

# ZIMBABWE

EAAF conducted two missions to Zimbabwe in May and September-October 2001, to work on forensic investigations at the invitation of and in conjunction with AMANI Trust, a non-governmental organization providing physical and mental health services to victims of Human Rights abuses throughout the country. These missions involved investigations of four separate cases. EAAF continues to participate in the training of a local forensic anthropology team.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### *War for Independence and Post-Colonial Period*

Between 1970 and 1987 thousands of Zimbabweans died in political violence, first during the war against the white settler Rhodesian government (1970-1980), and then during a period of internal conflict (1981-87) following liberation. The suffering inflicted upon black Africans during the colonial period and the liberation war is well recognized and documented, and Zimbabwe's government has made major efforts to assist the survivors. By contrast, most of the massive human rights violations that occurred after 1980 were not investigated or even officially recognized by the Zimbabwean government. Nationally and internationally, their existence remained virtually unknown, except to those who experienced them, until 1997 when the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation in Zimbabwe, a local non governmental organization, published a detailed report on human rights abuses in Matabeleland and Midlands during the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>



Zimbabwe, 2001. Reburial ceremony related to joint AMANI/EAAF work. Photo by A.Ginarte/EAAF.



The independence war (1970-1980) against the white settler Rhodesian government was waged by two separate forces. The larger of these was the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) and its armed wing, the Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). The other was the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) and its armed wing, the Zimbabwean People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). While the two forces cooperated in the struggle against the white settler government, there was also considerable animosity between them. This was due in part to the fact that the ZANU emerged from a split that occurred within ZAPU during the 1960s. It was also partially a consequence of differences in training and outlook: ZANLA had been trained by the Chinese and ZIPRA by the Russians, and the two armies employed somewhat different strategies and tactics. Finally, ZANU-ZANLA was associated with Zimbabwe's Shona-speaking majority and ZAPU-ZIPRA with

the Ndebele-speaking minority, although each force included large numbers of members from both ethnic groups. In some cases, the tensions arising from these differences led to armed clashes between the two armies.

By April 1980 the liberation armies had decisively defeated the white settler government. In the subsequent national elections, the ZANU gained a large parliamentary majority in a national vote that fell predominantly along ethnic lines. ZANU and ZAPU entered into a coalition government, and efforts were made to join their armed forces into a single army. Relations between the two groups rapidly deteriorated, however, and the political situation in the country became increasingly tense.

In 1982 a number of so-called “dissidents” began staging attacks and robberies in various areas in the country. According to the CCJP report, these “dissidents” were not a unified group: some were former-ZIPRA combatants who felt they were not well treated within the new, inte-

grated army; others had been secretly trained by South African agents to destabilize the new independent government; still others may have been “common” criminals. There is no conclusive evidence suggesting that the various dissident groups were part of a large-scale, organized plot to overthrow the Zimbabwean government. Nor were the “dissidents” numerous; according to the CCJP-LRF report, probably no more than 400 of them were active at any one time.

The ZANU-dominated Zimbabwean government, however, responded as though the dissidents were mounting a major insurrection. It directed state security forces to take counter-insurgency measures, and to repress the Ndebele-speaking civilian population in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions of the country, where the dissidents were most active. The government justified the repression of civilians on the grounds that Ndebele-speaking civilians supported the dissidents, although there was very little substantial evidence to uphold this claim.



Zimbabwe. 2001. Part of a memorial gathering related to joint AMANI/EAFF work. Photo by Anahí Ginarte/EAFF.

Various dissident groups allegedly committed a number of serious human rights violations, including rapes and murders of civilians. According to CCJP-LRF report, however, the human rights violations committed by the state security forces vastly exceeded those committed by the “dissidents.” Security forces, particularly the notorious 5th Brigade, reportedly carried out arbitrary executions, forced disappearances, beatings, rapes, and torture of thousands of civilians. Zimbabwean and international human rights organizations estimate that between 3,000 and 5,000 persons were killed or “disappeared” by state security forces during this period. Zimbabwean human rights organizations have compiled a database of names of almost 1800 victims known to have been killed or disappeared during the conflict in the 1980s, and another, larger database of unidentified victims. They have also identified sites of a number of mass graves that allegedly contain the remains of victims of human rights violations.

The period of massive violence finally ended in 1987 with a general amnesty and the signing of a “unity accord” between ZANU and ZAPU leaders. The Zimbabwean government, however, has been slow to officially recognize the crimes committed by state security forces during this period. This is at least partially due to the impunity made possible through the Lancaster House Agreement, which officially ended the war with Rhodesia and emphasized the need for reconciliation. As a result, the Zimbabwean government granted amnesty for all acts perpetrated during the Independence war, a move seen as essential to ensure the support of the economically powerful white community. President Mugabe has not only upheld this agreement, but many feel that he has gone far beyond his Lancaster House obligations through his unwillingness to investigate past human rights violations and by keeping human rights violators in crucial positions of power.<sup>2</sup>

Among the most significant consequences of the violence of the 1980s is the fact that survivors of human rights violations could not find or properly bury and mourn the dead. In some cases this happened because the victims were buried in unofficial mass graves. In other cases the victims were “disappeared,” and the survivors never learned their fates, or state security forces killed victims in the presence

of their relatives or neighbors and then refused to allow the survivors to bury or even mourn the dead. The 1997 CCJP-LRF report states:

“It was a characteristic of 5th Brigade to insist that there should be no mourning for the dead. In some cases, the family of dead victims were themselves shot because they wept. In other cases, burial of any kind was forbidden: families had to watch the bodies of their loved ones rotting in the sun and being scavenged...

