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Zimbabwe Situation Analysis third & fourth quarters 2021

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Major Highlights:

1. Zimbabwe has officially entered election mode ahead of the planned 2022 by-elections and the general election constitutionally due in 2023.
2. Elite dis-cohesion escalated within the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and this culminated in a court case challenging President Emmerson Mnangagwa's legal legitimacy.
3. The resurgence of political violence and human rights violations with **73.58%** committed by ruling party members and Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP).
4. The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) gazetted the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment (PVO) Bill on 5 November 2021 [GN 3107 of 2021] which might result in the shrinkage of democratic space for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).
5. Month on month inflation went up for the third consecutive time. It was **4.2%** in August, **4.7 %** in September and October recorded the highest in 2021 at **6.4%**.
6. Food Poverty Line (FPL) rose to **USD 311.77** for a family of six per month as food inflation rate surged to **7.56%** in October from **4.82%** in September.
7. The Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL) for a family of **six** rose to **USD 435.84** per month whilst on average a civil servant continued earning **USD 83.63** per month.
8. The Minister of Finance and Economic Development revised the annual inflation rate from **25-35%** to **52-58%**. However, independent analysts project an annual inflation rate of **103.2%** based on free market exchange rate making it the highest in Africa and third in the world after Venezuela and Lebanon.
9. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) expect Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to grow by **6-7.8%** due to increased agriculture production, mining outputs and investments in infrastructure.
10. COVID-19 infection rates have slowed remarkably (with only 532 active cases as of 20 November 2021), lockdown measures have been relaxed, and the cumulative numbers for those who received first vaccination dose was 3 650 966 (**36.5%** of herd immunity target) and 2 744 192 (**27.4%** of herd immunity target) for the second dose as of 20 November 2021.
11. Continued state complicity in land-based displacements of black indigenous farmers for mining mainly by Chinese companies and politically connected Zimbabwean big business.
12. Calls by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and United Nations (UN) Rapporteur for structured dialogue on sanctions through a reform plan that includes governance reforms, respect of rule of law and human rights.
13. The South African Government decided not to renew the Special Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP) on 24 November 2021 leaving 180 188 Zimbabweans facing a precarious future.

1. Elections, Human Rights Violations & Politics

Zimbabwe entered into an election mode as the two major political parties started running visible campaigns ahead of the planned by-elections in 2022 and the general election constitutionally due in 2023.¹ There are 28 National Assembly and 105 local authority vacancies

¹ The two major parties are MDC Alliance led by Nelson Chamisa and ZANU PF led by Emmerson Mnangagwa.

across the country.² This means that if held, the by-elections will mirror a mini-general election and will provide an opportunity to test the strength of political parties ahead of the 2023 general election. The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) expressed confidence in winning the elections. On 17 November 2021, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the ZANU PF leader and President of Zimbabwe, said: 'we are going to have by-elections in 2022 and *tinovasvasvanga* (we will trounce them). In 2023, we will then have general elections *tovarakasha* (we will beat them).'³ ZANU PF seeks to garner an ambitious five million votes which translates to almost everyone on the voters' roll.⁴ The ruling party started hashtag campaigns such as *#FiveMoreYears* [for Mnangagwa] and *#EDWorks*. The campaign is based on projecting ED (Mnangagwa) as a man of deeds. He has been leveraging the benefits of incumbency to commission roads, clinics, houses and processing plants in rural areas.⁵ On the other hand, the main opposition Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC A) led by Nelson Chamisa equally set an ambitious campaign target of six million voters.⁶ MDC A activists launched the popular hashtag *#Ngaapinde Hake Mkomana* [Let the boy-Chamisa- get into power]. Chamisa has been traversing the length and breadth of rural Zimbabwe across Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland and Matebeleland provinces since October 2021. The rural campaign has shown that Chamisa still has a solid social support base despite efforts to annihilate him politically by the state. Other smaller political parties like National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and Movement for Democratic Change Tsvangirai (MDC T) have also been gathering smaller crowds. A dark horse in the form of exiled Saviour Kasukuwere has emerged. He served as a cabinet minister under the late Robert Mugabe and as the ZANU PF political commissar. Kasukuwere's supporters have started a vigorous 2023 Presidential campaign for him on social media. However, his impact is likely to be limited unless plans succeed for him to make an alliance with either Chamisa or a disgruntled ZANU PF faction that identifies with Constantino Chiwenga, the Vice President of Zimbabwe, former commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) and second secretary in ZANU PF as elaborated later.

