

#Mugabe Must Fall



Zimbabwe is currently undergoing a mass movement in response to Mugabe and Zanu-PF's misrule. It was bound to happen. Mugabe, or perhaps what's left of him, still poses as president of Zimbabwe today, 36 years since he took office. He represents to the overwhelming mass of Zimbabweans the 'new' oppressor clothed in immense power and surrounded by a kleptomaniac gang masquerading as the state. He presides over a country with around 90% unemployment, widespread socio-economic destitution, monumental corruption, abject poverty and despondency which is based on the massive and unabated exploitation of the working class.

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Zimbabwe Solidarity Campaign & Wits Uni SYM

Zimbabwe's GDP is roughly \$4 billion at the present moment, yet it emerged this year that \$15 billion worth of diamond revenues are unaccounted for in the past seven years. It is unthinkable that the masses would remain silent in the wake of the unrepentant looting whilst they suffer massive unemployment, unmitigated poverty and destitution. It would take books to account for the social and economic atrocities committed by the Mugabe regime!

To many it remains unthinkable that Mugabe and his Zanu cronies have been able to cling onto power after 36 years. He continues to survive only because so far the mass movement against him has been largely sporadic and uncoordinated. Reformists have been at the forefront up to now but the realisation of the need to completely overturn the system that has sustained Mugabe's rule is widespread.

Historic background

The end of the racist minority regime presided over by Ian Smith in 1980 marked the dawn of a triumphalist era by the new Zanu government led by Robert Mugabe. But the revolutionary gains of the defeat of Smith's minority regime, which included important improvements in education and healthcare, were short lived. Mugabe and Zanu's true colours were shown bright and early after they came into power. Zanu portrayed themselves as Marxists while at the same time banning trade union and worker mobilisation.

Prior to him becoming a pariah, Mugabe paraded himself to the world including to the imperialist powers as a statesman and was well received in world capitals. In the background he quietly silenced dissent and engineered the ethnic cleansing and massacre of 20 000 Ndebele civilians in Matabeleland whom he branded as dissidents. The "dissident problem" ended when Zanu and Zapu, rivals in the liberation war and now for control of the

state post-independence, entered into the Unity Accord in 1987. The Unity Accord did not only bring to an end the Gukurahundi civil war but also resulted in the merging of Zanu and Zapu into one party. Massacres and mass terror were manoeuvres of the Zanu elite in their struggle for unchallenged dominance of the state. To some the Unity Accord represented a pivotal moment of success for the nationalist project, marking the end of ethnic hostility and animosity. In reality the unity accord was a façade that veiled the deep seated ethnic divisions and presented a false reality that dismally failed to address issues of ethnic and regional marginalisation.

If history were to fairly apportion credit for the liberation effort, it would accord it to both the guerrilla combatants and the civilian population which aided them. But Zanu-PF would have you believe otherwise. Mugabe has tried to lean on the war veterans and use them as a prop for his regime as a privileged caste separate from the rest of Zimbabwean population. But even they are losing patience with Mugabe. In an unprecedented development several senior veterans have joined calls for Mugabe to go.

Land reform

Land has always been a contentious issue in post-colonial Africa, even in countries that did not retain a significant settler population after independence. In Zimbabwe, the Lancaster House Agreement adopted a "willing buyer, willing seller" model in full agreement with the white farmers and British imperialism. Mugabe and the Zanu leadership were preoccupied with the assumption of political power above anything else. Committed to capitalism they shied away from a more radical land reform programme or a programme to fundamentally restructure the economy after independence. It was business as usual. The exploitation and poverty of the working class black majority and landless peasants went unabated.

By 1999 11 million hectares of arable land were still in the hands of white capitalist farmers with a significant portion of the purchased farms going to government ministers at the expense of the landless majority. Government's complacency on land redistribution did not go well with the war veterans as demands for land grew, leading to an early clash which alarmed the regime.

