



Foreign Affairs Committee

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Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
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22 January 2019

I am writing to you today regarding the recently reported violence in Zimbabwe. I am very concerned by reports in the media that suggest that there has been a violent crackdown on protesters by the Zimbabwean authorities. I am writing to ask your assessment of the current situation and how the UK has responded to this situation.

I expect that this correspondence will be published.

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair

14 February 2019

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
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King Charles Street
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Secretary of State

Dear Tom,

I am writing in response to your letter of 22 January regarding the recent violence in Zimbabwe.

We too are concerned by the situation in Zimbabwe following the fuel price increase of 12 January. Whilst we recognise that the protests that occurred included violent elements, the response of the security forces was clearly disproportionate. There are credible reports of the use of live ammunition on protestors, widespread and indiscriminate arrests, and physical and sexual assaults on civilians. These human rights violations, and the failure to follow the due process of law, contravene the fundamental tenets of international human rights standards and have no place in a democratic society.

Figures from the respected Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission suggest that there have been at least 17 deaths, 81 gunshot injuries, many hundreds of other injuries and at least 873 arrests and detentions.

The Zimbabwean government's decision to shut down the internet in response to the protests was a disturbing curtailment of freedom of expression and the media. We welcomed the restoration of internet access following the High Court of Zimbabwe ruling on 22 January that stated that the mechanism that ordered the shutdown was unlawful. We remain concerned that there continues to be a threat to internet freedom.

The UK has been at the forefront on international efforts in condemning the violence and calling on the Government of Zimbabwe to hold all those who committed human rights violations to account. The Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin MP, summoned the Zimbabwean Ambassador to the FCO on January 17 where she urged the Zimbabwean government to stop the disproportionate use of force by the security forces, reinstate full internet access and investigate any cases of alleged human rights abuses. Minister Baldwin also spoke to Foreign Minister Moyo on 29 January to reiterate our concerns and call for an end to ongoing human rights violations. On 31 January, she travelled to South Africa and Mozambique to urge the region to take coordinated action in pressing the Zimbabwean government for genuine political reform.

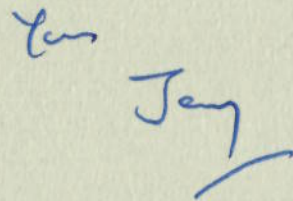
We welcomed President Mnangagwa's statement of 22 January where he said, "misconduct would be investigated" and called for a national dialogue. However, implementation has been slow. The UK has been clear that we are ready to support a Zimbabwe that fully embraces the rule of law, human rights and economic reform. International support will be based on genuine political and economic reforms and not words alone. The reaction to the current situation means that international re-engagement with Zimbabwe is looking increasingly difficult.

Zimbabwe's economy is extremely fragile and faces severe challenges. Comprehensive economic reforms are necessary to address these challenges, and to make progress towards the resolution of external debts. Such reform must be implemented as part of a broad strategy, with the support and advice of the IMF.

Many Parliamentarians have been interested in the UK's policy towards Zimbabwe's application to re-join the Commonwealth. As you are aware, it is not for the UK to decide if Zimbabwe is to re-join the Commonwealth. The final decision is for all Commonwealth members. The UK would only support re-admission provided Zimbabwe meets the admission requirements, complying with the values and principles set out in the Commonwealth Charter. Let me be clear that we believe that the disproportionate use of force by security forces is inconsistent with the Commonwealth Charter.

Targeted sanctions on Zimbabwe also remain in place. Currently, the EU has an arms embargo against Zimbabwe and active sanctions against former President Robert Mugabe, his wife Grace Mugabe and the company Zimbabwe Defence Industries. There are also a small number of suspended sanctions, including against Vice President Chiwenga. The UK and our EU partners continue to assess the appropriateness of these sanctions in light of recent developments. However, let me also assure you that these measures do no damage to the wider economy, or the people of Zimbabwe, as some have suggested.

We will continue to monitor the situation in Zimbabwe closely and remain ready to engage with the FAC on the matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J Hunt", with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

THE RT HON JEREMY HUNT MP