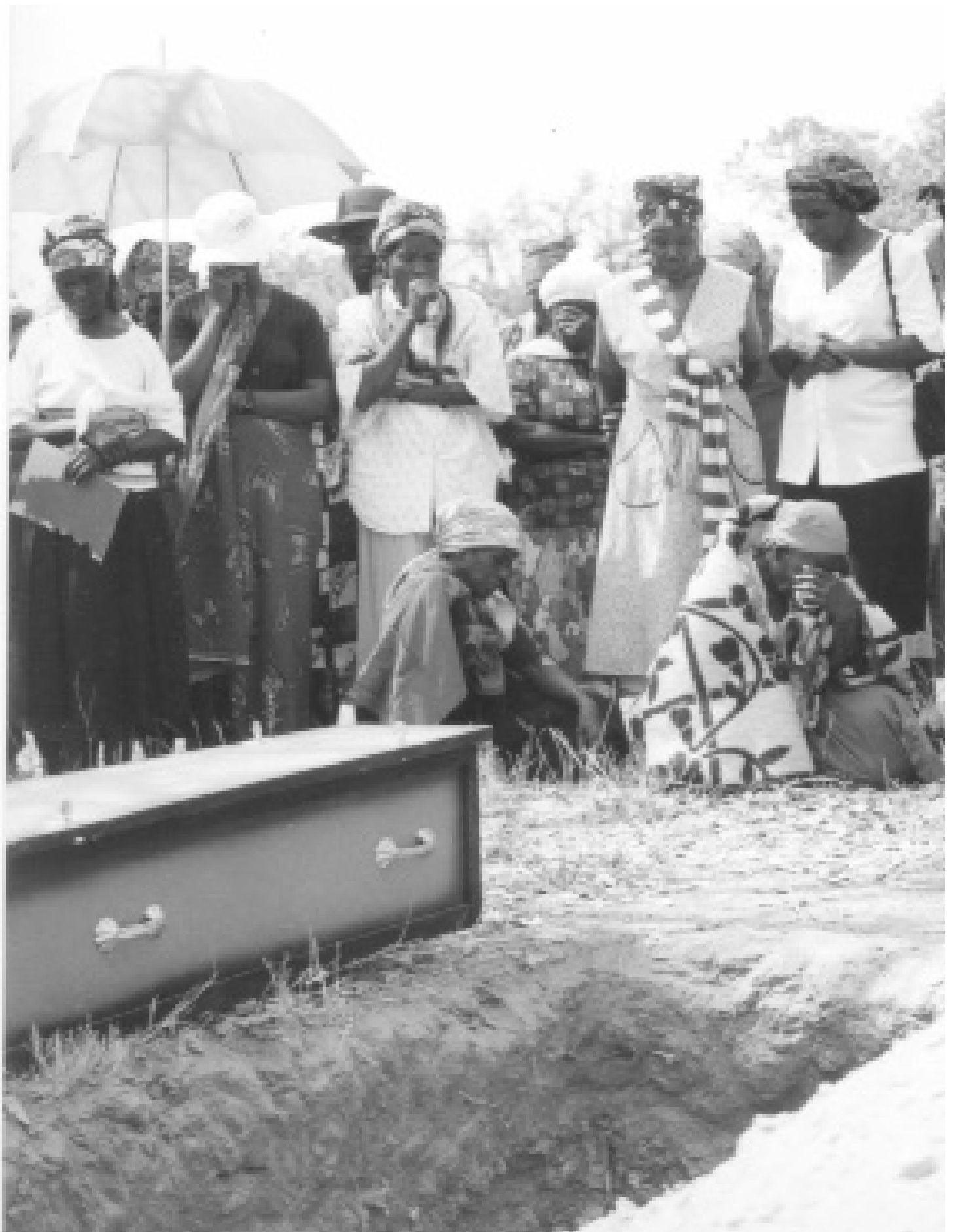
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In some cases, survivors have experienced serious practical difficulties because they do not know the fate of their loved ones, or cannot prove to government authorities that their relatives are dead, leading to the loss of inheritance rights or other benefits.

Moreover, the survivors have experienced tremendous psychological suffering because they have not been able to bury and mourn their dead according to local customs. The CCJP-LRF report asserts:

“The dead play a significant role in the well-being of the living in Ndebele culture, and the unburied dead return as ‘a restless and vengeful presence, innocent yet wronged, aggrieved and dangerous to the living.’”

“Not only those whose final fate and burial place is unknown are considered ‘missing.’ People in mass graves are also culturally regarded as having aggrieved spirits, or as being in an unhappy state of ‘limbo.’ It takes the tears of the living, shed properly through a decent period of mourning, to release the soul and allow it to be at rest.”



## RECENT POLITICAL TURMOIL IN ZIMBABWE

Since 1995, violence by self-styled war veterans under the leadership of Chenjerai Hunzvi, a Polish-trained doctor who died on June 4th, 2001, has been a major problem in Zimbabwe. The veterans, dismayed that the better life they fought for in the 1970's has not come to pass, have conducted mass occupations and seizures of approximately 1800 white-owned farms, murdered with impunity, and have also been reportedly behind attacks on supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the opposition political party.

The issue of land reform has been pivotal in the formation of the contemporary Zimbabwean political landscape. As a problem inherited from colonialist regimes, when the majority of land belonged to the minority of white settlers, it was an issue that was central to the war for Independence. According to Amnesty International, though some land belonging to white commercial farmers has been redistributed under a government program, charges of corruption and irregularities, alleging that the beneficiaries were mostly associated with the ruling party rather than with the landless poor, are legion.<sup>3</sup>

Also, some observers suggest that although land reform is a legitimate claim from the black population, since independence, Mugabe seems to have manipulated the issue as a tool for crushing political opponents or to distract attention from other problems in his government.<sup>4</sup> They propose that the recent war veterans' movement has its root in the fact that for the first time, Zimbabwe has a strong and organized political opposition.<sup>5</sup> Mugabe nevertheless tries to discredit the MDC, despite its roots in the black unions, as a white movement or one that is directed by white settlers.

As the economic crisis deepened, respect for human rights and freedom of expression and association has deteriorated. In 1998, food riots in which some people were tortured and killed were brought about by increasingly exacerbated social tensions and the widening of the huge gap between rich and poor. According to Amnesty

International, in the year 2000 torture of criminal suspects was widespread, and censorship, detention, and torture of members of the press also occurred.<sup>6</sup>

Many human rights abuses in Zimbabwe took place in the context of growing support for the opposition political party, the MDC. In June 2000, government supporters struck out violently at opposition party members. During this period, according to Amnesty International, Zimbabwe's government failed to condemn clearly and publicly acts of violence allegedly committed by government supporters. More than 30 people were killed during the campaigns, and the state intelligence police (CIO) was allegedly involved in several of the killings. There were reports of torture centers opening in various parts of the country, where war veterans were torturing actual or suspected supporters of the opposition with impunity.<sup>7</sup> Despite the outbreak of violence and intimidation of opposition members, the MDC gained one-third of the seats in parliament, enough to keep the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) from unilaterally changing the constitution, as it had been doing for more than a decade.<sup>8</sup>

During the period leading up to the March 2002 presidential election, the human rights situation deteriorated even further. President Mugabe continued to manipulate the land reform issue, and according to Amnesty International, again facilitated the creation of militias and torture camps as means to intimidate potential MDC supporters.<sup>10</sup> The election itself, in which Mugabe defeated opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai, was widely criticized. Among the representative criticisms voiced by observers from the British Commonwealth were these:

"it was clear to us that while the actual polling and counting processes were peaceful and the secrecy of the ballot was assured, the presidential election in Zimbabwe was marred by a high level of politically motivated violence and intimidation.

