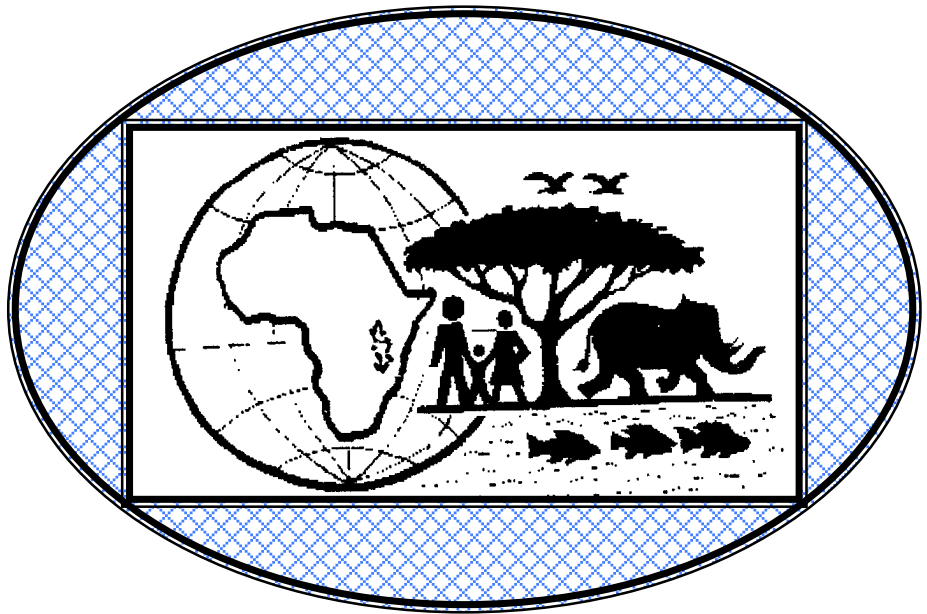


**C
F
S
C

P
R
E
S
S

R
E
V
I
E
W**



***JULY
2011***

**News clippings
with analysis
From the
Major newspapers
in Malawi**

Compiled by the
***Center for Social Concern
(CFSC)***
*Box 40049 Lilongwe 4
Area 25
Next to St. Francis Parish
Tel: 01 715 632*



www.cfscmalawi.org

LIST OF NEWSPAPERS REVIEWED

Daily Times

The Weekend Nation

The Sunday Times

Malawi News

The Guardian

Nation on Sunday

The Nation

PREVIEW

Jeffrey Sachs, who on several occasions has praised President Bingu wa Mutharika's policies on food security, has warned Malawi that all the achievements will mean nothing if human rights violations continue. Almost every corner of the world has condemned the recent events in the month of July.

What started as peaceful demonstrations with an assurance from the police that they would offer security, ended up being a nightmare that has dented Malawi's once beautiful image. When civil society leaders and other sectors of society planned to have peaceful demonstrations many people thought this was the chance for the people to freely exercise their human right to assemble and express themselves - but this was not too be.

Efforts to frustrate the peaceful demonstration against government started with a similar group called concerned citizens who also planned to stage a parade in support of government on the same day. Blantyre residents had to nurse their emotions when, on the 19th July, Cadets from *Democratic Progressive Party DPP* pick-ups drove around the streets brandishing machetes, threatening to deal with anyone who would cause problems to the country's leadership.

Then in many of Malawi's cities and major towns the 20th and 21st July disintegrated from peaceful assembly, to chaos and beatings; to riots answered by live ammunition and tear gas; the temporary closure of public radio stations; and many civilians being shot dead! All this was as a result of Malawians trying to exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and to express their opinion.

It is said that too much power corrupts. Malawians entrusted the *DPP* and gave them government with a huge majority in Parliament. What did the people get in return? More and more restrictive bills being passed in parliament

Just like the opposition political parties in Botswana and other countries in the West, President Jacob Zuma of the Republic of South Africa has condemned the aftermath of the July 20 demonstrations. At the same time some organizations have expressed shock over president Bingu wa Mutharika's way of suppressing some of the people's human rights by trying to stop people from demonstrating peacefully.