As a result of the tense election mode, **human violations and political violence have been on a significant rise.** First, is targeted violence against Chamisa and his team during his rural campaign in four provinces of Mashonaland West, Manicaland, Masvingo and Matebeleland North. His convoy was stoned and windows shattered in Masvingo.⁷ One of his supporters, Nyasha Zhambe Mawere, who was abducted and beaten during the tour eventually died from the injuries on 26 November 2021.⁸ Chamisa said that during one of the attacks in Manicaland a bullet passed near his head in an assassination attempt.⁹ Second, is the systematic attack on general citizens. From July to October **98.31%** of victims of human rights violations were general citizens.¹⁰ Women continued to bear the brunt of violence as they constituted **46.67 %** of the victims.¹¹ The main villains were ZANU PF and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) which contributed **32.32 %** and **41.26 %** of perpetrators respectively.¹² The two institutions contributed **73.58%** of perpetrators.¹³ Violations have taken the form of: assault, illegal detention, abduction, torture, sexual harassment and displacement, violating

² President to proclaim election dates: ZEC. *Herald*. 10.11.2021.

Available: <https://www.herald.co.zw/president-to-proclaim-election-dates-zec/>

³ Mphisa E and Ndlovu N. *Newsday*. 18.11.2021.

Available: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/11/nothing-will-stop-by-elections-ed/>

⁴ ZANU PF angles for five million votes. *Sundaymail*. 19.12.2019.

Available: <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/zanu-pf-angles-for-five-million-votes>

⁵ See for example; President commissions fruit and vegetable processing plant. *The Herald*. 14.10.2021. Available: <https://www.herald.co.zw/president-commissions-fruit-and-vegetable-processing-plant/>

⁶ Saunyama, J. MDC Alliance targets 6m voters. *Newsday*. 10 May 2021.

⁷ MDC Alliance convoy attacked. *eNCA*. 11 October 2021.

⁸ Munhende, L. MDC Activist Dies After Being Savagely Assaulted By Zanu PF Youths. *NewZimbabwe*. 27.11.2021.

⁹ Chamisa, N. Personal communication. 20 October 2021.

¹⁰ Collated by author using the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) Monthly Monitoring Reports for July, August, August and October 2021.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

covid 19, theft and killing.¹⁴ Despite the progressive fact that Mnangagwa signed the instrument of ratification of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in November 2021, current political events point to a potentially violent election with the main perpetrators likely to be state security agents and ZANU PF.¹⁵

The political logic behind ZANU PF's growing authoritarian responses is the deepening internal elite dis-cohesion within the party. The divisions were so fierce that the ZANU PF politburo had to suspend provincial elections on 20 September 2021 ahead of the 19th annual national people's conference which was held from 27-30 October 2021.¹⁶ Factionalism was more evident in six out of ten provinces namely, Harare, Masvingo, Midlands, Manicaland, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West.¹⁷ What exacerbates the situation is that factionalism has been characterised by intra-party violence mainly in Harare, Midlands and Manicaland.¹⁸ In this period, the divisions manifested along four major lines. First, there were serious political divisions along two competing centres of power within the party. These include Mnangagwa and Chiwenga. On the other hand, some ZANU PF members still owe allegiance to the legacy of former party leader, Mugabe, as represented by a faction named G40. To show the intensity of hostilities, a cabinet Minister and politburo member, Ziyambi Ziyambi, in October 2021 accused G40 of plotting to topple Mnangagwa. Ziyambi said, 'I have been following events and I hear money is exchanging hands. We have received a report, the majority of G40 people decided to stay in ZANU PF and fund provincial members so that those who were dormant take positions then challenge the president.'¹⁹ Third, there were ethnic divisions with the non-Karanga groups increasingly feeling marginalised as Mnangagwa continued to rule by communal and family ties. These factional battles were overtly exposed when a ZANU PF member, Sybeth Musengezi, filed court case no. HC 5687/21 on 20 October 2021. Musengezi challenged Mnangagwa's legitimacy noting that his ascension to the throne of party leader and national presidency 'is tainted by blatant illegalities in violation of the constitution' of ZANU PF.²⁰ Elite dis-cohesion has been widening within the ruling party making it inherently unstable. This has made Mnangagwa rely more on the coercive apparatus of the state to avoid party disintegration and an internal implosion ahead of 2023 general elections.

