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Power to the People?

(Con-)Tested Civil Society in Search of Democracy



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Making collective demands on tyranny: Social movements and resistance in Harare

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We will not be cowed by the repression of the regime since we know that ultimately tyranny never lasts. (*Mike Davies, CHRA Chairperson*)

On 20 March 2007, in defiance of Zimbabwe's draconian public order and security legislation, about one hundred Harare residents invaded Town House (City Hall). They denounced the government-appointed commission running the affairs of the city. They called for the commission to "vacate Town House" and demanded new elections. The defiant group was made up of members of the Combined Harare Residents' Association (CHRA). The chairperson of CHRA said of the spectacular protest (CHRA 2007a):

Today CHRA occupied the steps of Town House to send a clear message to the regime that Harare belongs to us, the residents of Harare. We will continue to demonstrate and hold other peaceful campaigns against the illegal commission until elections are held in Harare. Viva CHRA!

Rationalising this stunt, CHRA reasoned:

The Association has appealed to Parliament for its intervention through submissions to the Portfolio Committee on Local Government, has gone to the judiciary but still the regime has not listened to the concerns of Harare residents. The only option now available is civil disobedience until elections are held.

Surprisingly, this dramatic protest was staged a week after security agents had severely assaulted opposition and civil society leaders for allegedly

defying a police ban on a ‘prayer meeting’; less than a month earlier, government had defied a high court order nullifying a police ban on an opposition rally. Suggesting the perilousness – and maybe foolhardiness – of the defiant act, CHRA boasted, “No one was arrested. Nearly 24 baton-wielding policemen arrived on the scene 10 minutes after the demonstrators had left Town House”. In fact, so strong were fears of a state backlash that CHRA closed its offices for a whole week. When announcing the reopening of the offices, CHRA explained (CHRA 2007b):

This last week was a bit sensitive and our offices were actually not open to the public. There were genuine fears that the police or any members of the National State Security [*sic*] would pounce on us for our supposed role in the CHRA demonstration at Town House on Tuesday 20 March 2007.

These events illustrate CHRA’s convictions and *modus operandi*, as well as the environment in which it operates. CHRA is a social movement organisation that is unrelentingly calling tyranny to account. This article reflects on CHRA’s spirited efforts to defend the interests of residents against a municipal authority that it believes was ‘imposed’ on residents by a repressive national state. It also lays out a framework for analysis, focussing on social movements and urban governance, and reflects on some emerging issues.

Social movements, contentious politics and governance

CHRA is a typical social movement organisation (SMO), here defined as “a complex or formal organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement” (McCarthy and Zald 1977, p 1218). To this end, SMOs actively attempt to implement the goals of social movements (SMs). Dobson (2001) calls SMOs “command posts of the movement”, while Canel (1997, p 211) labels them “the carriers of SMs”. SMOs have “the task of determining the movement’s goals and program, strategy and tactics”. Typically SMOs are formal organisations with a fulltime secretariat, an office, paid staff and/or volunteers. To understand SMOs, it is necessary to take a closer look at some key aspects of social movements themselves.

One of the most celebrated social movement theorists states that social movements are an “invented political form...a distinctive form of contentious politics...that...involve the collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else’s interests” (Tilly 2004, p 3). There are two aspects of this conceptualisation that are of interest to the present discussion, namely, *contentious politics* and *collective claim making*.

Collective action is the identifying mark of social movements, SMs. Tilly (2004, p 12) notes that SMs are “not solo performances, but... interactive campaigns.” Della Porta and Diani (2006, p 20) correctly insist that SMs are “a distinct *social* process, consisting of mechanisms through which actors engage in *collective action*” (emphasis added). It is collective action, itself a result of *shared ideas*, that is the main characteristic of SMs (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, p 7). Collective action is a complex process that takes many forms.

