned or deserted over the past few years disgruntled by poor pay and working conditions.

Zimbabwe is in the grip of its worst ever economic crisis that has seen inflation close to 1,600 percent and spawned severe shortages of food, fuel, electricity, hard cash and just about every basic survival commodity.

Copyright 2007

TalkZimbabwe.com