ZWE105964.E

Zimbabwe: Treatment of white, or non-indigenous, minorities by authorities and society; availability of state protection (2015-July 2017)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Information on the treatment of white, or non-indigenous, minorities by society and authorities was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The Population Division of the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs indicates that, in 2016, Zimbabwe's population was projected to be 16.2 million (UN 2017). According to the US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, white people and Asians account for less than 1 percent of the population of Zimbabwe and other ethnic and racial groups for 3 percent of the population (US 3 Mar. 2017, 43).

According to a book published in December 2016 entitled Farm Labor Struggles in Zimbabwe: The Ground of Politics, citing academic texts from 1997 and 2005, in Zimbabwe, "'colored' is a racial category referring to children of 'mixed race' couples ..., who have faced their own specific forms of opportunities and discrimination" (Rutherford 2016, 256). An article on Chris Greenland "a coloured raised in an orphanage in Zimbabwe … [who] rose to prominence as a High Court Judge in Zimbabwe and Acting High Court Judge in South Africa," published in April 2017 in New Zimbabwe Vision, a news website (New Zimbabwe Vision n.d.), states that "coloured or mixed race individuals are generally frowned upon in our society as good for nothing drunkards, who love fighting, baby making and doing nothing good in society" (New Zimbabwe Vision 8 Apr. 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. Further information on the treatment of coloured persons in Zimbabwe, including incidents of violence, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources indicate that a land reform program launched in 2000 resulted in the redistribution of white-owned farms to black Zimbabweans (BBC 9 May 2017; The Washington Post 14 Sept. 2015). A Washington Post article published in September 2015 reports that black landowners are "quietly" reaching out to white farmers who were "thrown off their land" and explains that the partnerships between black landowners and white farmers are becoming more common as the Zimbabwean economy is "spiralling downward" (The Washington Post 14 Sept. 2015). The same source explains that "[b]lack landowners retain their rights to the property and share the profit with whites, who live and work on the farms as managers or consultants" and adds that, to some Zimbabweans, allowing whites to return to farms is a "tacit recognition that the land reform failed," while "many whites" say that accepting these jobs legitimize an "unjust and politically driven" land-reform system (The Washington Post 14 Sept. 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.
The US Country Reports 2016 indicates that leaders of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) "often" encouraged hatred of whites in public speeches (US 3 Mar. 2017, 43). Without providing further details, the Washington Post article states that Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe warned that cooperation with white farmers is "a step backward" (The Washington Post 14 Sept. 2015). An article published in February 2017 in The Citizen, a Gauteng-based daily national newspaper (The Citizen n.d.), indicates that, in a speech delivered on national television to mark his 93rd birthday, Mugabe stated that it is "sad" that black farmers have transferred the management of their farms to white people (The Citizen 23 Feb. 2017). The same source cites Mugabe as stating that "some black people have really gone to sleep and the whites have taken over once again" (The Citizen 23 Feb. 2017). Referring to a 23 February 2017 article from News24, a South Africa news website (24.com n.d.), the same source cites Mugabe as stating that "whites would be happy to see us continue to work for them" (The Citizen 23 Feb. 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In 2015, NewsDay, a daily newspaper in Zimbabwe, reported that the agriculture minister, Joseph Made, accused white farmers of being responsible for most of the wild fires recorded in the country (NewsDay 26 Sept. 2015). The same source explains that, according to Made, white farmers were bitter over the seizure of their farmland and that the wild fires were acts of "sabotage" (NewsDay 26 Sept. 2015). According to the article, Made urged the Environment minister to be more vigilant (NewsDay 26 Sept. 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on state protection available to white and/or non-indigenous minorities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Seizures of White-Owned Farms

An article published in June 2015 in News24 reports that a soldier "moved to evict" a white farmer in Beitbridge after arriving in a three-vehicle convoy with an offer letter that allowed him access to the property "immediately" (News24 26 June 2015). The same source states that, according to the farmer, the "farm invaders" seemed to have the protection of district-level law enforcement agents and government officials (News24 26 June 2015). A January 2016 article published in The Standard, a weekly Zimbabwean newspaper (The Standard n.d.), indicates that the farmer accused the soldier of threatening to shoot his employees if they did not leave the farm (The Standard 17 Jan. 2016). The same source quotes the farmer as saying that "[t]his was reported to the police in Beitbridge who claimed that the man had an offer letter so was the owner of the property and was quite entitled to carry a weapon and to physically eject illegal occupants (our company staff) from the property." (The Standard 17 Jan. 2016)

Sources report that, while addressing Zanu-PF supporters in June 2017 in Marondera, Mashonaland East, Mugabe called for the seizure of the lands of white commercial farmers (News24 4 June 2017; New Zimbabwe 5 June 2017). The same sources explain that the seized farms are to be redistributed to "the youths" (New Zimbabwe 5 June 2017; News24 4 June 2017).