"Very often the police did not take action to investigate reported cases of violence and intimidation, especially against known or suspected supporters of the MDC . . .

This failure to impartially enforce the law seriously calls into question the application of the rule of law.

“We were concerned that the legislative framework within which the elections were conducted . . . was basically flawed. Limitations on the freedom of speech, movement and of association prevented the opposition from campaigning freely.<sup>11</sup>”

**AMANI Trust has received threats and some of their members have been temporarily held for interrogation.**

The Commonwealth voted to suspend Zimbabwe’s membership privileges for twelve months because of the flaws found in the presidential election. Under similar premises, the European Union, the US Government, and the UN also condemned the elections and withdrew economic support in some cases.

The few months since the presidential election in Zimbabwe have been marred by government efforts to intimidate the opposition in Zimbabwe. On April 19, 2002, Amnesty International released a call for urgent action on the persecution of supporters and suspected supporters of the MDC. According to Amnesty, “dozens of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters and perceived supporters, have been abducted and sometimes “disappeared” in what appears to be a systematic campaign of intimidation against government opponents. MDC polling agents and other members of the party structure remain at high risk of attack from state-sponsored militia, which include veterans of the liberation war that led to independence in 1980.”<sup>12</sup> In the weeks leading up the writing of this report the press has also come under attack, and members of the local and international press have been arrested under the auspices of government sponsored “media reform laws,” which the *Guardian* (UK) reports have been widely condemned as part of efforts to stifle criticism of President Robert Mugabe’s increasingly autocratic government.<sup>13</sup>

## EAAF’S 2001 MISSIONS

### *The First Mission*

**Note:** Names of people and places have been changed to protect identities.

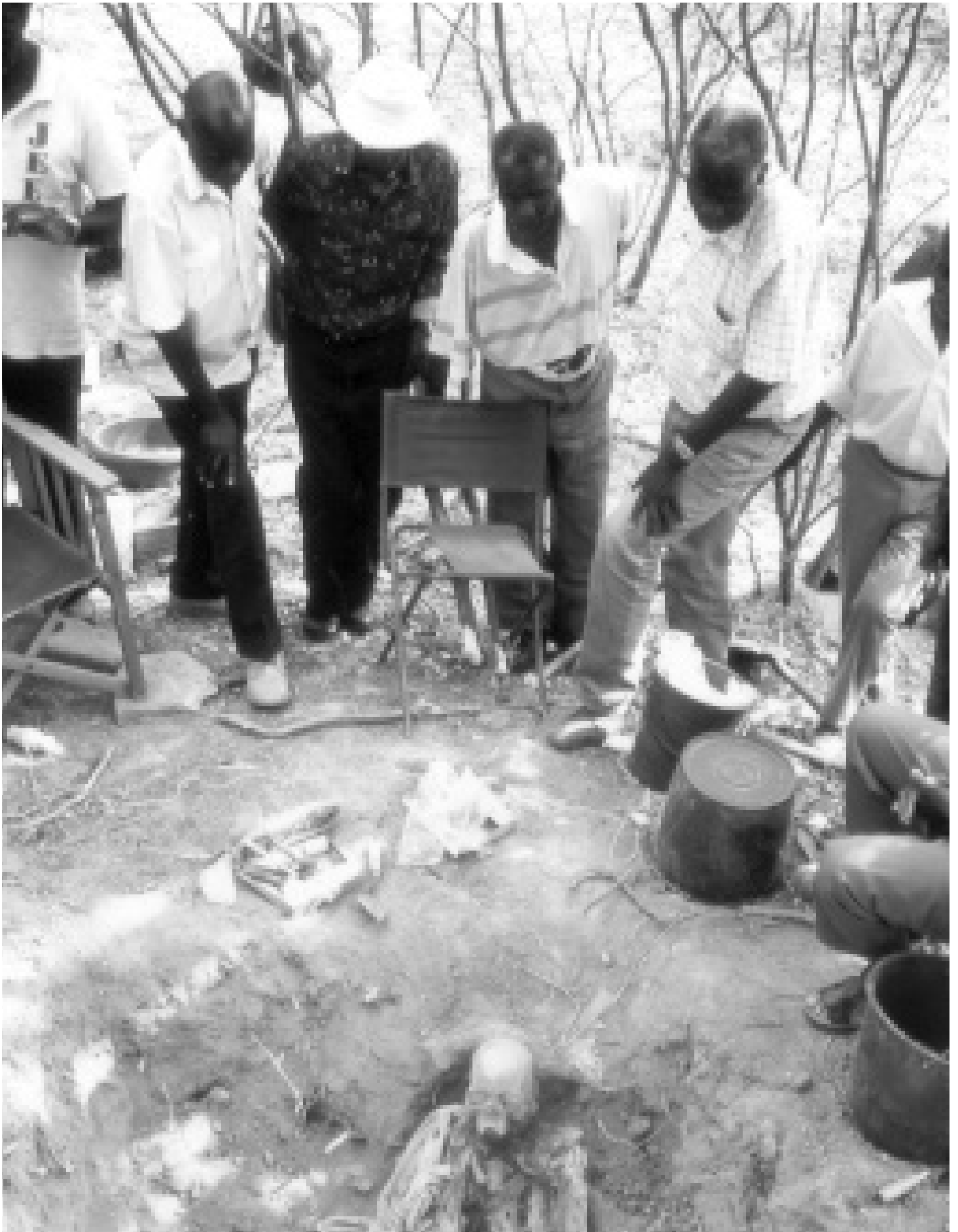
From May 20 to June 3 EAAF members Silvana Turner and Anahí Ginarte traveled to Matabeleland, Zimbabwe to work on four investigative cases with AMANI Trust, a nongovernmental organization providing physical and mental health services to victims of Human Rights abuses throughout the country. During its investigations, AMANI had located the cases of four people reportedly killed by members of the 5th Brigade of the Army of Zimbabwe, which had been active in the repression of opposition groups in Matabeleland during the 1980’s. EAAF’s mission was to collaborate with AMANI on the exhumation and analysis of the skeletal remains of these four people.

