

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwevigil/50965510762/sizes/m/>

Despite the pandemic, Zimbabwe is poised for economic growth this year according to President Mnangagwa. He told the Politburo that the country was progressing from strength to strength.

Comrade Mnangagwa said the economy was expected to grow by 7.4%, driven by strong recovery in agriculture, mining, electricity generation, construction, transport and communications as well as finance and insurance.

He claimed the government had entrenched the rule of law and constitutionalism, and was attracting more supporters through its 'consistent culture of hard honest work, transparency, accountability and stronger national institutions'. (See: <https://www.herald.co.zw/zim-on-growth-path-president/>.)

A rather different view of the situation in Zimbabwe was expressed by the European Union's High Representative who said the country's multi-faceted and prolonged crisis had further deepened in the past year. 'The lack of substantial reforms has allowed the continued deterioration of the humanitarian, economic and social situation. Violations of human rights and limitations on the democratic space are also persisting.'

The diplomat continued: 'The EU is especially concerned about a proliferation of arrests and prosecutions of journalists, opposition actors and individuals expressing dissenting views, and the use by high-level officials of speech that could be interpreted as incitement to violence.'

A statement added that the EU had decided to renew its arms embargo and maintain a targeted assets freeze against Zimbabwe Defence Industries. This did not affect the people and the EU would continue its development and humanitarian aid. The EU would closely follow developments, with particular attention to the human rights situation (see: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/02/19/zimbabwe-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>).

No doubt the wide differences between the contrasting views of the government and the EU will provide further ammunition to the satirists who are becoming increasingly popular in Zimbabwe.

Rashweat Mukundu, a media researcher for an NGO, said: 'Art and comedy have taken a centre stage in political commentary in Zimbabwe. This is mostly due to the repression of the mainstream media. So, people resort to satire to express their frustrations and concerns in a way that makes it difficult for authorities to target them.'

(See:

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/comedians-standing-up-to-repression-in-zimbabwe/2149424>

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Other Points:

- MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa has urged the international community to stop rubberstamping illegitimate election outcomes. In an article published in the influential UK paper the Guardian, he said that to recognise the outcome of unfair elections such as the one in Uganda last month serves only to entrench authoritarian regimes like the one in Zimbabwe (see: <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/the-international-community-must-stop-legitimising-despots-regimes-in-africa/>).

- Because of the coronavirus we can no longer physically meet outside the Zimbabwe Embassy in London, so we have a virtual Vigil while the restrictions continue. We ask our activists to put on Vigil / ROHR / Zimbabwe regalia and take a photo of themselves holding an appropriate poster reflecting our protest against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The photos are uploaded on our Flickr site: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwewigil/albums/72157718373994703> . Our virtual Vigil activists today were Deborah Harry and Shylette Chipangura who both kindly contributed to Vigil funds.

- For Vigil pictures check: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/zimbabwewigil/> . Please note: Vigil photos can only be downloaded from our Flickr website.

Notices:

- **The Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe (ROHR)** is the Vigil's partner organization based in Zimbabwe. ROHR grew out of the need for the Vigil to have an organization on the ground in Zimbabwe which reflected the Vigil's mission statement in a practical way. ROHR in the UK actively fundraises through membership subscriptions, events, sales etc to support the activities of ROHR in Zimbabwe. Please note that the official website of ROHR Zimbabwe is <http://www.rohrzimbabwe.org/>

. Any other website claiming to be the official website of ROHR in no way represents us.

- **The Vigil's book 'Zimbabwe Emergency'** is based on our weekly diaries. It records how events in Zimbabwe have unfolded as seen by the diaspora in the UK. It chronicles the economic disintegration, violence, growing oppression and political manoeuvring – and the tragic human cost involved. It is available at the Vigil. All proceeds go to the Vigil and our sister organisation the Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe's work in Zimbabwe. The book is also available from Amazon.

- **Facebook pages:**

Vigil: <https://www.facebook.com/zimbabwевigil>

ROHR: <https://www.facebook.com/Restoration-of-Human-Rights-ROHR-Zimbabwe-International-370825706588551/>

ZAF: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Zimbabwe-Action-Forum-ZAF/490257051027515>