

ISSUE: The situation in Zimbabwe

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Zimbabwe is an independent state since 1980 under the government of Robert Mugabe. The country is marked by economic mismanagement, especially several land reforms aiming to redistribute the arable land in white property to Zimbabwe indigenous, causes poverty and unemployment. Hyperinflation caused the suspension of the Zimbabwean Dollar in April 2009. Allowed currencies are now among other the US Dollar, Euro and the South African Rand. Reason for several sanctions taken against Zimbabwe by Western nations are reports of constant human rights abuses as well as rigged elections and governmental pressure against the opposition.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU)

Former militant group, later political party founded in 1961. The military wing of the ZAPU was called Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA).

The ZANU was ideologically similar to the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, following the idea of mobilising the working class.

Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)

Militant organisation fighting against the rule of the white minority which split from the ZAPU in 1963. In 1980 Robert Mugabe won the presidential elections with the ZANU.

The armed wing of the ZANU was ZANLA, the Zimbabwe African Liberation Army.

Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)

Union of the ZANU and ZAPU since the reconciliation of their rivalry in 1987. It is the ruling party since 1980 led by Robert Mugabe. Its ideology is still of socialist orientation.

Rhodesian Bush War (1964-1979)

Also called "Zimbabwe War of Liberation". The ZAPU and the ZANU fought against the Rhodesian and the Zimbabwe-Rhodesian government. With the war ended the rule of the white minority and the republic of Zimbabwe was created.

Gukurahundi (Matabeleland Massacres)

Low-level civil war between the Shona dominated ZANU (ZANLA) and the followers of nationalist Joshua Nkomo, mostly Ndebele, organised in the ZAPU (ZIPRA). App. 3000 people died on both sides. Though it is also referred to as Matabeleland Massacres, the whole country was harmed by the conflict. It ended after five years with the founding of the ZANU-PF in 1987.

Land reform programmes

After more than 70% of the arable land in Zimbabwe was owned by white colonists, who only made up about 1% of the population, for almost 90 years, the Lancaster House Agreement tried to re-distribute the land in 1979. It was based on the "willing buyer, willing seller"-principle, meaning that white farmers not willing to stay in Zimbabwe could sell their land to a government fund sponsored by Great Britain. Because of the "willing buyer, willing seller"-principle the government could not reach their expected amount of re-distribution in the following ten years. Therefore the government removed this principle in 1992 and many white farmers lost their land without receiving the promised compensation. Many tried to sue for performance but instead lost even more money due to the widespread corruption.

All in all, none of the attempts had much success, also because of the poor quality of the farmland which does not allow lucrative farming. The Mugabe government is nonetheless trying to implement new land reforms, until present without significant success.

BACKGROUND/ GENERAL INFORMATION

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in the south-east of Africa, neighbouring Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana and Zambia.

Formerly British Crown Colony, Zimbabwe is now an independent state, governed by Robert Mugabe since 1980. In order to reach this goal, diverse guerrilla forces fought a long lasting war for independence from 1964-1979. The current president Robert Mugabe is an ex-guerrilla officer himself.

Though hopes for better living conditions were high in the first years of independence, they were quickly disappointed.

An example for the current questionable actions taken by the Zimbabwean government is that in November 2008 donated money was not spent for the original purposes, combating AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, but otherwise and declined to pay it back.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

1965 November 11 - Unilateral declaration of independence, civil war begins

1979 December 1 - ending of the civil war

1980 - Election of Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister

1982-87 - Matabelend Massacres

1988 - Unity agreement of the two rivaling parties ZAPU and ZANU; both merged into the ZANU-PF

1990 - Re-election of the Mugabe government, "campaign neither free nor fair"

1990's - several demonstrations and strikes against government control of universities, low salary and the government in general, often inhibited by police forces

1997 - 25% of the Zimbabwean population is infected with HIV/AIDS

1998 - An economic crisis marked by high interest rates and inflation provokes riots and mass support for the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions headed by Morgan Tsvangirai. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is formed and Tsvangirai is appointed leader the next year.

1999 - World Bank and IMF suspend aid to Zimbabwe over differences with the government on policies.

2000 - Mugabe's government loses referendum on constitutional reforms, and in the face of growing opposition to his rule, his supporters invade and seize white-owned commercial farms, saying the land was illegally taken by white settlers.

-- Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party wins parliamentary polls amid charges of fraud and vote rigging by the opposition.

2001 - Zimbabwe suffers food shortages that government critics blame on farm seizures, but Mugabe blames on drought.

-- Several Western governments quietly withdraw economic aid over rights abuses by the government and Mugabe's land policy.

2002 - Mugabe wins new six-year term in elections. Observers condemn poll as flawed and unfair.

-- Commonwealth suspends Zimbabwe, while EU imposes travel sanctions and freezes assets of Mugabe's associates.

-- Collapse of commercial agriculture and poor weather contribute to serious food shortages, leaving about half of Zimbabwe's population in need of emergency food aid.

-- U.N. agencies, Britain and the U.S. help fund food aid.

2003 - Hundreds of companies are forced to shut down due to economic hardships and rising inflation.

2005 - Mugabe's party wins parliamentary election, which the opposition say was rigged.

-- The IMF (International Monetary Found) begins process to expel Zimbabwe from the fund over dues unpaid since 2001.

-- A U.N. report in July says Zimbabwe should halt its indiscriminate bulldozing of shanty buildings, calling the operation a disastrous venture that had cost 700,000 people their homes or jobs and affected 2.4 million others.