Many people feel cheated because the same Mutharika, during his swearing in ceremony, promised to safeguard the Malawi Constitution. Now by denying the citizens of Malawi their right to demonstrate Mutharika is trying to go away from the same Constitution which gives people the right to demonstrate.

POLITICS

President Bingu wa Mutharika ignored all the pleas and demands not to assent the infamous Injunctions Bill. In July the president went ahead to assent the bill. Parliament in June passed the bill despite the resistance by the minority opposition in the National Assembly. As if this was not enough, the chairperson of the *Legal Affairs Committee* honourable Henry Phoya made it clear to the House that the Injunctions Bill was a bad law and therefore should not be passed. Forty-four *DPP* MPs voted against the bill but their numbers were not enough to stop the bill from being passed.

Recent reports have disclosed that there is a lot of fear among government parliamentarians. According to Khumbo Kachali, who was fired from the ruling *Democratic Progressive Party DPP*, many government MPs live in fear as they are being forced to do things against their conscience. Kachali claims there are some people who confided in him that they are forced to vote for bills they feel they should not vote for. Meanwhile some observers have warned that this tendency is a recipe for disaster for our hard earned democracy.

Just when people expected the *DPP* to lead by example, by being very accommodative even to people who have different views, the party acted in a more questionable way in the month under review. Press coverage in July revealed that the party had fired Henry Phoya and all MPs that said no to the Injunctions Bill. It seems the party does not take criticism well going by its recent actions when it also fired Lifred Nawena, the MP for Thyolo Thava. The party is failing. Meanwhile some party supporters have expressed disappointment over the party's actions in firing some of the MPs.

The former MP for Thyolo North, Anita Kalinde, spelt it out as it is in the National Assembly earlier in July when she said government fears holding the *Local Government Elections (LGE)*. Ever since President Bingu wa Mutharika became president he has continually put off and postponed the *LGE*. The latest information is that the *LGE* will be conducted in 2014 much to the displeasure the opposition political parties and other stakeholders. MP Kalinde has said the government fears the outcome of the *LGE* will embarrass the government because people no longer trust it.

President Bingu wa Mutharika pushed the blame for the violence that erupted after the marches on to the organizers of the July 20 mass demonstrations. Mutharika who had earlier on opened the platform for dialogue changed the some hours later. Mutharika blamed the death of victims of the July 20 demonstrations on Joyce Banda, opposition *Malawi Congress Party MCP* leader John Tembo, and some civil society leaders. As observers noted President Mutharika should not only have blamed civil society but also the *DPP* Cadets who had terrorized the streets of Blantyre on the eve of the mass demonstration. They have added on to say that pointing fingers at others will not resolve the issues a hand but instead there should be concerted efforts among all players so that the situation is addressed.

In this time when the ruling *Democratic Progressive Party DPP* seems to be losing it, one would have expected the opposition parties to take advantage of the situation to put their houses in order. But this is not the case because there is in-house fighting in the major opposition party, the *United Democratic Front UDF*. Some quarters in the party are not comfortable with Atupele Muluzi's announcement that he has ambitions of becoming the *UDF's* presidential candidate in the next general elections. This development has not been welcomed by some of the party's gurus who have branded Atupele Muluzi as a baby.

Malawi now has a new political party Vice President, Joyce Banda's *People's Party (PP)*, which was eventually registered as a party. The journey has not been easy because there were so many stumbling blocks on the way. It all started with *The Maravi People's Party (PP)* asking the Registrar of Parties to stop registering the Vice President's party because having *PP* as a party would confuse people. *Maravi People's Party* officials feel *PP* sounds more like that it's only an acronym. Recently another party also claimed that the symbol of the party is similar to their own. This did not stop the *PP*'s leadership from going ahead with their goal to have the *PP* registered. Of late government went to the courts trying to stop the *PP* from its intended goal. This time government said the official colour, orange, of the *PP* is also the colour of James Nyondo's party and this would give problems to the Electoral Commission, problems when preparing the ballot papers. It should be noted that there are more than 30 political parties registered in Malawi.