In keeping with EAAF’s work with AMANI Trust, the investigations also served as to continue the training of members of AMANI in forensic anthropology. The exhumations of the four skeletal remains were directed by EAAF and conducted by members of AMANI; the laboratory analysis was performed by EAAF with the assistance of AMANI members, who were present during every stage of the investigation.

Although the investigations established cause of death in only two of the four cases, the skeletal remains of all four individuals were identified. The history of each case that we present here was researched and compiled by AMANI Trust through interviews with relatives of the victims and witnesses to the events.

**Note:** Zimbabwe is a country with two major racially defined groups, colloquially characterized as black and white Zimbabweans. In a country such as this, it is forensically useful for identification purposes to distinguish among “races.” In both missions to Zimbabwe, the skeletal remains of the victims all showed characteristics of black African ancestry, and this information is provided here to avoid repetition in the individual cases below.

**Zimbabwe. 2001. Participants in a joint AMANI/EAAF exhumation. Photo by Anahí Ginarte/EAAF.**





Zimbabwe. 2001. Joint AMANI/EAAF exhumation. Photo by Anahí Ginarte/EAAF.

## THE HISTORY OF MR. Z

According to the testimony of Ms. Y (see page 132), her nephew Mr. Z was killed in 1984 by members of the Zimbabwe Army's 5th Brigade. Mr Z had only recently moved to the town of his aunt, where he herded cattle for her. On the day Mr. Z was killed, soldiers had come to Ms. Y's house and accused her of cooking food for dissidents in the area. When Mr. Z came to the house to retrieve his jersey, the soldiers began to beat him, accusing him of being a dissident. They then handcuffed him and took him away.

Seven days later, on the way to water her herd, Ms. Y found her nephew's body floating in a nearby watering hole. With help from her village, she retrieved the body from the water and buried it in an ant bear den, which she later marked with a large rock. Before placing the body in its grave, severed one of the hands and retrieved the pair of handcuffs that were still attached to the victim.

### *Archaeological Excavation*

On March 22, 2001 members of AMANI, with the help of EAAF and in the presence of family members, began exhuming the skeletal remains of the victim later identified as Mr. Z. As indicated by witnesses, the site was located on firm ground, a short distance from a marsh. It had been marked by rocks, and a nearby tree sent roots through the gravesite.

The skeleton was found stretched out in a prone position in the grave. A wool blanket covered the body, and beneath the blanket the skeleton was dressed in brown cloth pants, green boxer shorts with the label "Jean," and below that, a white cotton slip. Above, in the thoracic area, was a brown wool sweater covering a sky blue cotton sleeveless shirt. The skeleton itself was in anatomical position – that is, in the position the skeleton would have if soft tissue or flesh was still present – with the exception of the left hand, which was detached from the wrist and found below the pelvis with both lower limbs. The bones of this hand were in anatomical

position. These details are consistent with the testimony of Ms. Y, who claimed to have severed one hand from the body to remove handcuffs from the wrists. Small roots had grown around the body and penetrated into the clothing and bones, producing considerable post mortem damage, especially to the spongy sections of the bones.

### *Laboratory Analysis*

Laboratory analysis determined that the skeletal remains belonged to a male age 20-26, height 164.19+/-3cm.

The cause of death based on skeletal remains was undetermined. Skeletal remains, such as the evidence collected here, may not show the cause of death, which may have affected body parts other than the skeleton. In addition, the remains were very poorly preserved, which may also obscure the cause of death even when bones have been affected. The analysis did find peri mortem fractures - that is to say, fractures produced around the moment of death- to the forearm (radius and ulna) of the victim that led to the subsequent detachment of the left hand. The fractures were consistent with testimony offered by Ms. Y on the fate of her nephew.

The victim was indentified as Mr. Z. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, and the specifics about location, peri mortem fractures and personal effects consistent between witness accounts and archaeological findings.

### **THE HISTORY OF MR. A<sup>14</sup>**

Mr. A lived in a village in Gwanda North. After working for the then-Rhodesian railways, he retired to his rural home. In 1984, his son Mr. B was killed by soldiers from Zimbabwe Army's 5th Brigade. Mr. A reported his son's death to a nearby army camp, in order to receive authorization to bury the body. A few days later soldiers returned to Mr. A's home and accused him of rudeness during his visit to the camp; according to witness testimony, the soldiers subsequently shot him in the head and killed him. The sol-

dier then reportedly ordered Mr. A's cousins Mr. D and Ms. E to bury the victim. Mr. D was able to dig only a shallow grave in the time allowed him.

### *Archaeological Excavation*

Excavations at a gravesite located some 50m from a secondary road in Matebeleland began on May 23, 2001. Family members of the victims were present. The grave was marked with two stones, one at the head and one at the feet of the body, and the site was overgrown with vegetation.

Exhumation revealed a skeleton lying prone in anatomical position. The skeleton was dressed in dark cloth pants with a brown leather belt. In the thoracic area, there was a long sleeved plaid cotton shirt. In addition, in the area of the feet there was a pair of laced shoes filled with soil but no bone remains inside of them. The facial bones of the skull were all fragmented. The soil extracted while exhuming the skull was sifted, revealing a bullet fragment.

### *Laboratory Analysis*

Analysis determined that the skeletal remains were those of a male, age 55-75, right-handed, height 168.79+/-3cm. The skeleton was found in a relatively good state of preservation, even though the majority of bones with spongy tissue showed post mortem damage. The skeleton had a completely healed pre mortem (or old) fracture of the left lower leg.

As noted, the skull had multiple fractures, all peri mortem. These fractures were compatible with a gunshot wound to the head travelling from top to bottom and right to left, and the analysis concluded based on the the remains that this was the cause of death. The conclusion was also supported by the ballistic evidence discovered during the exhumation.

Seventeen Zimbabwean coins were found in the victim's right front pocket, all but one dated 1980, which indicated that the victim could not have been killed before 1980.