2006 - Zimbabwe's annual inflation rises above 1,000 percent in April. Redenominated notes are issued in August. Inflation rises monthly.

2007 - Ruling ZANU-PF adopts a motion to hold elections in 2008 in March and endorse Mugabe as its presidential candidate.

-- Government institutes price freeze in June, followed two months later by wage freeze.

-- There is a run on shops as goods disappear from shelves. Zimbabwe imports 60,000 tonnes of wheat to ease bread shortages after millers run out of the grain. The government said it did not meet its annual consumption requirements of between 400,000 and 450,000 tonnes of wheat.

-- Zimbabwe announces inflation slowed to an annualized 6,592.8 percent in August from 7,634.8 percent in July. The government credits price freeze for the drop.

-- Labour leaders call for a two-day strike Sept 26-27 to protest the wage freeze.
polls.

From: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL1992587420070919> (shortened + completed)

2008 - Mediation efforts fail. Mugabe declares March 29 election for first combined presidential, parliamentary and local council

2008, March 29 - Mugabe faced the toughest challenge yet to his 28-year rule as voters, while wary of potential ballot rigging, went to the polls. Running against Mugabe was chief opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, 55, who narrowly lost disputed 2002 elections.

2008, April 2 - Official election returns showed President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party had lost its parliamentary majority. Morgan Tsvangirai wins first round of presidential poll by clear margin, but Mugabe refuses to admit defeat. A runoff between Mugabe and Tsvangirai was expected.

2008, June 4 - Police detained Tsvangirai after his convoy was stopped at a roadblock. Tsvangirai and a group of about 14 party officials were being detained at a police station in Lupane, north of Bulawayo. He was later released but detained again shortly a few times.

2008, June 5 - A mob believed loyal to Mugabe assaults a convoy of U.S. and British diplomats, beating a local staffer. The government orders aid groups to halt operations indefinitely.

2008, June 22 - Tsvangirai, unwilling to ask his supporters to risk their lives on his behalf, withdrew his bid for the presidency and pleaded with the international community to intervene in what he called a "violent sham" of an election.

2008, June 29 - Presidential run-off election is held. Tsvangirai's name remains on the ballot even though he withdrew from the race. Residents say they were forced to vote by threats of violence or arson from the Mugabe supporters.

2008, June 29 - Mugabe is sworn in for a sixth term as president moments after election officials declared he had won the runoff election. Tsvangirai and many African and other world leaders call the runoff a sham. Results show more than 2 million votes for Mugabe, 233,000 for Tsvangirai, and 131,000 defaced or spoiled votes.

2008, Juli 21 - Mugabe and Tsvangirai agree to share power but a key stumbling block — how the two rivals would divide responsibilities and who would have the most authority — remains.

2008, September 11 - South Africa's President Theo Mbeki announces he has mediated a power-sharing deal between Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai.

2008, September 15 - Mugabe and Tsvangirai sign the power-sharing deal that calls for Mugabe to remain president and Tsvangirai to become prime minister.

2009, January 30 - Tsvangirai agrees to join a unity government and resolve outstanding issues later.

*From: http://www.cbsnews.com/elements/2008/03/27/in_depth_world/timeline3974815.shtml
(shortened + completed)*

RELEVANT TREATIES, UN RESOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

ECM/res.25/XIII (1980) - Resolution on Zimbabwe

<http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N80/070/75/pdf/N8007075.pdf?OpenElement>

POSITIONS OF MAJOR COUNTRIES AND PARTIES INVOLVED

People's Republic of China

China initially supported Mugabe's ZANU and is still an important partner for Zimbabwe, partly because of economic sanctions of Western countries against Zimbabwe.

China supported Zimbabwe e.g. with the donation of farm machinery and also the illegal trade of armour and anti-riot gear for ivory.

United Kingdom

Since Rhodesia was formerly a British Crown colony, the UK supported Zimbabwe after its independence and especially the land redistribution in its early phase with several millions of dollar. Nonetheless, during the last eight years the UK changed its position and amongst others supported a travel ban for Mugabe. Mugabe accuses the UK of sabotage and planning to invade the country, while the UK constantly criticises Mugabe's attitude towards human rights.

United States of America

The US constantly supported the UK with trying to influence Zimbabwean politics and since 2000 strongly condemns human rights violations in Zimbabwe and imposed sanctions against the country.

Russian Federation

Russia still has strong economic and political relations to Zimbabwe and vetoed a SC resolution by the UK and USA for implying sanctions against Zimbabwe.

European Union

In 2002 the EU implied sanctions against Zimbabwe by denying visa to government officials and prohibiting the selling of arms to Zimbabwe.

South Africa

Former president Thabo Mbeki often tried to mediate in Zimbabwe governmental conflicts and held back criticism on several issues.

Greece

With a large Greece community in Harare, Greece has a special relationship to Zimbabwe, planning to found support projects for food and the building of a hospital in Harare.

Cuba

Zimbabwe feels connected to Cuba through the similarities in their history as a post-revolutionary state with socialist ideology which has to suffer from international sanctions.

Israel

Zimbabwe questions the legitimacy of an Israeli state and supports a two state-solution.

USEFUL LINKS

<http://www.unzimbabwe.org/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/zi.html>

The CIA World Fact Book for Zimbabwe

<http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/zimbabwe/pid/8434>

Statements of the Zimbabwe government

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Zimbabwe

Wikipedia entry on the foreign relations of Zimbabwe