The most sensational forms of claim making by social movements is accomplished through contentious politics. According to Tarrow (1998, p 2) “contentious politics occurs when ordinary people, often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontations with elites, authorities and opponents”. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (1996, p 17) trace the genesis of contention to the moment “when people collectively make claims on other people”. What precipitates contention is that the realisation of these claims “would affect those others’ interests” (ibid). Amenta and Young’s equating of social movements to “challengers” (Amenta and Young 1999, p 154) is not without basis. What makes contention really contentious is that it “relies at least in part on non-institutional interaction with elites, opponents or the state” (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 1996, p 18). Relying largely as it does on “extrainstitutional means of influence” (Gamson and Meyer 1996, p 283), contention makes a mockery of protocol as the claim makers choose to disregard the ‘right channels’. Hence, “collective challenges are often marked by interrupting, obstructing, or rendering uncertain the activities of others” (Tarrow 1998, p 4). It is small wonder that “disruption is the archetypical expression of challenging groups” (ibid, p 96).

McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996, p 2) maintain that collective action depends on the triad of political opportunities, mobilising struc-

tures, and framing processes (cf Goodwin and Jasper 1999). Political opportunities refer to “the structure of political opportunities or constraints confronting the movement”. Mobilising structures define “the forms of organisation (informal as well as formal) available to the insurgents”. Framing processes are “the collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action”. All three factors need to be present for collective action to be possible. Even in repressive political environments, a degree of political opportunity is needed for an aggrieved group to resort to collective action. Even with the best of organisational resources and the most strongly felt and widely shared grievances, the aggrieved group needs to claim some form of political space to make meaningful and sustained collective action possible.

There is a link between social movement organisations, contentious politics and governance. Governance involves relationships and interactions. Some of these interactions are between the governors and the governed, between the powerful and the weak. In the relational practice that is governance, stakeholders with certain advantages can deploy these to maintain and protect their favoured position. Sometimes this involves neutralising threats, which itself may involve stifling the needs and demands of the politically disadvantaged groups. Weak, marginalised and ignored, the politically disadvantaged groups can become “challengers” (Amenta and Young 1999, p 154) when they make claims upon the institutions of governance. They become a social movement if they are able to mount a “campaign”, that is, “a sustained, organised public effort making claims on target authorities” (Tilly 2004, p 3). The importance of governance in these conflicts is amplified by Morrill et al (2003, p 393) who define political conflict as “a form of contentious politics in which challengers contest authorities over the shape and *governance* of institutionalized systems of power” (emphasis added). In spatial terms, urban councils rank among these ‘institutionalised systems of power’, whose governance is the subject of contention. As carriers of social movements, social movement organisations are the visible force that physically engages the institutionalised systems of power. They are therefore the face of collective demand-making and the instigators of collective action.

The example of the Combined Harare Residents' Association

The movement

In 1999, six neighbourhood residents' groups – some dating back to the 1940s – merged to form the Combined Harare Residents' Association, CHRA. In 2005, the association's chairperson asserted that CHRA is “an expression of the growing power of residents' collective action and... is an effective monitor of the activities of elected councillors as well as municipal officials” (Davies 2005, p 8). In 1999, a Trust was formed and CHRA was registered as a civil society organisation. In 2000, the Advocacy Centre was established as CHRA's secretariat.

According to CHRA's constitution, the aim of the association is “to promote and protect the rights and interests of the residents of Harare” (CHRA 2006a). Its preoccupation with urban governance is amplified by its slogan: “CHRA for Enhanced Civic Participation in Local Governance”. Among CHRA's local governance-related objectives are:

- To represent and support residents of Harare by advocating for effective, transparent and affordable municipal and other services and quality facilities.
- To make representations to and liaise with the Harare City Council, City Councillors, Central Government or any of its ministries, departments or other public institutions concerning matters affecting the residents of Harare.
- To promote and encourage public awareness and participation by residents in local governance issues.
- To do all things necessary to protect and promote the rights and interests of the residents.

It is these objectives that define CHRA's “core focus”, which is “to develop participatory approaches to local government and...demanding accountability” (Davies 2005, p 9).

CHRA membership is “open to any bona fide resident of Harare upon payment of the membership and subscription fees.” The association has semi-autonomous local ward-based branches with a minimum of twenty registered members. The General Council (GC) manages and controls the affairs of CHRA. The secretariat, headed by the Chief Executive

Officer, is the implementing arm, and the Management Committee and six other standing committees carry out its affairs.