ECONOMY

Britain, one of Malawi's major donors, announced that it has cut its budgetary support to Malawi. The writing was on the wall since the British High Commissioner was expelled. The announcement did not surprise many at all because the signs were there. Those that were in the know had actually said the final straw for the British was the signing of the Injunctions Bill and other violation of human rights by the government. Despite pleas from various people to President Bingu wa Mutharika he made it clear that he will not apologize to Britain. It has also been reported that the British will not send an envoy to Malawi any time soon.

It again did not come as a surprise when the United States of America, through the *Millennium Challenge Corporation* account (*MCC*) withheld K203 billion that was meant for improving the energy sector. Malawi and America signed the agreement that would have improved electricity for many Malawians even those in the rural areas. For now the increased access to electricity will be just a dream because the USA has suspended the *MCC* account. The US government is saddened with the deliberate violation of human rights following the July 20 demonstration. As some observers have noted the money could have benefited Malawians more on electrification thereby easing power failures.

Meanwhile some economic experts have warned that Malawi risks having an acute shortage of currency because of the suspension of aid from various quarters. Already the tobacco market has not been that promising leaving smallholder farmers poorer than last year. At the same time this has also affected the availability of Forex in circulation. There have been cries from both farmers and buyers over the sales of tobacco this season. Farmers on their part have over some time protested on the prices of tobacco which were on the low side while buyers cited the poor quality of the leaf. As some experts have advised Malawi needs to find an alternative to tobacco.

As one measure of cutting down expenses the government announced that it has cut down travel for all top officials. There have been calls from various sectors of the society over government's lust of foreign travel. In this time when government is trying to prove a point in implementing a *Zero Deficit Budget* perhaps cutting down on foreign travel will ease the Forex shortage problem. Malawians in the past two years have witnessed a lot of external travel by President Mutharika, who at times moves around in a large entourage. Civil society groups and other sectors of society have already asked the government to minimize foreign trips.

FOOD SECURITY

The press had in recent months indicated that Kenya is looking for maize from Malawi to beef up its stocks following reports of food shortage. Kenya had announced that it was going to buy the grain from Malawi. But recent reports have further disclosed that authorities in Kenya are no longer interested in the Malawi maize because of quality. The country will be forced to send the grain back. Kenyan authorities would have to send back the maize exports from Malawi and Zambia.

In Karonga district chiefs are worried over illegal sales of maize to Tanzania. Malawi has had another bumper harvest and media reports have shown that some people are selling maize to Tanzanians who in return export it to their country. According to Traditional Authority Mwankhunikira people are carried away with the money because the grain is being sold at K25 per kilogram. Mwankhunikira says if the sales of maize continue, the area could face shortages of food since the maize is being sold outside Malawi.

Meanwhile reports have shown that ADMARC markets have not yet opened. By this time of the year people have harvested their crop and it is ready for marketing. It leaves the farmers with no option but to sell their crops to anyone who wishes to buy. As evidence has shown these illegal traders sell back the maize to the farmers in lean months at exorbitant prices. If only ADMARC starts buying the grain people will be assured of finding maize easily in the lean periods.

In July we read of foot and mouth disease cases in a village called Kasisi in Chikwawa District. Foot and mouth disease affects cattle the main source of meat among many Malawians. To avoid the spread of the disease, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has since affected a ban on livestock movement and other products. Press reports have further disclosed that Chikwawa is prone to foot and mouth disease because of the presence of buffaloes at Majete Game Reserve in the district.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Malawi celebrated 47 years of independence in the month under review. The main celebrations took place in the Northern Region at Mzuzu Stadium amid a fuel crisis. Speaking at the celebrations ceremony Mutharika outlined some of the successes during his term of office, but as usual he fell short of giving Malawians hope on the current problems like the Forex and fuel crises. People are still spending hours looking for fuel due to the shortage. As some religious groups have noted Mutharika's speech was empty and very defensive.