## The Death and Burial of Mr. Z

*Drawn from the testimony of his aunt Ms. Y, as told to members of AMANI Trust.<sup>1</sup>*

“My name is Ms. Y and I would like everyone in the world to hear my story, to hear the terrible things that happened to me and my family in 1984. It is very painful, what happened to our family. God seemed to have decided that our family did not deserve to live, and directed all the torrent of His storm in our direction. It was as if a powerful river swept my family away, so many of the family died. If I talk about it now, my heart beats faster and I have a blurred vision. I lose my breath with the pain. It was as if God had decided we were dirt that should be washed away.

All that I am about to describe happened before my eyes, and the eyes of my family. There was no order nor reason for how he was beaten to death and thrown into a dam. The day that Z died was a day like any other. Z was my nephew, a young man and new to our community – I had asked for him to come and help me with the cattle herding, and he had not been there long. He arrived just before the 5 Brigade began their terror in our community. I had realized by this time that young men in particular were at risk with this brigade. I had heard what they had done the previous week, when they had tied two young men from the village to a tree by their feet, and had then beaten them to death, like that, with their heads dangling near the ground. They were just any two boys - they had done nothing wrong. The whole village saw this happen, and many others were beaten on that day, women and school children too.

So I knew about the cruelty of those soldiers. They arrived at my homestead on the morning of this day, and began their abuse of me. “Where are the dissidents that you cook for?” They would ask such questions and then beat before you could even answer. You would just find yourself lying on the ground being kicked and beaten. I was made to take my cooking utensils out of the kitchen and into the bush to cook for the soldiers. I carried the pots out into the forest, and began to cook for these men, my heart beating with fear.

Then I saw Z approaching, coming to herd the cattle into their pen. I was so afraid, I knew that if the soldiers saw him, they would do something terrible to him. I tried to warn him that the soldiers were nearby, that he should hide, but he was not paying me attention.

He started to come nearer, as he wanted to pick up his jersey. “Leave your jersey!” I was trying to warn him to run away, but he just kept on coming to pick up the jersey. It was a cream jersey: I can still see it. And as he picked up the jersey, the soldiers saw him and grabbed him. So really, you could say he died because he stopped to pick up that jersey on that day. Something as small as that could be the death of you then.

The soldiers picked up sticks and started to beat Z – I could hear his cries and I was so full of fear and pain. I could no longer see properly and I was trying not to hear his cries. I could hear the blood rushing in my ears and in front of my eyes I could see nothing. While some soldiers beat him, others

were telling me to dish their food. I was in such a terrible state and could not see properly, so I began to dish the soldiers’ porridge onto the ground and not onto the plates. This made the soldiers angry. They shouted at me, but they stopped beating Z. They said that the boy and I had to eat all the porridge that had been dished onto the ground. I could not eat anything, I was too afraid, but they made Z eat it all, covered with soil and leaves.

Then they put handcuffs on Z and took him away. That was the last time I saw him alive. But I heard from others that they led that poor boy through the bush, beating him and saying things like – “You are a dissident, where have you put your gun?” When you are in a situation like that, you will say anything to stop the beating, agree with all accusations if you think it will help. And Z was saying “yes, I know the dissidents, I will show you their guns”. Of course he could not, because there were no dissidents in our area. But he took them to the dam, saying he would find guns there, hoping to buy time, I suppose. Of course at the dam he could not find guns, and so they killed him and threw him into the water.

I was the one to find him, but that was seven whole days later. I was herding the cattle there to drink, and I noticed that they were very nervous of something, would not go down to the water. I was coming behind them, and suspected something. I, too, was afraid at that – the soldiers were still around and I was afraid they were at the water. My dog was whimpering and running to the water and back to me.

I knew I had to establish what was going on, so I went very carefully to the edge of the water. And then I could see that there was something floating in the water, out in the middle. At first I was confused, could not recognize what the object was – and then I identified that jersey, that cream jersey. It was Z floating face down in the water, and all I could see was that jersey, the one that cost him his life, and the glint of handcuffs behind his back where he floated. What could I do? A woman there on her own, and now I have discovered this poor dead child, who was my relative and who had come to the region because I had requested him to herd my cattle.

I went straight home to bed. I stayed in my bed all night, but could find no rest. This boy was my responsibility - I was going to have to do something about this situation. He could not float there, rotting, and scaring the cattle forever. But everyone was so afraid, including me. I, too, was so afraid.

I realized that if I did not do something, he would float and decompose forever. So the next day, I went to tell the village head what I had found. “My child is in the dam. I know people are afraid, but we must take him out.” Actually, the headman was very afraid. He said that if the soldiers caught us taking him from the water, then we would also be killed. I told him, if the soldiers want to kill anybody for doing that, they can kill me, I consider myself dead anyway. They had killed Z for nothing, sooner or later they would kill me and they might then just as well kill me trying to bury Z.

I think this made those men a bit ashamed, that I as a woman should be braver than them in this situation, and so they agreed to come with me. It was awful for the men. They waded out into the water to pull him to shore. The dam was not that deep, but the corpse was hard to handle. Z had been many days in the water by then and was quite decomposed, still with the jersey and the handcuffs on.

While they rescued his body, I was looking for a place to bury him. There was an ant bear hole nearby – an animal’s hole. Usually you only bury dogs in such a place, but the ground was very hard as it was a drought time, and we had to be quick. Nobody had time or energy to dig deep in such circumstances, so I took the spade and opened the animal den for Z. I also collected big stones to cover the entrance in due course.

The men brought Z out, and were in a state of nerves and were also shocked by the state of the body. They wanted to bury him then and there, as fast as they could, just shove him quickly in the hole and leave. But I had been thinking about the handcuffs. They did not belong to us and I was worried that if we buried Z with the handcuffs, then in a few days’ time the 5 Brigade might come looking for them. They would beat us if they discovered that we had buried the handcuffs and might even force us to exhume the body to retrieve their property. Also, I did not want Z to be buried in handcuffs.

So that is why I did it, the thing I did next. I told the men to lie Z on his side, so that the handcuffs were visible. His flesh was shredding off, and the handcuffs had dug right into his arm, so that they were now partly buried in his flesh, which was soapy and sloppy and white with decay. I picked up a spade – like this – high in the air, and then hit his wrists as hard as I could with the blade of the spade. Although the flesh was soggy, the bones were hard, and I had to hit him several times to cut the hands right off. When I finally severed them, the impact of my blows meant that the hands shot away from him, they were displaced quite a distance from his arms, and the handcuffs dropped to the ground quite a distance from his arms, and the handcuffs dropped to the ground between the hands and the body.

