

Zimbabwe: after one year of Inclusive Government

ACTSA

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On the 2 February 2009 Zimbabwe got an Inclusive Government with representatives from the countries three main political parties.

What has changed since?

There has been some economic progress. Inflation is now in single figures rather than in the trillions. The shops have products of the shelves, although most Zimbabweans cannot afford the prices. The economy is now based on the US dollar or South African rand, and the Zimbabwean dollar no longer really exists, is worthless and often found on the street as litter.

Repression and human rights violations have reduced from the levels of 2008, yet activists still get detained, harassed and beaten. All the repressive legislation remains on the statute books. Zanu PF retains control of the security apparatus and domestic media.

There are some improvements in basic social services such as health and education, as Western donors have increased their funding for these sectors.

The Inclusive Government is sometimes referred to as a Government of National Unity and some would like it to be. It is not. It is marked by mistrust and currently there is stalemate around a number of issues. South Africa is facilitating discussion between the parties on behalf of SADC (the Southern African Development Community). SADC sees its role as supporting the parties to agree and develop a consensus, and not to impose a solution which one or more may reject. The constitutional process, criticised by some including the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union for not being people-driven, is stalled.

Yet despite all the problems the formation of the Inclusive Government still provides some hope that things may improve for ordinary Zimbabwean. Those who were critical of the deal, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) that brought it about, nevertheless hope it will work to end human rights violations and repression, and will help bring about freedom of organisation and expression, economic recovery and allow Zimbabweans to decide their priorities and to be able to hold their leaders to account.

For Zimbabwe to really overcome the humanitarian and economic crises which have afflicted it then it has to demonstrate it can overcome the political crisis which continues today.