The month of July saw some international organizations commenting on the state of affairs in Malawi. In Namibia an organisation called Forum for the Future of Africa expressed concerns over President Bingu wa Mutharika's style of leadership which they have said is that of a dictator. In recent times Malawians have been exposed to the other side of president Mutharika. His speeches are now full of hate against those that oppose him especially civil society leaders, faith leaders and even some of the media people. The fact that even organisations from other countries are noticing this means something has really gone wrong and must be looked into.

Some non-governmental organizations commented on the donors' conditions to some of the projects that civil societies are involved in. This observation comes in after reports have shown that some donors have a tendency of putting strict conditions when funding projects. According to observers there are times when conditions set by some financiers are too tough. In some instances such help is seen to be crippling of the projects that it is supposed to serve. It is against this background that the NGOs are asking the donors to wear a human face when dictating conditions on their funds.

In July activists asked Bingu wa Mutharika to call for a referendum so that people can vote if they still have confidence in him as a leader. This follows Mutharika's admission that people doubt his leadership style. Mutharika in his speech pleaded with Malawians not to doubt him but instead should give him a chance to prove his worthwhile. In recent times president Bingu wa Mutharika has made some questionable decisions that left people with more questions than answers and doubts for some.

Despite getting an assurance that civil society's demonstration will be held in peace with police offering security the opposite happened in some parts of Malawi. What were meant to be peaceful demonstrations across the nation ended up being terrible acts of violence, vandalism, tear gas, beatings, insults and led to the death of at least 19 people. Despite reports that a group called Concerned Citizens would march in support of government, the group was no where to be seen as only members of civil society marched against government's bad economic and political governance was what took place in some parts.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

In July some traditional leaders could not hide their frustrations over the power struggle with magistrates in Chikwawa District. One of the duties of the traditional leaders is to preside over cases in their villages. But this seems to be fading slowly because according to the chiefs the magistrates are taking charge of cases meant for the traditional leaders. Press reports further disclosed that this scenario is causing a lack of trust between the subjects and chiefs and therefore the chiefs are demanding more recognition on the cases.

Controversial George Thindwa announced that his body will be donated to the Kamuzu College of Medicine when he dies. Thindwa, who has been in conflicts with other people for openly saying that he does not believe there is God, has said his body should be used for research. His decision to donate his body follows late activist Harold Williams donation to the same. Like Thindwa is also a member of Association for Secular Humanism whose members do not believe in God and the existence of witchcraft. Thindwa is also famously known for openly saying there is no witchcraft and has an organization that is advocating for freedom for all those that were put in custody on witchcraft accusations. Acts of donating dead bodies to colleges are a new occurrence to Malawians because normally when one dies tradition expects a burial to take place. Donating bodies after death seems to be a taboo among Malawians but in the West it is nothing strange.

As cases of child abuses continue in some communities, children's organizations have noted that a lot of cases go unreported. According to press reports children continue to face a lot of abuses and child labour is one of the top forms. Not so long ago organizations came out with findings that disclosed a large number of children exposed to dangers in tobacco estates. As if this is not enough there is evidence that some employers are in a habit of employing children to look after cattle because children's wages are cheaper. It is with this reason that *Limbe Leaf* has partnered with the Livingstonia Synod of the *Church of Central African Presbyterian CCAP* in an anti-child labour campaign.

Issues of child trafficking were also covered by the press in the month of July. It is no secret that trafficking of children is happening in Malawi though it is not well reported to authorities. Child trafficking is another form of child abuse as children are faced with inhuman conditions when they are in a process of being trafficked. In a bid to make sure that child trafficking is eliminated in Malawi the Ministry of Gender, Child and Community Development has since come up with new strategies to curb child trafficking.