The men were astonished at me doing this. But I was as good as dead then, fear was not an issue at that point. Actually I was angry too at what had happened, and did not want Z to lie there in the handcuffs of the killers.

I picked up the hands which were falling to pieces and put them with the rest of the body in the blanket, and we rolled him all up together still in his coffee-colored jersey, and buried him like that, his hands were buried along with the rest of him. The smell of the body was so bad that we had to work fast.

But as for the handcuffs, I picked them up and wrapped them in a plastic bag, all stinking and with bits of Z’s flesh still on them, and I took them away. I just thought to myself, I am a dead person now anyway, Z died for nothing and now I feel dead too. I was a dead person at that moment.

And what did I do with those handcuffs? Having them made me angry,

they reminded me of the fact that Z died for nothing. When the 5 Brigade called a meeting and made everyone attend, I went and I took the handcuffs with me. At the meeting, I just walked straight up to the soldiers, the ones I had been forced to cook for, and I just gave them the handcuffs, just like that, still wrapped in the plastic since the day we buried Z. I just gave them straight to the soldiers. I wanted to ask them, why did they kill Z, who was new to the area and knew nothing about dissidents? I did not have the words to ask them, but giving them the handcuffs was a way of telling them to their faces that I knew of their crime, I knew what they had done at the dam – yes, the handcuffs were the proof of that and words were not necessary.

I thought they would kill me but I did not care. I was angry but of course I was also so afraid. I expected blows to follow, but all the same, I just stood there in front of all those witnesses and gave them the handcuffs. But they did not hit me. They took the handcuffs from me and did not say

one word. In silence, they took that pair of handcuffs and said nothing – there was nothing to say, they had no answer to the question that the handcuffs were asking. They could not say why they killed that child, and so they said nothing.

To this day, I think I am one of the few people in our region that did something that silenced those cruel men. For one minute, I think they had nothing to say because the handcuffs left them without words to justify Z’s murder and all their other crimes at that time.

I have never been able to forget that incident. I cannot forget it...

My father and my brother were the next to die, a few weeks later. They were shot to death at night in their beds, in my homestead. My brother died with his stomach shot right out of him, his intestines hanging off the side of the bed to the floor. My father tried to cover his face with his hands as 5 Brigade stood over him and shot him. The bullets went straight through his body and his head, and his fingers were blown to pieces by the bullets. His hands were shot off.

Z spirit is not at rest. People have seen his spirit - it wanders around the area, in the form of a pale light, near the ant bear hole where he is buried. He is not happy to be buried in such a place. He is not peaceful – he is lost. I feel so sad when I see that light, and remember how sorrowful Z is at what happened to him. What he wishes for is to be taken out of that place and to be given a decent funeral witnessed by all his family, as is everybody’s right. I would like his body to be removed from that place, so that all can witness for themselves what happened to Z, how he was murdered and had to have his hands amputated in order not to lie in handcuffs. All this needs to be witnessed. Then his spirit will be at peace, and I will be able to think of that time without this panic, without the deep pain that rests just here in my heart.”

1. AMANI Trust’s documents.



The remains were identified as those of Mr. A. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, the personal effects recovered at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses consistent with archaeological findings.

### **THE HISTORY OF MR. Q AND MR. R<sup>15</sup>**

The brothers Mr. Q and Mr. R grew up in a rural area, and later moved with their father, Mr. S, to a remote rural area in the Gwanda district. The family moved during a period of intense military activity by the 5th Brigade in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands, an area that included their new home.

Mr. Q and Mr. R were visiting their father's home in when soldiers arrested them. According to witness testimony, the soldiers first beat the victims with logs, fists and boots and in front of other family members. They were later taken from the house. Eyewitnesses to their killings reported that, in part because Mr. Q and Mr. R were new to the area and thus relatively unknown to the community, soldiers from the 5th Brigade concluded that they were subversives and shot them to death. These same witnesses were forced to bury the two victims in shallow graves. Mr. S later marked his sons' graves with stones.

### *Archaeological Excavation*

Excavations at the site commenced on May 29, 2001 at 9:00 am. Family members of the victims were present. The investigation at Site 1 involved two individual graves. The graves were 100 meters from each other: the grave to the south was labelled Site 1 Grave 1 and the other, Site I Grave 2.

#### *Site 1, Grave 1:*

The skeleton in this grave was stretched out in a prone position on its back in anatomical position. The skeleton was in a shallow grave, some 10cm from the surface, and roots in the area caused considerable post mortem damage to the skeletal remains. The body was dressed in dark-colored cloth pants with a red and white slip underneath. In the chest area, there was a

plain white shirt in a very bad state of preservation. In addition, a brown and white cloth wallet was found containing fragments of cloth and black rubber bracelets. The skull had multiple fractures that were later studied at the laboratory.

#### *Site 1 Grave 2:*

This grave lay under a small circle of rocks. The skeleton was found stretched out on its back, in anatomical position with both upper limbs extended. The body was clothed in dark pants, doubled at the knee, with a white plastic belt. In the chest (thoracic) area, there was a white and blue jersey with the buckle opened in front. Red and white striped underwear covered the pelvic area.

### *Laboratory Analysis*

#### *Site 1 Grave 1*

The skeletal remains in this grave corresponded to a male, age 20-50, height 168.43 +/- 3cm. The skeleton had a pre mortem abcess likely caused by an infection on the right side of the frontal bone. There was considerable post mortem damage to the remains: the ribs and vertebrae were incomplete and very poorly preserved, both from root and animal action. Post mortem fractures were also found at the right tibia and fibula.

The cause of death, based on skeletal remains, was undetermined. But the cause of death may affect only soft tissue. In addition, the remains were very poorly preserved, which may also have obscured the cause of death even if bones were affected.

The skeletal remains were identified as those of Mr. R. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determination of sex, age, height and ancestry, the personal effects recovered prior to burial and at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses and consistent with archaeological findings.

#### *Site 1 Grave 2*

The skeletal remains found at the second grave corresponded to male age 21-27 years, with a height of 172.7 +/- 3 cm. No pre mortem lesions were found on the skeleton. The skull showed peri mortem fractures. Fracture lines

came from the back to front of the skull without a concentric or radial pattern. No bullet wound was found at neck (cervical) vertebrae or at the mandible. The skull fracture is compatible with blunt force injury. There were at least two points of impact: one at the back of the head and the other on the right side.