The organisation has defined seven key programme activities to reach the aims of CHRA:

1. public meetings on topical issues affecting residents of Harare;
2. membership mobilisation;
3. warding public meetings;
4. research into local governance issues;
5. networking with civic organisations that share common objectives with CHRA;
6. development and dissemination of information packages concerning local governance; and
7. challenging violations of the Urban Councils' Act...and other legislation governing local governance. (CHRA 2007c)

In terms of what Tilly (2004, p 3) terms “social movement repertoire”, the list bespeaks of an ordinary SMO. Its activities cover the gamut of contentious politics that the organisation has adopted since the turn of the century. In the context of Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic environment, public meetings and the challenging of violations of the Urban Councils Act and other legislation can hardly be non-contentious, especially considering that the state is increasingly being characterised as repressive and intolerant.

National context

CHRA operates in a repressive political environment and an unstable economic situation that has plunged the country into a series of multiple crises since 2000. Zimbabwe's is a composite crisis that has raised questions on two issues, namely, governance and livelihood. It has been argued that the multifarious socio-political and economic tribulations that have bedevilled the country since 2000 are a result of a crisis of governance (Chikuhwa 2004). Always cited or alluded to in the list of causative misdeeds is economic mismanagement, characterised by endemic corruption and suicidal economic policies. Critics observe a relentless assault on democracy encapsulated in political repression, disregard for

the rule of law, violation of human rights and a fundamentally flawed electoral system that has proved incapable of producing a controversy-free election result since the appearance of a strong opposition political party in 2000 (ICG 2006). These faults are blamed for creating a hostile environment where livelihoods have been severely impaired by, among other vicissitudes, quadruple digit inflation and a persistently soaring cost of living – this in the midst of burgeoning poverty, spiralling unemployment and crippling shortages of basic commodities.

Between 2000 and 2005, there were three national elections whose results were contested by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the main opposition party. Significantly, the MDC contested the very legitimacy of government. The party still views the government as illegitimate, courtesy of ‘stolen’ presidential elections in 2002 (Kamete 2003). Additionally, there is very little faith in public institutions. Key ministries and departments, like the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development (MLGPWUD), and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), are viewed as extensions of the ruling party, ZANU-PF. Some cities, most notably Harare, are run by government-appointed commissions, whose legitimacy, like that of the national state, is contested. Furthermore, critics regard the judiciary as having been seriously compromised. Many doubt the impartiality of the courts (ICG 2006). CHRA described the legal process as “costly, slow, flawed and frustrating” (CHRA 2006b). In any case, government is known to disregard court judgements it does not like and to defy court orders at will.

Of particular relevance to CHRA’s operations is what has been regarded as government’s repressive infrastructure, particularly that restricting the freedom of assembly. The Public Order and Security Act (POSA) restricts public gatherings that are officially described as being of ‘political’ nature. POSA aims to “make provision for the maintenance of public order and security...” (GoZ 2002). It requires four days advance notice to the police for any public gathering, which is defined as a public meeting “held for the purpose of the discussion of matters of public interest or for the purpose of the expression of views on such matters” (GoZ 2002). It gives the police power to prohibit any public gathering they reasonably believe will result in public violence, to disperse such a gathering,

and to cordon and search any area at any time. Under this legislation, government has recently clamped down on opposition and civil society gatherings, labelling them as a threat to public order and national security. The closure of CHRA offices mentioned in the introduction came in the wake of world-famous suppression of civil society gathering, during which leaders of the opposition and civil society were severely assaulted and/or arrested and detained.

Apart from CHRA, there are other high-profile organisations within civil society whose mandates bring them into direct conflict with the authorities. Among them are: the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), which campaigns for a new democratic constitution; Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CZC), consisting of more than 350 civil society organisations, whose vision is to bring about democratic change; Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) that encourages women to stand up for their rights and freedoms; and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), which aims to foster a culture of human rights. At one time or another, members of these organisations have either been physically assaulted and/or arrested by the security agents.

Local context

The national political, social and economic situation is mirrored at the local level. In keeping with national trends, service levels in Harare have been deteriorating. Roads have been falling into a state of disrepair; water, electricity and refuse collection are increasingly becoming erratic. Health, education and environmental management are plagued by problems. Harare, like all major cities, has since 2000 become “bastions of opposition support” (Maroleng 2005, p 1). In national and council elections, Harare’s electorate rejected the ruling party, and by mid 2002, the ruling party had no democratic presence in Harare. All Members of the national Parliament were of the MDC party, the powerful office of Mayor was won by the MDC, and all but one of the 43 councillors were MDC.