The fast track land reform programme was a frantic and hurried attempt to legitimise the sporadic land invasions that were already taking place. The white owned farms were broken-up. But much of the best land was given to the political and bureaucratic elite whilst ignoring and displacing farm workers who had worked on the land for generations. Many of the new small farmers are struggling to survive, unsupported by government. A new wave of Chinese imperialism threatens whatever successes the programme might have achieved, as Chinese companies are busy buying land from poor farmers for mining purposes. Access to urban land remains largely reserved for the connected Zanu-PF supporters.

The way forward

Zimbabwe lacks the necessary vehicle to take forward the resolve of the masses. Opposition parties, committed to capitalism, have been incapable of seizing the vast array of opportunities the new situation provides. In the midst of the current uprising they have only been able to rally around a call for electoral reforms, which is pitiful considering that Zanu-PF has rigged the past three elections to maintain its hold on power! It boggles the mind that they now expect Zanu-PF to loosen its hold on the system that gives it life. The opposition's flirtation with capitalism and the West only serves to strengthen Zanu-PF's nationalist propaganda. The determination and energy of the masses must be harnessed in a socialist programme with an organised revolutionary party to carry it forward.

Building solidarity

WASP has been at the forefront of building a South African solidarity movement in support of the mass movement in Zimbabwe.

WASP members played an important role in founding the Zimbabwe Solidarity Campaign. The ZSC unites all of the different Zimbabwean groups active in SA under one umbrella. Through the ZSC our comrades played a key role in organising a march to the Zimbabwean embassy in Pretoria on 14 July.



Mamelewe Sebei, WASP Executive member, helps lead the march to the Zimbabwean embassy



Campaigning in Olievenhoutbosch

In Olievenhoutbosch and Diepsloot townships and the Mooiplaas informal settlement in Centurion, WASP members called open air meetings to begin to lay foundations for a mass solidarity movement rooted in working class communities. In Olievenhoutbosch over 60 attended despite it being early on Sunday morning!

Izwi says...

- Mugabe Must Fall! For the immediate resignation of the Mugabe regime.
- Support mass border protests. Fight to end all import restrictions now! Build a mass movement of transport workers and small traders to blockade Beit Bridge and other border crossings until restrictions are lifted.
- Fight for the payment of all salaries and back-pay now! Build a rolling programme of strikes and mass demonstrations until wages are paid under the leadership of democratic workers' committees.
- Demand the immediate release of all political prisoners. Free political prisoners in the same way Pastor Marawire was freed – build mass demonstrations outside of police stations and prisons until they are released.
- Build action committees of workers, youth, the unemployed, small traders and small farmers in every area to co-ordinate mass protests. Mass democratic committees of the Zimbabwean people to take decisions on the movement of goods, the running of services and other key decisions about the running of society.
- Action committees to organise accountable and democratically controlled self-defence units to protect protests and activists from regime intimidation and violence; seize the assets of Mugabe, Zanu-PF and other regime leaders, placing them under the control of the action committees; enforce a travel ban on Mugabe, Zanu-PF and all regime leaders.
- Leave the Mugabe regime paralysed and defenceless! Build action committees of rank-and-file police officers, soldiers and air personnel. Elect rank-and-file leaders and spokespeople and take no orders from regime-linked officers! Build links with the action committees of the people for a united struggle. Stamp-out the practice of roadblocks and bribes!
- Link-up all committees of the Zimbabwean people across districts, provinces and nationally to form a transitional authority to lay the foundation for a future government of workers and small farmers. Organise a trial of Mugabe and his cronies.
- No trust in the imperialist dominated anti-working class UN, AU or SADC. Build links with the working class across Southern Africa. Outside of Zimbabwe organise action committees in all Zimbabwean communities building strong links with local communities and working class and youth organisations. United struggle against xenophobia. Fight for migrants rights. Organise migrant workers in the trade union movement.
- Workers and young people to take the lead in building a mass revolutionary party to struggle for a socialist Zimbabwe drawing together all the leading activists of the mass movement against Mugabe.