The skeleton also showed complete peri mortem fractures at the right forearm (ulna) and the right hand bones (5th right metacarpal). Both fractures are compatible with blunt force trauma received in a defensive position. Finally, the 7th, 8th, and 9th left ribs had complete peri mortem fractures, also caused by blunt force.

The cause of death based on skeletal remains was determined to be blunt force trauma to the skull.

The remains were identified as those of Mr. Q. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, and the personal effects recovered at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses consistent with archaeological findings.

#### **SECOND MISSION: AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2001**

From August 9 to September 24, 2001, EAAF team member Anahí Ginarte and volunteer team member Claudia Bisso undertook a second mission to Zimbabwe. Team member Luis Fondebrider and Dr. Clyde Snow came to Zimbabwe from August 12 to 24 to assist with laboratory analysis, and provided valuable training for members of AMANI Trust in techniques of forensic anthropology.

#### **Training**

In contrast to the earlier mission, the exhumations performed during this mission were both planned and performed by members of AMANI Trust under the supervision of EAAF team members. The participation of someone with a record as distinguished as that of Dr. Snow was especially important for this training mission.

#### **Forensic Work**

Six skeletons were exhumed and analyzed in a town south of Bulawayo. Unfortunately, the difficult current political situation in Zimbabwe made it impossible to learn more about the particular histories of the victims in these six cases; this report will offer the conclusions gained through forensic work in anticipation of fuller accounts of the victims' lives and deaths. Five of the cases were positively identified; the sixth case, which involved only a skull, is still under investigation, with hope that a fuller preliminary investigation will allow for identification.

The cause of death based on skeletal remains could be determined in four of the cases: in one case, a victim died from a gunshot wound that fractured the sternum and left ribs at the approximate location of the heart; three other victims died from gunshot wounds to the head. Archaeological excavations were conducted in two other sites where no skeletal remains were found.

#### **SITE 2 SKELETON 1**

#### **Archaeological Excavation**

Excavations at this site commenced on August 17, 2001 at 12:45 pm. Family members of the victims were present. Witnesses identified an open area, adjacent to an abandoned hamlet (*kraal*), as the site of the burial of a skull. A pole approximately 1m high and a big square rock marked the burial place. The rest of the skeleton was presumed buried at the site labelled Site 2, but explorations there the same morning turned up nothing.

Once the stone was removed, the topsoil was lifted from this area and passed through a screen. One penny, from Rhodesia and Nyasaland dated 1995, was found in the topsoil, and for that reason was probably not related to the burial. Further down at 0.84m, three sandstones were found. Soil was then removed to expose the skull in situ, where the mandible had been displaced from anatomical position. The soil collected from the site was sifted and another coin found, a halfpenny from Rhodesia and Nyasaland dated 1964.

#### **Laboratory Analysis**



Zimbabwe. 2001. Participants on an EAAF/AMANI joint exhumation. Photo by Anahí Ginarte/EAAF.

Laboratory analysis was conducted by Dr. Snow and members of EAAF. Though only the skull was recovered, analysis revealed the remains to be those of a female, aged 30-60. There were no observable pre or peri mortem lesions. Cause of death thus was undetermined. It was not possible to identify the victim.

### *SITE 3 SKELETON 1*

#### *Archaeological Excavation*

Excavations at this site commenced on August 18, 2001 at 10:15 am. Family members of the victims were present. The site was at the flank of an ant bear den, in the middle of a grove of xerophilic trees and bushes. A rock marked the entrance to the ant bear den where, according to witnesses, the victim had been deposited; the den was at the flank of an anthill with many mouths. The skeleton was found stretched in a prone position on its back and flexed at the knee, in anatomical position except for the mandible

situated at the level of the right knee. Four big rocks were under the upper maxilla covering the thorax and the left upper limb. The right upper limb was extended with the hand over the pelvis. The left one was over the thorax.

The body was clothed at the thorax with a blue or green striped light coloured long sleeved cotton shirt. Under the shirt was a light coloured cotton vest with blue trim. At the pelvis and lower limbs: a white, blue and red tartan trouser. Under the trousers were white cotton underwear with blue trim.

#### *Laboratory Analysis*

Dr. Snow and EAAF members performed the laboratory analysis. The skeletal remains corresponded to a male, age 35-45, height approximately 170+/-5 cm, right-handed. There was a small pre mortem healing fracture at the side of the skull (the left parietal). There was a bony rim on the upper section of the right femur, which likely caused pain at this joint.

The skull showed several peri mortem fractures caused



by blunt force involving several of its bones. The sternum and at least at nine ribs and five vertebrae showed peri mortem fractures. There were also multiple peri mortem fractures at the right lower leg (fibula). These peri mortem lesions are consistent with a death caused by multiple stab wounds to the left chest. No ballistic evidence was found associated with the skeleton.

The remains were identified as those of Mr. N. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, the personal effects recovered at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses consistent with archaeological findings.

#### **SITE 4**

##### ***Archaeological Excavation***

Excavations at this site commenced on August 24, 2001 at 10:00 am. Family members of the victims were present. The grave was located on firm ground, adjacent to a large rock dome in a small grove of large trees and small shrubs, near a large field, approximately 2 km from a village. A villager had pointed out the grave in an open section of the grove lightly covered with fallen leaves and small plants. The grave itself was unmarked. The xerophilic — herbaceous and stunted bushes — made it difficult to establish the precise orientation of the grave. Exhumation eventually revealed human remains.

The burial site was infiltrated by many roots, which had penetrated the skeleton and clothing. The skeleton was found in a near foetal position, lying right side down, with both arms flexed to lie under the skull, in anatomical position. The body was clothed in blue, with a red knitted top, very degraded. A blue shirt, a pale nylon petticoat with a lace border, and a pale purple apron with floral pattern (separated from the skeleton) were found in the grave. At the pelvic area, a pair of black tennis shoes, a brown towel, and an orange and yellow sun hat were found. On a finger bone (fourth proximal phalange), two plain metal rings were found in situ.