The opposition-controlled councils became fiercely independent and defiant. Obviously playing to the gallery, it publicly countered most central government – which many interpreted as ZANU-PF – moves by

routinely disregarding and/or contesting central government instructions, directives and guidelines (Kamete 2006). The multiple electoral defeats and purported local council insubordination spurred the national state into action as it sought to salvage its dominance in urban politics and rein in renegade councils. By December 2004, Harare's opposition executive mayor and the opposition-controlled council had been sacked. In their place was put a pliant government-appointed commission, which many critics, including CHRA, regarded as an extension of ZANU-PF. The fact that the commission unhesitatingly does everything central government asks of it has not endeared it to residents who see the hand of ZANU-PF in the running of the affairs of the city.

Contesting the legitimacy of an imposed authority

CHRA has consistently maintained that the government-appointed commission running the affairs of the City of Harare is illegally constituted. In its contention, CHRA cites the law as being on its side; and indeed it is. Section 80(3), of the Urban Councils Act, limits the tenure of commissioners to six months. Section 80(4) requires the holding of council elections before the term of office of the commission is terminated. Based on these legal provisions, "CHRA believes the office of the commissioners to have ended on 9 June 2005" (CHRA n.d.1), six months after its appointment. CHRA's contention is that "the commission has not fulfilled this requirement" and that this "has serious implications not only for the rights of residents of Harare but for every citizen of Zimbabwe" (ibid).

In a separate legal challenge by the dismissed Town Clerk, in March 2007, the High Court declared the commission illegal. CHRA predictably celebrated the victory and then promptly switched its strategy to demanding that government abide by the court ruling. When it became clear that central government was bent on disregarding the judgement, CHRA announced, "CHRA continues to demand the immediate holding of Mayoral and Council elections in Harare, and the removal of the illegal commission from Town House in line with the High Court ruling" (CHRA 2007d). CHRA further threatened (ibid):

Failure to heed these demands, the residents of Harare shall continue to: withhold paying any rates to the City of Harare; actively demand their stolen democratic space by engaging in peaceful protests and actions against Makwavarara [the chairperson of the commission] within their suburbs or at Town House.

True to its word, barely a fortnight after the state had demonstrated its readiness to violently suppress protests, CHRA mounted the surprise protest at Town House. Aware of the wrath of the state, CHRA closed its offices for one week.

Claiming space in budgetary processes

CHRA made a sombre analysis of the 2006 budget, prepared by the commission. In its conclusion CHRA showed its stance on the budget by amplifying the negative aspects of the budget such as astronomical increases in rates and service charges.

When the 2007 budget was presented, CHRA did not even bother to analyse it. On 7 January, CHRA (2007d) curtly declared it had:

resolved...to reject the proposed City of Harare 2007 budget and to take any action necessary to express our rejection of the budget and the illegal...Commission. We do so because the commission has no mandate from the residents of Harare to formulate any budget and we demand an immediate return to legitimate governance at Town House.

This statement showed the principled stand of CHRA. The commission was illegal; therefore it did not have the mandate to make decisions, including and in particular, financial ones.

CHRA then advocated a rates boycott, informing residents that they could “safely decide not to pay their rates and still live without any fears from the municipality” before embarking on campaign of a protest (ibid). It drafted a letter of objection against the budget. Residents were requested to individually sign the letter and post it to the acting town clerk, yet another indication that CHRA did not recognise the legitimacy of the commission.

CHRA's repertoire of tactics

About its tactics on contesting the legality of the Harare City Commission, CHRA (2006c) says:

CHRA will strategically continue to pursue the slow and frustrating court processes for the record, but will back that action with the popular mass mobilisation until we have restored Harare to its rightful owners. We continue to mobilise residents against payment of rates and rentals until there is a legitimate board of city fathers to run our affairs. CHRA says no to the continued re-appointments! Elections Must Be Held Now!

The statement captures CHRA's *modus operandi*. Included in this repertoire are litigation, advocacy, disruption and information campaigns. Notably all these fall within the realm of collective claim making and contentious politics.