EDUCATION

Finally government admitted that education standards have gone down in Malawi. This admission comes years after poor performance in national examinations and exam leakage. It is not strange to have poor results in examinations in recent years. The quality of students who are awarded certificates after passing examinations in recent times has not been up to date. Similarly reports have shown that many students are not fully prepared for examinations and this result into cheating. Therefore, the government's admission has come at the right time and will perhaps assist authorities in dealing with the problem head on.

A network of organizations in Chitipa District in July asked authorities to consider introducing compulsory education. Similar organizations during the year have also echoed the same sentiments, but government had made it clear that at present it has no such plans. But the *Chitipa District Network Chiden* feels that the introduction of compulsory education that residents in Chitipa is the only way parents will be forced to send their children to school. Evidence has shown that while there is a lot of progress on school enrollment in primary schools since free primary education was introduced, there are still many more children who are not in school. According to *Chiden* this scenario would change for the better if deliberate policies were put in place to give room for compulsory education in Malawi.

Press coverage on education also tackled issues of quota system. According to reports some students are failing to work hard in class relying on government's quota system of selecting students to the institutions of higher learning. Government reintroduced the quota system despite other quarters being against the system. In some areas people thought the system was against the Northern Region. Controversial as it is, press reports have disclosed that some students think even if they do not work hard they will still make it to university because of the system. It is against this background that candidates sat for the 2011 *Malawi Schools Certificate of Education MSCE* were advised to work harder for fear of being expelled from college for underperformance.

Still on education a Ministry of Education official made it known that the ministry is failing to upgrade its teachers because of financial constraints. Press reports further indicate that a number of teachers are failing to go for upgrading courses due to poor funding. Evidence has shown that a number of under qualified teachers are failing to go for upgrading because for years the programme has been dormant. Only those that can afford do go upgrading courses using their own resources.

HEALTH

In the Budget sitting of parliament members were at pains to understand why there is no tangible development on the construction of Nkhata Bay District Hospital. Members of Parliament wondered why the hospital construction has not yet finished when there is money allocated to the building since the year 2006. It has now been 5 years but the Nkhata Bay District Hospital is not even close to completion. As some observers have noted there is a lot that needs to be done in making sure that the hospital should not be used for siphoning money off for a few individuals.

A lot of articles have appeared in the press over the suspension of the Global Aids Fund to Malawi. While some people felt the suspension would have a great impact on the fight against HIV/AIDS in Malawi others felt nothing was going to change. In July press coverage, however, people's fears have been put to rest because the ministry responsible says government can sustain ARVs availability. According to Dr Mary Shaba, the Principal Secretary for Nutrition, HIV and Aids, has assured Malawians that government will find ways of making sure that there is continuation of distribution of free ARVs.

The same press coverage on health had contrary issues over ARVs. It was reported that there is a shortage in both private and public hospitals. The news further says hospitals have stopped giving out ARVs that would last for 3 months and are now rationing them. All this is evidence that there is low supply of ARVs in hospitals.

In July the Ministry of Health assured the nation that it has taken care of the rabies vaccine shortage problem. This comes after reports had earlier disclosed the death of 4 people in Phalombe district due to dog bites and shortage of rabies vaccine. In the past the press had also shown that apparently there was no rabies vaccine in health centres in Blantyre. It was further reported that the vaccine is very expensive. But a recent report that authorities have the vaccines to last for over three months is good news.

The press in July shed some light on the situation of medical staff in Malawi hospitals. While others might say nurses are supposed to serve and save people's lives their own life should also be taken care of. In recent times the media has come up with reports that have shown that some nurses lives are at risk because of the poor conditions and lack of equipment that puts their lives at greater risks of contracting diseases. In past years Malawi has experienced many cases of brain drain as a number of medical personnel has left Malawi, with some citing low pay and lack of medical equipment as some of the reason for leaving. It is no secret that government hospitals are always hit by one problem after the other and for sure Malawi cannot afford to lose its highly qualified medical personnel due to lack of equipment and safety in hospitals.