2. Democratic Space & Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The government gazetted the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill on 5 November [GN 3107 of 2021] which might be detrimental to Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) democratic and constitutional operations. The Bill is meant to amend the Private Voluntary Organisations Act [Chapter 17:05], which governs non-profit organizations in Zimbabwe. The aim of the Bill is to comply with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations to strengthen the country's legal framework to combat money laundering, financing terrorism and proliferation. FAFT is a global inter-governmental organization that sets international standards that aim to combat money laundering and financing terrorism.²¹

However, the Bill contains provisions that go beyond FAFT recommendations and undermines the Zimbabwe's Bill of Rights contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution. These are elaborated below.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵ Veritas. President Ratifies African Charter on Democracy, BILL WATCH 73/2021. 11.11. 2021

¹⁶ ZANU PF suspends provincial elections. *ZANU PF website*. 23.09.2021.

Available: <https://www.zanupf.org.zw/news/zanu-pf-suspends-provincial-elections>

¹⁷ Zamchiya, P. ZANU PF's current political dynamics, balance of forces and possible scenarios going into the future. Presentation at SAPES, 9.09.2021.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹G40 heavy in ZANU PF planning to topple Mnangagwa Ziyambi claims. *Nehanda Radio*. 06.10.2021. Available:<https://nehandaradio.com/2021/10/06/g40-heavy-in-zanu-pf-planning-to-topple-mnangagwa-ziyambi-claims/>

²⁰ HC 5687/21, page.19.

²¹ See: <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/about/>

- The Minister has unilateral powers under the proposed Section 22(2) to undertake 'risk assessments' of CSOs without consulting the CSOs in the assessment.
- The Minister has broad discretion under the proposed Section 2 (3) to designate any CSO as vulnerable to terrorist financing without even taking risk assessment.
- The Minister has powers under proposed section 21 to suspend and replace a PVO's executive committee with his or her own selected provisional members.
- The Bill requires PVO to re-register with the Registrar once there is 'material change' in the organisation under the proposed Section 13A and this provides the Registrar with an opportunity to delay or deny registration.
- The proposed Section 2 (4) requires the Registrar to stop PVOs from receiving funding from the public and or from foreigners without giving reasons. This affects funding.
- Section 10(e1) prohibits PVOs from supporting or opposing a political party or candidate during elections and any violation will lead to deregistration.

If the Bill is enacted as it is, the increasingly authoritarian state is likely to use it to ban CSOs from associating with any political party or even to support party policies that are in synch with their goals, vision and objectives. There can be state efforts to prevent civic education about politics and elections. In the past, the state has used legislation to curtail freedoms of assembly, association and expression.

3. Economy, Livelihoods & Covid 19

The period recorded an exponential rise in inflation and the cost of living plunging many Zimbabweans below the poverty datum line. This has created a systemic crisis of livelihoods for the general citizens who increasingly cannot afford adequate food and essentials. Month on month inflation went up for the **third consecutive time** according to official Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) figures. It was **4.2%** in August, **4.7 %** in September and October recorded the highest in 2021 at **6.4%**.²² The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development revised the annual inflation rate from **25-35 % to 52-58%**.²³ However, independent analysts project an annual inflation rate of **103.2%** based on free market exchange rate making it the highest in Africa and third in the world after Venezuela and Lebanon.²⁴ Year on inflation rate stood at **54.4%** in October up from **51.5%** in September.²⁵ As 2021 closes, it looks like the month on month inflation will keep rising. The GoZ blames the rising inflation on sanctions, the benchmarking of prices according to the free-market exchange rate by retailers and rising global prices in oil and food. However, the role of cartels abusing the foreign exchange auction system, lack of coordination of the fiscal, exchange rate, and monetary policies, cannot be understated.