Litigation and advocacy involve working within recognised institutional structures. Litigation, for example, involves dealing with the judicial system. Could it be that CHRA believes that the rule of law is alive in Zimbabwe? However, CHRA describes the strategy as "the slow and frustrating court processes". Perhaps CHRA is seeking a moral victory, trying to show all and sundry that it has tried the proper channels and they cannot be trusted to deliver. Or could it be that a legal victory is a huge moral blow to its opponents? It could be that CHRA knows that when dealing with fundamental structural issues, the only lasting victory is obtained through institutionally recognised practices.

In its advocacy role, CHRA rarely engages constructively with the commission. The main impediment seems to be the commission's illegality. Dealing with it may be misconstrued as amounting recognition. In contrast, CHRA has readily engaged with institutions it recognised. For example, it has no qualms about seeking an audience with the national parliament. It did hold a workshop and meetings with the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Local Government (PCLG). In its dealings with parliament, CHRA puts a lot of work into developing a technically sound position, and the recommendations made to the PCLG are always backed by careful research and analysis.

Disruption is the hallmark of CHRA. In its bid to oust the commission, the association threatens with sustained mass mobilisation “until we have restored the city to its rightful owners”. The weapon of choice in this regard is public performance through public protests. The surprise demonstration at Town House is an example of such protests. As noted above, in its contestation of the commission’s legality, CHRA promised “peaceful protests and actions”. In its rejection of the budget, the association said residents would “take any action necessary to express our rejection of the budget” and then protested through a campaign to swamp the local authority with signed individual letters.

CHRA’s other method of disruption was to call for a rates boycott. It is a tactic that has been applied in several cases. The association’s logic is simple: Residents should not pay rates to the commission because it is illegal and everything it does, every decision it makes, and every action it takes lacks legitimacy. Hence, part of the strategy to force the disbanding of the commission and ensure that elections are held is to withhold payment of rates. Similarly, part of the strategy to reject the budget involves not only disregarding the astronomical increases in rates and service charges, but also mounting a complete rates boycott. The argument is that the commission is illegal and has no mandate to prepare the budget, let alone raise revenue.

Information campaigns constitute CHRA’s most visible tactic. Leading this tactic is the issuing of timely public statements characterised by the liberal use of information technology and what Tilly (2004, p 3) calls “pamphleteering”. Notably, CHRA is one of the few organisations in Zimbabwe that have a functional up-to-date website. Through a sustained cyber-campaign, CHRA has been able to not only “promote and encourage public awareness and participation by residents in local governance issues” but also to keep the pressure on institutions of governance as it fiercely does “all things necessary to protect and promote the rights and interests of the residents” as set out in its constitution (CHRA 2006a). Furthermore, CHRA and its branches hold public meetings. Unlike public protests, these are meetings where cool-tempered analyses and discussion take place. It is at these meetings that CHRA rationally reviews issues such as budgets and policies, while providing feedback to residents.

CHRA officials give regular interviews in reaction to issues and lay out their programme of action. These interviews are predictably not solicited by and carried in state-controlled media. Independent and international media as well as websites of like-minded local organisations conduct and carry the interviews. For example on 15 December 2006, two days after the controversial extension of the term of the commission, the website of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, a network of civil society organisations fiercely critical of the state, carried an interview with Mike Davies, chairperson of CHRA. In such interviews, CHRA projects the image of an organisation on a just crusade. This is accomplished by providing a reasoned, logical, and technically sound analysis that is backed by reference to appropriate legislation.

Emerging issues

CHRA's mandate, crusade and tactics raise questions about SMOs in general, and those operating in repressive environments in particular. The first one is on *ensuring good local governance without being tainted with projects of regime change*. The Zimbabwean government instinctively labels all its critics as 'oppositional forces' bent on 'illegal' regime change. CHRA is a self-confessed member of this distinguished group that includes opposition parties, academics, independent media, non-governmental organisations and civil society. The carrying of CHRA's views in 'oppositional media' and the presence of CHRA personnel on sites of oppositional politics, such as demonstrations, is summarily linked to a partisan political project by the state. Interestingly, when CHRA is present on such sites, it consistently uses the occasion as a vehicle for advancing its own agenda such as the dismantling of the Harare commission.

Notwithstanding the state's ritualistic branding as 'enemies of the state' all who disagree with it, question it, or stand up to it, the question should be asked whether it is possible to contend with tyranny without being linked to or implicated in some larger political project.

