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Zimbabwe: Treatment of white Zimbabweans who are not farmers and available state protection
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

United States (US) government sources indicate that the white minority in Zimbabwe accounts for less than one percent of the total population (US 28 June 2010; *ibid.* 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 6). Minority Rights Group (MRG) International, an international non-governmental organization (NGO) which supports minority and indigenous people (MRG n.d.), states that the census of 2002 counted 47,000 white Zimbabweans at that time (MRG June 2008). Sources indicate that the white population is greatly reduced from what it once was (*ibid.*; *World Affairs* 1 May 2010). According to an article in *World Affairs*, a bi-monthly international affairs journal published in Washington, DC (*World Affairs* n.d.), there were 296,000 white Zimbabweans in 1975, 120,000 in 1999, and 30,000 in 2010 (*World Affairs* 1 May 2010).

The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009* indicates that there are tensions between the white minority and other groups in Zimbabwe (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 6). The report notes that the white minority has been particularly affected by the state and leading party's infringement on the rights to due process, citizenship and property ownership (*ibid.*). Freedom House similarly notes that white Zimbabweans are "marginalized by the government and are subject to a distinct set of abuses" (7 Apr. 2010, 9).

Sources note that President Robert Mugabe has spoken out against white Zimbabweans (*The Zimbabwe Times* 1 Mar. 2009; IWPR 4 Apr. 2009). According to *Country Reports 2009* the government-controlled media has tried to blame the economic and political problems on the white minority (US 11 Mar 2010, Sec. 6). The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) notes that Mugabe also accuses white Zimbabweans of conspiring with the opposition group Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (IWPR 4 Apr. 2009). Mugabe has claimed that the MDC is controlled by its "white masters" (*ibid.* 16 Jan. 2009).

IWPR reports that security forces have issued verbal and physical threats against white Zimbabweans (IWPR 16 Jan. 2009). IWPR provides examples of two cases where white suspects were jailed for allegedly conspiring against the regime (*ibid.*). In one case, authorities jailed three white men who teach outdoor adventure training to boy scouts, tourists and others, alleging that the men were training terrorists (*ibid.*). In another case, a group of white doctors assessing a cholera epidemic were jailed and accused of plotting to overthrow Mugabe (*ibid.*). Further information on these incidents could not be found among the sources

consulted by the Research Directorate.

MRG states that white Zimbabweans are "threatened," but that they remain "economically advantaged" (MRG 2010, 72). However, *World Affairs* reports that the economic crisis in Zimbabwe has led to poverty among some white people (1 May 2010). In the article, some white Zimbabweans expressed the opinion that there was little left for white people in Zimbabwe and that it was increasingly difficult to live there (*World Affairs* 1 May 2010). Without providing details, MRG states that white civil servants working for the Zimbabwean state have "been abandoned by their government and left impoverished" (MRG June 2008).

Country Reports 2009 states that the Citizenship Act of 2002 requires Zimbabwean citizens with a claim to dual citizenship to renounce their foreign citizenship; this particularly affects 30,000 dual nationals, the majority of whom are white (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 2d).

Two sources report that the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Law, which was passed in 2008, requires that all businesses be at least 51 percent owned by black Zimbabweans (*Mail and Guardian* 20 Apr. 2010; US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 6). The South African newspaper *Mail and Guardian* explains that the law affects both white-owned and foreign-owned businesses and requires owners to submit a plan for relinquishing power of 51 percent of their companies to black Zimbabweans (*Mail and Guardian* 20 Apr. 2010). *Country Reports 2009* indicates that businesses complained that senior members of the leading party and military officials have tried to force partnerships on to such companies "without contributing" anything (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 6).

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.

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Internet sites, including: Africa Confidential, Africa Files, Afrik News, Amnesty International (AI), Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld, UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN).

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