The Food Poverty Line (FPL) rose to USD 311.77 for a family of six per month as food inflation rate surged to 7.56% in October from 4.82% in September.²⁶ The Food Poverty Line for one person represents the amount of money that an individual will require to afford the minimum required daily energy intake of 2 100 calories. The Zimbabwe Rural Livelihood Assessment Report revealed that a rural household average monthly income is **US\$75** in 2021.²⁷ That means a monthly deficit of **USD 236,77** for food alone for rural households. The Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL) for a family of six rose to **USD 435.84** per month whilst on average a civil servant continued earning **USD**

²² Monthly inflation rate surges to 6.4%. *The Herald*. 27.10. 2021. Available: <https://www.herald.co.zw/monthly-inflation-rate-surges-to-64/>

²³ Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. 2022 National Budget Statement. 25 November 2022.

²⁴ Available: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/prof.steve.h.hanke/viz/HankesInflationSatellite/HankesInflationSatellite>, 18.11. 2021.

²⁵ Monthly inflation rate surges to 6.4%. *The Herald*. 27.10. 2021. Available: <https://www.herald.co.zw/monthly-inflation-rate-surges-to-64/>

²⁶ Collated by author based on the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (Zimstat) Inflation and Pricing statistics for September and October 2021.

²⁷ Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee. 2021 Rural Livelihood Assessment Report. 21.06.2021.

83.63 per month.²⁸ However, according to the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe the TCPL was **USD 490** per month for a family of six.²⁹ The TCPL is the sum of the Food Poverty Line and the non-food essentials. It represents the least amount of money an individual or family needs to cover their food, rentals, clothing and other essentials. This shows that general citizens are facing a crisis of livelihoods.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and GoZ expect Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to grow by 6-7.8% due to increased agriculture production, mining outputs and investments in infrastructure.³⁰ However, three problems arise. First, the IMF acknowledged that ‘uncertainty remains high, however, and the outlook will depend on the pandemic [Covid]’s evolution—compounded by the economy’s vulnerabilities to climatic shocks—and implementation of sustainable policies.’³¹ The second was highlighted by the Minister of Finance during the 25 November annual budget presentation who said, ‘renewed pressures on inflation and a misaligned official exchange rate and rising international oil prices’ can derail projections.³² Third, there is no solid plan to foster higher sustained and inclusive growth. This means that even if the economy grows, the inequalities will persist in a trajectory that might mirror Equatorial Guinea.

COVID-19 infection rates have slowed remarkably [with only 532 active cases as of 20 November 2021], lockdown measures have been relaxed, and the cumulative numbers for those who received first vaccination dose was 3 650 966 (36.5% of herd immunity target) and 2 744 192 (27.4% of herd immunity target) for the second dose as of 20 November 2021.³³ However, the recent discovery of a new variant in South Africa and Botswana, known as B.1.1.529 [Omicron variant], described as ‘the worst one we’ve seen so far’³⁴ by a British scientist, can easily spread beyond borders and lead to another hard economic lockdown in Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries. This will worsen the economic and livelihoods crises for the ordinary citizens. Meanwhile, America, United Kingdom, European Union and Hongkong have suspended all travel from Zimbabwe, South Africa and other Southern African countries due to fears over the Omicron variant.³⁵

4. Land Displacements

The post-colonial Zimbabwean state, which prides itself in the politics of decoloniality and black empowerment, continued to support mainly Chinese companies, domestic political and business elites’ plans to displace black indigenous farmers from their customary land. Displacements in Zimbabwe are usually authoritarian, arbitrary and unconstitutional. The government hardly follows section 74 of the Zimbabwe Constitution which states that: ‘No person may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances’.³⁶ The consequences for many land rights holders -vulnerable women and men - include loss of arable land, residential land and common property resources, destruction of protected areas and the desecration of cultural and spiritual sites. For emphasis, rural displacements loomed across the nation. For example, in Manicaland, the villagers

²⁸ Collated by author based on the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (Zimstat) Inflation and Pricing statistics for September and October 2021. For a civil servant’s salary see: <https://tshisalive.com/a-look-at-this-zimbabwean-teachers-payslip-is-heartbreaking/>

²⁹ Family monthly basket shoots to \$41 000. *Newsday*. 3.09.2021.