##### ***Laboratory Analysis***

The skeletal remains were those of a female, age 35-45, height 160+/-5cm, right-handed. Pre mortem lesions were found at the right orbit, with a pre mortem fracture also found at a thoracic vertebra. The only peri mortem lesion found was in the left forearm (the ulna). This wound was compatible with one caused by blunt force trauma with the victim in a defensive position. It was not possible to determine the victim's cause of death from the skeletal remains, perhaps in part because of the extensive post mortem bone damage caused by roots and insects. No ballistic evidence was found associated with the remains.

The victim was identified as Ms. F. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, the personal effects recovered at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses consistent with archaeological findings.

#### **SITE 5**

##### ***Archaeological Excavation***

Excavation at this site commenced on September 12, 2001 at 10:15 am. Family members of the victims were present. Excavation revealed a skeleton not completely in anatomical position; the evidence was compatible with a secondary individual grave, meaning that the remains were probably removed from their original grave and reburied in a second site. The skeleton was dressed in blue pants with a leather belt with a metal buckle, and a slip with a red, white, and black pattern. Towards the west end of the grave was a quantity of clothing not directly attached to the skeleton.

##### ***Laboratory Analysis:***

The skeletal remains were those of a male, age 18-22, height 180+/-3cm, probably right-handed. The skeleton was well-preserved, but because this was a secondary grave several bones were missing post mortem, included the radius, and the right hand and right foot. Other bones showed marks of animal teeth. The third lumbar vertebra showed spondilolysis, a separation between the arches and the body, that may have been congenital and could be important for identification purposes.

Peri mortem wounds included multiple fractures in the skull, which was reconstructed at the laboratory. There was an entrance gun shot wound in the posterior part of the left side of the skull, indicating a trajectory from back to front and top to bottom. There were also peri mortem fractures in the right collarbone, the 1st right rib, the 4th left rib, and the 4th and 5th dorsal vertebrae.

The cause of death based on skeletal remains was multiple gunshot wounds to the skull and chest.

The victim was identified as Mr. G. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, the personal effects recovered at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses consistent with archaeological findings.

#### SITE 6

##### *Archaeological Excavation*

Excavation at this site began on September 18 at 10:00 am. Relatives of the victims were present.

This site was located near the *kraal* of the victim's family, in an open area in Mapane. The tomb was marked with large stones and stood near a tree planted by relatives of the victim near the foot of the grave. At 1.34m, the remains of blanket that may have covered the corpse were found. The blanket, once uncovered, revealed a complete skeleton in anatomical position, lying on its right side, with legs and arms flexed. The skeleton was dressed in striped pants with light stripes over a dark background, and in a white t-shirt covered by a green pullover.

##### *Laboratory Analysis*

The skeletal remains were those of a male, age 50-70, height 176.38 +/- 3cm, right handed. The skeleton was very well-preserved, with very little post mortem damage. There was a pre mortem fracture on the 11th left rib. The cranium had multiple peri mortem fractures and was reconstructed at the lab. An entrance gun shot wound was found

on the posterior section of the left parietal and an exit wound on the right parietal. The bullet's trajectory moved from left to right and from top to bottom. Peri mortem wounds to the left clavicle and the 3rd left rib were found.

Cause of death based on skeletal remains was determined to be multiple gunshot wounds to the skull and chest.

The victim was identified as Mr. H. This was based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, the personal effects recovered at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses consistent with archaeological findings.

#### SITE 7

##### *Archaeological Excavation*

Excavation of this site began on September 19 at 9:50am. Family members of the victims were present. The tomb was marked with large stones. A piece of a blanket was the first sign of the grave, but the blanket was empty; excavation next revealed a skull 0.89 m deep. A skeleton was then uncovered in anatomical position, lying on its left side with legs and arms flexed. Pieces of what appeared to be a light colored shirt covered the remains.

##### *Laboratory Analysis*

The skeletal remains were those of a male aged 40-60, height approximately 165 cm, right-handed. No pre mortem lesions were found. The skeleton was relatively well-preserved, with ribs and vertebrae showing post mortem damage caused by ants. The skull showed peri mortem multiple fractures and was reconstructed at the laboratory. An entrance gunshot wound to the head was found on the right side, with an exit wound on the left. The trajectory of the bullet, then, moved from right to left along an almost horizontal plane. Peri mortem fractures were also found on the right clavicle and the 1st right rib.

Cause of death based on skeletal remains was multiple gunshot wounds to the skull and chest.

The victim was indentified as Mr. J, based on consistency of the general anthropological determinations of sex, age, height and ancestry, the personal effects recovered at the exhumation of the individual, and circumstantial evidence about the burial provided by witnesses consistent with archaeological findings

## COLLABORATION AND TRAINING

EAAF's missions to Zimbabwe are part of a growing collaboration between EAAF and AMANI Trust. EAAF invited one AMANI investigator to join EAAF in El Salvador during September and October 2001. The person participated in the exhumations EAAF was carrying out in El Mozote. EAAF looks forward to continuing our collaboration with AMANI Trust in Zimbabwe and elsewhere.



Zimbabwe. 2001. Dr Clyde Snow during EAAF/AMANI joint laboratory work. Photo by Anahí Ginarte/EAAF.

## FOOTNOTES

1. A few international organizations and media publications investigated these human rights abuses: a handful of journalists provided coverage of events as they occurred, Amnesty International documented rights violations, and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights published a report in 1986 entitled *The Wages of War*. However, none of these documentary efforts succeeded in focusing international attention on this issue.
2. Report on Zimbabwe, The Center for Reconciliation and Violence, UK, 1996
3. Amnesty International Report on Zimbabwe, 2001
4. Alec Russell, *Big Men, Little People*, Pan Books, London, 1999
5. *ibid.*
6. Amnesty International, *Report on Zimbabwe*, 2001
7. Amnesty International, *Report on Zimbabwe*, 2001
8. New York Times, June 28, 2000
9. "In Zimbabwe, Mugabe Runs Against an Old Rival: Colonialism," Rachel Swarns, New York Times, February 27, 2002.
10. Amnesty International, Zimbabwe: Urgent Action Needed, April 19, 2002
11. See The Guardian, "Extracts from the Commonwealth Observer Group after the Election", March 15, 2002
12. Amnesty International, Zimbabwe: Urgent Action Needed, April 19, 2002
13. See The Guardian, "Guardian Journalist Arrested in Zimbabwe," May 1, 2002.
14. Amani Trust documents.
15. Amani Trust documents.



