

# Zimbabwe in 2010: A Short Guide to the Future

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## Introduction

Zimbabwe has witnessed some of the worst crimes against humanity to be committed on the African continent in recent years. Civil and political rights violations were in most instances committed immediately before, during or after elections. Supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and human rights defenders bore the brunt of the repression. Bad governance having worsened the situation to such an extent that in July 2008, Zimbabwe's official inflation rate was 231,150,888.87%, ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwean\\_dollar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwean_dollar)), with unemployment at over 85%. Unofficial calculations by Professor of applied economics Steve Hanke of the John Hopkins University however put the country's inflation at a staggering "6.5 quidecillion novemdecillion percent - 65 followed by 107 zeros" with prices doubling every 24.7" hours. (<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82500>). Zimbabwe was an international pariah and almost a failed state.

It is in order to prevent the complete collapse of the country that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) foisted a Government of National Unity (GNU) or Inclusive Government (IG) on the country. This Inclusive Government has no legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of Zimbabweans as it is an imposition that subverts the will of the people who on 29 March 2009 had voted for the MDC to be in government. However, following widespread and brutal abuses, the this government was constituted through the Global Political Agreement of the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2008 and was formalised on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2009. It is almost a year since the GNU came to life. This article seeks to give a short audit of the GNU, give a projection of the future as well as offer suggestions for the international community's re-engagement with Zimbabwe.

## Positives in the Performance of the GNU

There can be no doubt that since the formation of the GNU, there has been positive improvement in the livelihoods of the people. Since the introduction of the multi-currency system, the run-away inflation has been dealt with and has been below 2% for most of 2009. Zero duty on basic commodity imports has meant that food is available and that consumer prices are stabilised. Some schools and hospitals that have closed have now been re-opened. The cholera epidemic has to a large extent been dealt with and infrastructural development resumed. International finance institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the African Development Bank (IDB) have expressed willingness to reengage with Zimbabwe, and have offered technical support. Some of the Zimbabwe diaspora population has begun to go back home.

Politically, the GNU has significantly reduced incidents of violence in the country. Commissions have been established to ensure that most of the structures of repression that ZANU (PF) used to suppress dissent and transparency are contained. These include the Human Rights, Media and the Electoral Commissions. Processes that have been born out of the GPA eg Constitutional reform have also given the people of Zimbabwe hope. Since the election of President Jacob Zuma in South Africa, SADC has also been robust in its engagement with the negotiators in Zimbabwe. That notwithstanding, it should be noted that these gains are far outweighed by the realities of the present situation.

## Failures of the GNU

It is reported that of the 27 issues on the table, only 16 have been resolved. As I write, talks between the MDC and ZANU (PF) to resolve the outstanding issues have stalled once more. The outstanding issues include the unilateral appointments of Reserve Bank Governor and the Attorney General; the refusal by President Robert Mugabe to swear in MDC's Roy

Bennet and the refusal to swear in Provincial Governors. ZANU (PF) resolved at its Congress in December that the Reserve Bank Governor and the Attorney General issues will not be entertained any more, adding that for talks to progress, MDC should get targeted sanctions removed as well as to stop radio stations operating from out of the country from broadcasting. For obvious reasons, these demands are impossible for the MDC to meet as it cannot make decisions on behalf of the countries that imposed targeted measures, nor does it sit on the Board of Directors of the so-called pirates radio stations.

It should also be noted that the GNU has largely failed to restore the rule of law. Selective prosecution on trumped up charges of MDC supporters and MP's such as Roy Bennet is the order of the day. In fact, the MDC-T's membership in Parliament has now been overtaken by ZANU (PF) partly because of that. Lawyers such as Alec Muchadehama are also persecuted for defending the rights of the citizens. Farm invasions continue in spite of rulings by the SADC Tribunal and the existence of Bilateral Trade Agreements.

The Constitutional reform process is deliberately being hijacked by elements within ZANU (PF) who want the Kariba Draft version. Already, the army and ZANU (PF) militia are reportedly terrorising villagers in the rural areas so that they can support the Kariba Draft. The abductions and torture of political opponents of ZANU (PF) such as Pascal Gazira are also an indication that the GNU has achieved very little in dismantling the institutions of oppression and abuse. In such a situation there can be no true national healing and transitional justice.

The GNU has also failed in removing repressive laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (pOSA) from Zimbabwe's statute books. The National Security Council which should have been created to replace the Joint Operations Command has not yet been formed. Hate speech against political opponents and human rights defenders is still the order of the day in the state media. Thus, the majority of skilled Zimbabweans in exile have not been ready to leave the sanctuary of exile yet. In view of all this, where is Zimbabwe going. Below I try to look at some of the possible scenarios.