³⁰ Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. 2022 National Budget Statement. 25 November 2022. Also see: IMF Press Release no.21/337. IMF Staff Concludes Article IV Mission to Zimbabwe. 16 November 2021.

³¹ IMF Press Release no.21/337. IMF Staff Concludes Article IV Mission to Zimbabwe. 16 November 2021

³² Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. 2022 National Budget Statement. 25 November 2022.

³³ Ministry of Health and Child Care. Covid 19 daily updates. 20 November 2021.

³⁴ Coronavirus variant fear sparks Africa travel curbs. BBC News. 25.11.2021.

Available: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-59424269>

³⁵ Parekh, M et al. Coronavirus latest news: EU suspends all flights to southern Africa over omicron Covid variant fears. *Telegraph*. 26 .11.2021.

³⁶ Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013 [Zimbabwe].

in Chipinge district lost thousands of hectares of land. The land was acquired by Billy Rautenbach - who has close links to Mnangagwa - for the production of sugarcane and anhydrous ethanol.³⁷ In Muzarabani, Mashonaland Central, a Chinese firm, Afrochine Smelting (Pvt) Ltd, was granted a controversial special mining permit to mine chrome inside Mavuradona Game Park, a wildlife resort. In Mutoko, Mashonaland East, a Chinese company, Shanghai Haoying Mining Investments P/L planned to relocate people from their ancestral lands for granite mining.³⁸ Another Chinese mining company, Heijin, was on the verge of displacing several villagers from their ancestral land in Uzumba Maramba-Pfungwe in Mashonaland East province.³⁹ In Hwange district in Matebeleland North, Beifa investments from China was exploring the area for coal production with plans to displace villagers.⁴⁰ In Masvingo, Chilonga villagers still awaited judgment from the High Court on whether they will be displaced or not for lucerne grass farming by Dendairy Private Limited.⁴¹

One of the affected villagers from Uzumba captured the simmering discontent from the affected rural masses: He said:

“This area [Uzumba] is known for voting [ZANU PF], and when we vote we expect that leader to protect us, if he fails then our votes will be for someone else, If they really want our votes they should stop these people. Some areas have farms, we do not have farms so where do they think we should go...Having the MDC Alliance in our corner is good and bad, if ZANU PF does not man up and help us we will vote MDC Alliance.”⁴²

The majority of the citizenry I interviewed in the affected rural areas felt that the government was reversing the gains of the land reform program. Even in ZANU PF’s traditional electoral strongholds, the party is losing legitimacy. In addition to the old wave of urban discontent, there is a new wave of rural discontent rooted in the evolving land question.

5. Sanctions & Dialogue

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), reiterated its concerns about sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by the US, United Kingdom and European Union (EU). On 25 October 2021, SADC released a statement through its chairperson, Lazarus Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi, which called for ‘the unconditional and immediate lifting of these sanctions’.⁴³ However, Chakwera went beyond the sanctions narrative to include the need for governance reforms and dialogue to resolve the Zimbabwe crisis. He stated that:

“The Republic of Zimbabwe and the SADC Region, are committed to engage in meaningful and constructive dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, with a view to consolidate the rule of law, democracy, governance and human rights. It is only through such exchanges that

³⁷ Ian Scoones, Joseph Chaumba, BlasioMavedzenge and William Wolmer, ‘The new politics of Zimbabwe’s lowveld: struggles over land at the margins’, *African Affairs*, 111,445 (2012), p.533

³⁸ Mlevu, S. Fear grips Mutoko villagers as they face possible eviction to pave way for a Chinese miner. 12.08.2021. Available: <https://www.cnrzim.org/fear-grips-motoko-villagers-as-they-face-possible-eviction-to-pave-way-for-a-chinese-miner/>

³⁹ Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. EMA speaks out on Chinese miner’s operations in Uzumba. 30.09.2021. Available: <https://kubatana.net/2021/09/30/ema-speaks-out-on-chinese-miners-operations-in-uzumba/>

⁴⁰ Mavhunga, C. Zimbabwe Villagers Fight Chinese Coal Mining Project Near Wildlife Reserve. *VOANEWS*. 5 .07.2021. Available: https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_zimbabwe-villagers-fight-chinese-coal-mining-project-near-wildlife-reserve/6207859.html

⁴¹ Fandiso, A. High Court reserves judgment in Chilonga villagers case. *Newsday*.13.10.2021. Available: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/10/high-court-reserves-judgment-in-chilonga-villagers-case/>

⁴² Munhende, L. Uzumba Maramba-Pfungwe Villagers Vow To Vote Mnangagwa Out Over Chinese Invasions. *NewZimbabwe*. 5.11.2021.