This issue should be viewed in the context of a tricky practical and ethical dilemma, namely, how to handle tyranny when the loudest noise falls on deaf ears; the greatest public performances have no rousing effect on the target; the soundest arguments count for naught; and even the

sweetest of legal victories end up being hollow. In such cases, one can argue that the ultimate success of a movement's programme rests on fundamental political and structural changes, including regime change. While it is indeed risky, it may not be wrong for a social movement organisation whose mandate is local governance not to shy away from projects aimed at fundamental changes in national governance.

Another issue has to do with *acting on principle as opposed to pragmatic action and flagrant opportunism*. CHRA is a locally embedded organisation with a local mandate hinging on local governance. The execution of this mandate involves dealing with the premier local governance institution, which in CHRA's case is the commission. As McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996, p 14) point out, "the demands of most movements are ultimately adjudicated by representatives of the state". Apart from being the local state, albeit of dubious legitimacy, the commission is the representative, if not instrument, of the national state. It is therefore the adjudicator of the local demands of the movement. However, because the association does not recognise the commission, it rarely, if ever engages it. In contrast, CHRA has shown a readiness to engage with national institutions such as the courts and parliament.

One could ask if this principled stand is hurting the cause of residents. Understandably, being a state creation, the commission does not have a mind of its own; it owes its allegiance not to residents but to the source of its power, which is central government. Admittedly, it is tricky – and futile – to deal with the commission. But, when standoffs do not pay, there is much to be gained by "revising and expanding repertoires and cultivating new forms of political engagement" (Downey 2006, p 574). Adapting to changing external conditions is what keeps social movements alive and relevant (cf Meyer and Whittier 1994, p 279).

By any standards, despite its radical stance and disruptive tactics, CHRA is a moderate organisation – a characterisation that is confirmed by the association's numerous references to 'peaceful protest'. This partly explains why government can afford to ignore it. With CHRA, one notices the absence of "radical flank effects" (Haines 1988; cited in McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, p 14). McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) observe that the presence of a radical wing in a movement

can be beneficial. In the presence of extremists within a movement the object of the claims, such as the state, are forced to accommodate the lesser threat by supporting the position of the moderates “as a way of undercutting the radicals”, thereby helping the cause of the movement (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, p 14).

Conclusion

A typical social movement organisation, CHRA operates in an environment that is not conducive to stable and strife-free relations of governance. There is a confirmed crisis of governance at the national level, and contested legitimacy of governance institutions at the local level. Further, state repression at all levels makes it difficult to engage in contentious politics, which is what characterises CHRA’s approach in its bid to protect and promote the rights and interests of the residents.

Despite the factors working against it, CHRA has managed to mount a sustained challenge as it unrelentingly makes collective claims on centres of authority. It has persisted in the deployment of its double-edged repertoire, namely working within established institutions while at the same time employing disruptive tactics. In Zimbabwe’s system of authoritarian governance, this is a feat in itself. Not only does this require ingenuity and heroic sacrifices, but it also demands a constant reinvention of the movement, considerable staying power and the capacity to stomach disappointments stemming from victories that turn out to be hollow.

It is CHRA’s dealings with the commission, undoubtedly the main local governance institution, which raises fundamental questions. While CHRA has consistently stuck to its principle of not recognising the legitimacy of the commission, it could be asked whether this adherence to principle is hurting the terrain of local governance. It is a peculiar situation where the two main actors in local governance do not engage. There is a clear absence of trust and reciprocity, which – when combined with the issues of legitimacy and the rule of law – make Harare’s governance scene decidedly poisonous. One can therefore wonder whether pragmatism and opportunism, embraced by opponents to CHRS, may not be more advantageous in the long run.

For all its ‘nuisances’, CHRA is a moderate movement. The absence of a radical wing makes CHRA predictable and safe to ignore. Additionally, the state has devised ways and means of responding to the movement’s tactical and strategic repertoires. It is this paper’s contention that CHRA needs a radical flank. The presence of an extremist group with a radical approach and agenda might force the authorities to consider CHRA as having the potential to transcend the bounds of an ordinary irritant. This could see the state bargaining with the moderate elements within CHRA so as to undercut the radical wing. In an environment where the state is notoriously repressive, stubbornly listens to no one, routinely disregards court orders, and impudently scoffs at threats, deliberate selective radicalisation of some sections of the movement may offer the only way to constructively engage, to be heard, and to be taken seriously.

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