

2B310

MEDICAL REPORT ON DISABILITIES

This paper is a reflection on the ex-combatants who were injured during the war of liberation of Zimbabwe from the colonizers during the sixties and seventies. Some comrades sustained injuries through torture by the colonial agents in Police stations, Special interrogation centres or in detention Camps within the country. For the majority of the ex-combatants injuries resulting in part or permanent disabilities were sustained either during combat against the enemy forces, bombardment by enemy airforce planes or accidents whilst on duty.

On attainment of Independence the popularly elected Government of a new Zimbabwe declared that all ex-combatants who were injured during the war of liberation should receive compensation for their disabilities after assessment by qualified doctors. Following this declaration thousands of disabled ex-combatants availed themselves to designated centres throughout the country for assessment by Gvt. appointed doctors. Whilst the writers appreciate and applause this decision by Gvt. they noted with regret that in many instances there have been a let down by the designated Doctors. Examination and proper procedures for assessment have not been followed resulting in people being under assessed. The writers are receiving many complaints from fellow ex-combatants who claim that they were not even examined but first asked one or two questions. Normal requires that two doctors are present at any assessment session but we note that the centres are manned by one doctor; this does not safeguard the doctor or patient.

The writers also note that disability percentage is based on the extract from the Workers Compensation Act (chapter 269). A close look of this extract reveals that that compensation is based on lose of a limb, body part or therefore. As mentioned above torture by Regime assumed a sophisticated character whereby soft tissue injury and damage resulted. We have amongst us today comrades with multiple complaints from their previous internal injuries. Many ex-combatants back mentally damaged through harsh experiences of war and death. A new medical phenomenon known as the Vietnam Syndrome has been recognised by the American Gvt. This concerns American soldiers who served in the Vietnam War. Most of them still suffer mentally and are compensated for that in short this syndrome is also afflicting our fellow ex-combatants. Therefore the extract from the Workers Compensation Act is long overdue and we feel a new detailed disability assessment schedule should be worked out.

Finally the writers feel that the pitfalls mentioned in this paper can be rectified, if consideration when opportunity doctors could be given to former ZIPRA/ZANLA doctors who have a clear understanding of their fellow ex-combatants and know how they sustained such disabilities.

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