Available: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/uzumba-maramba-pfungwe-villagers-vow-to-vote-mnangagwa-out-over-chinese-invasions/>

⁴³ SADC. Statement by His Excellency Dr. Lazarus Mccarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi, and Chairperson of SADC, calling for the lifting of all sanctions imposed on the Republic of Zimbabwe. 25.10. 2021. page.1.

better appreciation of concerns of all parties could be secured and progress towards their resolution be achieved.⁴⁴

On 28 October 2021, the statement by Alena Douhan, United Nations (UN) Rapporteur on sanctions, notwithstanding the problematic nature of her exclusive engagement did not only call for the unconditional removal of sanctions but urged ‘all stakeholders at the international and national levels to stop using the rhetoric of sanctions as an advocacy tool, and to engage in structural dialogue to settle any disputes in accordance with the rule of law’. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently called for ‘a reform plan that is consistent with macroeconomic stability, sustainable growth, and poverty reduction; a reinforcement of the social safety net; and governance and transparency reforms.’⁴⁵

However, ZANU PF insisted on national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. Consequently, ZANU PF has maintained its position that dialogue should be through the Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) platform convened and controlled by ZANU PF and excluding MDC A, which has refused to join a platform they consider to be incapable of producing any meaningful results except legitimating Mnangagwa’s rule.⁴⁶ SADC is unlikely to push for implementation of its recommendation unless two or three countries take the lead.

6. South Africa & Zimbabwean migrants

The South African Government decided not to renew the Special Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP) on 24 November 2021 leaving a total of 180 188 Zimbabweans facing a precarious future. The first Zimbabwean special dispensation started in 2009 when the South African government introduced a Dispensation of Zimbabwean Permit (DZP) to document Zimbabweans who were already living in South Africa because of political repression and the socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The Department of Home Affairs (DoHA) encouraged those who had applied for asylum to apply for DZP. DoHA issued about 245 000 DZP. In 2014, the DZP was renamed the Zimbabwe Special Permit (ZSP) and was extended by three years. In 2017 it was renamed the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP). A total of **180 188** Zimbabweans applied for the ZEP permit when the process started on 15 September 2017.⁴⁷ The ZEP expires on 31 December 2021.

Pending the expiry, on 24 November 2021, the South African Cabinet ‘decided to no longer issue extensions to the Zimbabwean special dispensations’.⁴⁸ However, it decided on a 12 months grace period at the expiry of the current ZEP. According to the resolution, ‘during this period, the holders of this permit should apply for other permits appropriate to their particular status or situation. At the expiry of this 12-month period, those who are not successful will have to leave South Africa or be deported’.⁴⁹ This is not a relief as many Zimbabweans who hold the ZEP do not meet the stringent requirements to qualify for other South African visa regimes that is why in the first place, they were undocumented migrants. The South African visa regime is hostile for poor and vulnerable workers such as drivers, hairdressers, domestic workers, general cleaners, restaurant workers, hotel workers, builders, till operators and security guards *et cetera*. Yet the bulk of ZEP holders fall in this low skilled labour category.

⁴⁴ SADC. Statement by His Excellency Dr. Lazarus Mccarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi, and Chairperson of SADC, calling for the lifting of all sanctions imposed on the Republic of Zimbabwe. 25.10. 2021. page.1.

⁴⁵ IMF Press Release no.21/337. IMF Staff Concludes Article IV Mission to Zimbabwe. 16 November 2021.

⁴⁶ ZANU PF open to dialogue. *The Herald*. 1.10.2021.