### **Zimbabwe and the future**

There are a few possibilities for Zimbabwe in the next few years: some positive; some negative. The first scenario is to have the GNU unravelling, leaving ZANU (PF) in control. This would mean that the gains of the past year are all eroded. The little confidence that the international investors were beginning to show in the country would be undermined. The country would therefore go back to previous years of hyperinflation, starvation and violence. ZANU (PF) that has accommodated some few reforms under protest would only turn more violent and a lot of people will die. If this happens, we will witness another exodus of refugees seeking sanctuary in neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Botswana.

The second scenario is what was proposed by President Jacob Zuma last week. Regarding the issues of contention, he indicated that the negotiators should "park and proceed" to have elections. This essentially means that the MDC, a party which won the previous elections, is the only one that has conceded on major issues. Having conceded on Permanent Secretaries and Ambassadors, the party will lose face to the voting populace. Moreover, Zimbabweans now associate elections with trauma. To call for elections when the structures of violence and rigging are still in place is to subject the nation to yet another unnecessary torment. The potential is that such an early election will sap the strength of the MDC and any outcome thereof is likely to be legitimized by SADC, which is anxious to discard the Zimbabwe issue from the international agenda. Thus, any such election will likely be to the advantage of ZANU (PF).

The worse case scenario is that hardliners will, with the support of the army, stage a coup. Many people believe that unlikely, but with the divisions in ZANU (PF) and the weakening of the MDC through its involvement in the GNU, the possibility exists. [In fact, it could be argued that the reversals of the GNU gains and the stalemate existing are an indication that a

smooth coup is taking place with Munangagwa (Min of Defence) and Chiwengwa (Defence Forces Commander) as chief architects.] SADC's record of dealing with Zimbabwe is less than inspiring, and if this happens (Heavens forbid) it could take some time before the organ has a clear and unified response to such a case. In any case, SADC is already having its difficulties with Madagascar. If a militarily backed civilian coup takes place, it would take ages before SADC and the African Union (AU) have done any meaningful intervention.

Judging from the above, it would therefore seem that the only reasonable option is to give life to the GNU so that it can fulfil some of the commitments in the GPA. Sticking with some of the commitments of the GNU means that the economy will thrive, and that the political environment will improve. SADC should be forced to take stronger action against ZANU (PF) hardliners. The AU, which has not been effective in this crisis, should also have a stronger involvement. It is only after electoral, constitutional, media and other reforms have taken place that any future election is likely to be free, fair and legitimate.

The infrastructure of violence also need to be dismantled. All the militia and ZANU (PF) youths that are under the payroll of the state should be exposed and deprived of their means of sustenance. There is also need to have a professional Reserve Bank Governor Police Commissioner and Attorney General. These reforms may take longer than was expected when the GPA was crafted, but it would be better to take long to have a solid foundation for a new start for the country than to force progress, thus entrenching ineffectual and potentially dysfunctional systems.

#### **The call for the international community**

The international community has imposed targeted restrictions on individuals and firms involved in undermining democracy in Zimbabwe. As long as there is no meaningful change, these measures should stay. In fact, they should be expanded to include police officers involved in forcing Nestle to buy milk from Grace Mugabe, as well as companies that continue to circumvent the sanctions.

The European Union, United States and other countries should also intensify efforts to free the asserts of these individuals, and to make public the value of those asserts to give Zimbabweans more moral support in their quest for democracy. Clear benchmarks should be established from the GPA itself and progress should be rewarded.

Ever since the coming into effect of the GNU, there has been a progressive weakening civil society organisations in or outside Zimbabwe. There is need for increased funding to strengthen them to monitor the GPA and to objectively deal with issues of the Constitution, elections, national healing and transitional justice. Zimbabwean diaspora involvement in all these processes is extremely crucial, as it will provide the skills base and investment necessary for reconstruction.

There is also a continued need for institution and infrastructure building, especially the anti-corruption, human rights, media and other commissions, the judiciary, hospitals and schools. The international community should also intensify the provision of humanitarian aid into Zimbabwe, doing it in such a way that those who receive it are capacitated to generate more for themselves. Lastly there should be constant and firmer engagement with African institutions on the situation in Zimbabwe. SADC as a region cannot move on without Zimbabwe, and there is need to say to South Africa (which is calling for "parking and proceeding") that Zimbabwe's democracy should not be mortgaged on the successful hosting the FIFA world cup, a mere event.

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