ENVIRONMENT

For the first time in Malawi we saw the *Malawi Energy Regulatory* body *MERA* banning the use of jerry cans at petrol stations. The ban received a lot of rejection and people all they could to have the ban lifted. For the consumers it seemed *MERA* had made a rushed decision in banning the use of jerry cans at filling stations. For starters Malawi has been facing a fuel shortage for some time now. For months people have had to live with dry pumps at gas station. Much as people are rejoicing over the lifting of the ban of jerry cans, environmentalists are of the contrary view. Media reports have shown that environment activists are of the view that the use of jerry cans has serious complications to the surroundings. Burning fossil fuels is a threat to people's lives and the environment.

The issue of oil drilling in Lake Malawi was also dealt with in the press in the July. If reports are anything to go by, these stories have been circulation for some time. At first people were speculating that the first independent government frustrated efforts to have oil drilled in the fresh waters of Lake Malawi. Some environmental experts backed this stand for fear of the lives of other creatures in the Lake if there are oil spills. This time around the same issue is circulating in the press. Malawi should not get carried away with oil prospects in Lake Malawi for fear of spills and leakages. Fresh in people's minds in the latest spillage of oil in the Gulf of Mexico last year. For sure environmentalists would not want a copy of this in the beautiful Lake Malawi.

Similar concerns had also been raised before and after *Paladin* started mining activities in Karonga. There were and are still fears that if anything happens to mining site it would cause serious environmental threats to the surrounding areas Lake Malawi included. It was said any uranium deposits in Lake Malawi mean contamination of the fresh water and would pose a danger to fish and other living creatures. Despite all the resistance from civil society groups and environmental experts the mining started and it is now in full swing.

The church also added its voice in asking government to put in place policies on climate change. Talk on the environment these days is incomplete when nothing on the changing of times and weather patterns is not mentioned. Malawi has witnessed a change in the weather and rainfall patterns in recent times. This has affected some activities in the patterns of various sectors of the society. For this reason the church would like authorities to have policies and interventions in the times of climate change so that development work and other initiatives are not affected.

GENDER

Some gender experts have noted that despite the many efforts that authorities have put in place on gender equality and empowerment, many women still face hurdles in the fight for position in many sectors. A good example is that of the political circles where many women have not made it to the top most positions. In political parties while the membership is dominated by women, the leading positions are mostly occupied by men. This scenario is reflected in the policies that are made because they at times do not have the concerns and more benefits to women simply because they are not present when the policies are formulated. It is against this background that some activists are asking for more participation of women in various spheres.

The registration of the *People's Party PP* in the month under review opens a new chapter in the history Malawi. The *PP* becomes one of the few parties to be headed by a woman after Loveness Gondwe's *National Rainbow Party*. Joyce Banda who was formerly vice president of the *Democratic Progressive Party DPP* got the chop from the *DPP* only to come up with a party of her own. Malawians wait to see if the *PP* will come up with something new in as far as women affairs are concerned.

Press reports on gender disclosed of how parliament has used its powers to deal with political bills at to the expense of gender bill. It has been reported that although some proposed gender related bills have been submitted to the National Assembly, they have still not been adopted. A case in mind is that of the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill which despite being submitted to parliament in 2006, has not been made into a law. Surprisingly some political bills are easily taken into consideration and are passed in parliament with haste. Reports have further shown that there are only 3 gender related bills that have been passed. Therefore authorities need to do some soul searching so that gender bills are also taken into consideration.

Coverage on women issues also tackled the issue of motherhood. Columnists have advised that women need to keep upgrading their knowledge and studies even after becoming mothers. Evidence has shown that some women have given up their careers after becoming mother. As it has been disclosed with a lot of support many more women are coping pretty well with their careers after becoming mother.