

## **Zimbabwe end of 2009 update.**

Zimbabwe has experienced both change and more of the same in 2009.

The Inclusive Government agreed to by the Global Political Agreement was formed in February 2009. It has at best been an uneasy coalition where the main political parties have come together but there is still great disagreement and little trust.

There have been changes and improvements: most notably on the economy. Zimbabwe now has two currencies neither of them its own. The US dollar or South African Rand. Inflation has ceased. Some parts of the economy are functioning. There are goods again in shops but most are at prices beyond the reach of the Zimbabwean who does not have access to foreign currency. There is increased food availability. It is currently estimated approx 3 million Zimbabweans will need food aid in 2010 as compared to 7 million in 2009. The health and education services have been working better than for some time albeit from a low base. Whilst there are still controls on local media the international media such as BBC and CNN have been allowed to freely report from Zimbabwe again.

The human rights situation has improved in that there are fewer violations than a year ago. There are though still human rights violations.

There is an impasse politically. It is expected that the negotiators from 3 main political parties will report some areas of both agreement and disagreement before the end of the year. The areas of political disagreement are likely to be passed to SADC mediation led by South Africa. In essence what is at the heart of the political disagreement is whether this is an inclusive government in which the MDCs have been invited to be part but in which Zanu PF maintains real control over the state machinery or a form of power sharing where all parties both have some control but also lack of control of the state machinery; in which all parties have some influence but one does not dominate. Mediation only tends to work if the parties involved want to find an agreement.

Despite the problems there seems little real option to the inclusive or a power sharing government. If the opposition withdraws what does it do? What other than early democratic elections can it call for? If it withdrew could it mobilise Zimbabweans in effective peaceful action? For Zanu PF withdrawal seems even more unlikely. Both know withdrawal would not gain them support from countries in the region.

The international community has increased support for both humanitarian programmes and more. The UK has pledged funding of £100 million; an increase from its previous humanitarian support of £60 million. Real substantial western financial support is likely to depend on significant political as well as economic development. The action many would want to see before calling for and/or providing major government to government support is:-

- Resolution of outstanding issues including process of appointments of key government officials- e.g. governor of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Attorney General. Deputy Minister of Agriculture and ambassadors.
- Cessation of arbitrary arrests of journalists, lawyers, trade union leaders, civic leaders, human rights activists and MDC members.
- Unconditional dropping of politically-motivated charges facing political prisoners, human rights activists and lawyers.
- Cessation of inflammatory reporting in broadcast and print media.

- Cessation of politicisation of food aid and threats to INGO's.
- Halting of fresh farm seizures.
- Respect for the Rule of Law and Court orders.
- Stop State's interference with the Judiciary.
- Stopping of political violence.
- Disbanding of militia bases in rural communities.
- Putting in place legislative and media reform.

ZANU PF is arguing the MDC Tsvangirai should be doing more and be seen to doing more to end the sanctions (targeted measures) of the EU, US, Australia, Canada and others.

The key challenge is whether there is real political improvement and continued financial improvement.

There is also the situation of the Zimbabwean diaspora in the region and internationally. Without a feeling that there is concrete positive change which is irreversible many Zimbabweans outside Zimbabwe will want to keep their options open. In South Africa, which is hosting an estimated 3 million Zimbabweans, mostly without major incident there are continuing outbreaks of violence toward them in some areas. In the UK some Zimbabweans continue to be denied the right to work or study with their status unclear.

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