⁴⁷ Department of Home Affairs. Media statement on the extension of the closing date for dispatching Zimbabwean Exemption Permits (ZEP). 15.11.2018, page 1.

⁴⁸ South Africa Government. Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 24 November 2021. Resolution 6.3.

⁴⁹ South Africa Government. Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 24 November 2021. Resolution 6.4.

Zimbabweans who fail to qualify for other onerous permits will have work contracts cancelled, bank accounts closed, and their insurance and funeral policies nullified. Some will lose their immovable assets like houses and small tuck shops. Their children's education will be disrupted and there will be lots of split families and loss of social capital. Some of the ZEP holders face political persecution and risk being assassinated if they return to Zimbabwe. In fact, the ZEP holders were already experiencing problems with getting work contracts renewed given their uncertain future among other challenges.⁵⁰ It is most likely that many will strive to be invisible to the South African state by going underground rather than return to crisis-torn Zimbabwe. By going underground, they will face exploitation by many capitalist employers. The South African government will also lose a tax revenue base.

The South African government did not give any official explanation for its decision and the Zimbabwe government has also not officially responded. However, there are competing political interpretations. The issue of migrants became an election issue in South Africa's Local Government Elections of 1 November 2021. Some parties like Patriotic Alliance and Action South Africa called for the mass deportation of 'illegal foreigners' during their political campaigns.⁵¹ The Economic Freedom Fighters [EFF] got 10.17% and its leader Julius Malema mentioned that his pro-African foreigners stanza could have cost him some votes. However, he was not prepared to change his 'cardinal principle'. He explained,

"it is very xenophobic to say foreigners must leave...I will never take part in a platform and denounce Africans. I will never do it...If it means votes are going, let them go. I am prepared to go home...So I must go and tell hungry Zimbabweans to leave here and go where? To die? I would rather die with them than allow them to die alone."⁵²

On the other end, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) got below 50% of the vote [46.14%] for the first time in post-apartheid South Africa.⁵³ Some analysts have partly attributed its loss to its policy on supporting migrants. As a result, some have interpreted the discontinuation of ZEP as a response meant to placate voters ahead of the crucial 2024 general elections. Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh, Africa director for the International Committee of Jurists (ICJ), said: 'This seems like an attempt to appease voters ahead of 2024 general election...'⁵⁴ The ANC could also be responding to the #PutSouthAfricaFirst Movement. The movement alleges without evidence that foreign nationals are 'mainly responsible for crimes ranging from robbery, sex slavery, kidnappings, and human trafficking to the peddling of drugs.'⁵⁵

The decision might portray Africa's oldest former liberation movement as averse to the Pan-African principle of *ubuntu* [humanity towards others] and solidarity. This negatively impacts on its moral standing as a leader on the African continent. The migration conundrum is a consequence of South Africa not putting enough diplomatic pressure on the Zimbabwe government to respect rule of law, human rights and democracy and institute sound economic governance reforms. As long as there is no resolution of the Zimbabwe crisis, South Africa will continue to receive and remain host to hundreds of thousands of both documented and undocumented Zimbabweans.

⁵⁰ Washinyira, T. Cabinet announces Zimbabwe Exemption Permits will not be extended. *Ground Up*. 25 November 2021. Available: <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/cabinet-announces-zimbabwe-exemption-permits-will-not-be-extended/>

⁵¹ Mahlati, Z. Elections 2021: Patriotic Alliance targets 'illegal foreigners' at manifesto launch. *News24*. 09.10.2021. Also see: Simelane ,B.C. Action SA's Herman Mashaba: Unapologetic about stance on foreigners and driven to wear Joburg's mayoral chain again. *Daily Maverick*. 05.9.2021.

⁵² So I must tell hungry Zimbabweans to leave & go where? To die? I would rather die with them: MALEMA. *YouTube*. 16 November 2021. Available:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ef3RfPZ4IQ>

⁵³ IEC Official Results. Available:

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⁵⁴ <https://twitter.com/kaajal1/status/1463820675899170817.25.11.2021>.

⁵⁵ South Africa: Hatred of migrants reaches new heights. Available: <https://www.dw.com/en/south-africa-hatred-of-migrants-reaches-new-heights/a-55093941>

About the Southern African Liaison Office:



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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