In Freedom in the World 2017, Freedom House states that, in September 2016, the Zanu-PF youth secretary called for the seizure of land owned by white farmers (Freedom House 2017). Sources report that the Zanu-PF youth leader stated during a rally that the white farmers in Manicaland should vacate their properties and relocate to Borrowdale (New Zimbabwe 18 June 2017; The South African 19 June 2017).

Sources indicate that riot police helped expel a white farmer, Robert Smart, after breaking into his property (The Times 28 June 2017; New Zimbabwe 23 June 2017). A Times article states that police ordered the white farmer to leave "immediately, in violation of laws governing property rights" (The Times 28 June 2017). Sources indicate that the farm was seized on behalf of Bishop Trevor Manhanga (New Zimbabwe 23 June 2017; News24 16 June 2017). Sources explain that Manhanga is "an ally of President Mugabe" (The Times 28 June 2017) or has "links to the ruling Zanu-PF party" (News24 16 June 2017).

Sources report that Smart received support from local villagers (The Times 28 June 2017; News24 16 June 2017). The Times article further specifies that "1,000 black farmers" from the area arrived at the farm to show support for Smart (The Times 28 June 2017). The June 2017 article from News24 explains that, according to court documents, villagers brought Manhanga to court and accused him of taking the farm in order to build a church "on shrines that the villagers said were sacred" (News24 16 June 2017).

3. Farmland Leasing and Offer Letters

A January 2016 article published by the Herald, a daily Zimbabwean newspaper (The Herald n.d.), reports that, according to the Minister of Lands and Rural Resettlement, Dr. Douglas Mombeshora, the...
government has no land policy "that discriminate[s] against whites" (The Herald 13 July 2015). Sources report in January 2016 that the government started issuing leases to white farmers (The Herald 25 Jan. 2016; The Africa Report 26 Jan. 2016). A January 2016 article published in the Africa Report, a monthly publication dedicated to African affairs (The Africa Report n.d.), explains that the white farmers would be given 99-year leases after the government "converted all farm[s] into State land" with the land reform initiative (The Africa Report 26 Jan. 2016). The January 2016 article from The Herald indicates that, according to Mombeshora, leases were granted to white farmers who were recommended by their provinces to "remain on their land" as their farming activities were considered of strategic economic importance (The Herald 25 Jan. 2016).

According to the same source, Mombeshora said that the government was not giving "special treatment" to white farmers over black indigenous farmers by issuing leases to white farmers and letters of offer to black farmers (The Herald 25 Jan. 2016). Sources cite Mombeshora as saying that "[w]e are giving the white farmers leases right away because we already know their production history on the properties [on which] they were recommended to stay" (The Herald 25 Jan. 2016; The Africa Report 26 Jan. 2016). According to the same sources, indigenous black farmers will be considered for leases in three years (The Herald 25 Jan. 2016; The Africa Report 26 Jan. 2016). The same sources quote Mombeshora as stating that "[d]uring this time, we will be monitoring things such as production levels and also whether they would have taken up their properties because most of them are still fairly new [to] farming" (The Herald 25 Jan. 2016; The Africa Report 26 Jan. 2016).

The Herald reports that the Masvingo provincial leadership recommended six white farmers to get offer letters for farming activities considered strategic to the Masvingo Province's economy (The Herald 25 Jan. 2016). Reporting on the Masvingo provincial leadership's recommendation of the six white farmers that occurred in July 2015, The Herald indicates that the letters of offer will be signed by Mombeshora under the model A2 scheme (The Herald 13 July 2015). According to a 2002 report from Human Rights Watch, the A2 scheme is an initiative aimed at "creating a cadre of 51,000 small- to medium-scale black indigenous commercial farmers" (Human Rights Watch 8 Mar. 2002, 12).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References


The Citizen. 23 February 2017. "Whites Have Taken over Once Again, Moans 'Sad' Mugabe." [Accessed 24 July 2017]


New Zimbabwe. 18 June 2017. "Zanu-PF Youth Leader Urges Mugabe to Eject Remaining White Farmers." (Factiva) [Accessed 24 July 2017]

New Zimbabwe. 5 June 2017. "Mugabe to Kick Out All White Farmers in Mash East." (Factiva) [Accessed 19 July 2017]


Additional Sources Consulted


Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Asylum Research Consultancy; Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition; Daily News; Freedom House; Institute for War and Peace Reporting; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre; International Crisis Group; International Organization for Migration; IRIN; Minority Rights Group International; The Southern Times; United Nations – Refworld; Worldwide Movement for Human Rights; Zimbabwe – National Constitutional Assembly; Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum.

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