

RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON 24 JULY 2024

DISCLAIMER

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. All COI Query Responses are compiled in line with the Common EU Guidelines (2008) and the EUAA Methodology (2023). This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. Please refer to all documents cited.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

ZIMBABWE – POLITICAL RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A report issued in July 2024 by *Human Rights Watch* points out that: “Since assuming power in a military coup in 2017, the administration of President Mnangagwa has committed serious human rights violations and shown a failure or unwillingness to institute lasting human rights reforms. Violence, intimidation, harassment, and repression aimed principally at opposition members and civil society activists have restricted civic and political space. Several activists have been abducted and tortured in the past year. The authorities have weaponized the criminal justice system against the ruling party’s political opponents. Opposition politicians have been held in prolonged pretrial detention or convicted on baseless, seemingly politically motivated charges.”¹

In June 2024 the *Associated Press* states that: “Amnesty and other global and local rights groups say the clampdown highlights continued repression, including pretrial detention, of the opposition and other government critics such as university students and labor unionists.”²

Amnesty International in July 2024 notes that: “Zimbabwean authorities must immediately and unconditionally release over 70 opposition members detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights...”³

In July 2024 *Human Rights Watch* states that: “For decades, Zimbabwe’s military and other state security forces have interfered in the nation’s political and electoral affairs in violation of citizens’ civil and political rights.”⁴

¹ Human Rights Watch (8 July 2024) Zimbabwe: SADC Should Respond to Intensified Crackdown on Opponents

² Associated Press (27 June 2024) Zimbabwe police quash opposition courthouse protest over prolonged detention of activists

³ Amnesty International (17 July 2024) Zimbabwe: Authorities must immediately release detained opposition members

⁴ Human Rights Watch (10 July 2024) Zimbabwe: Army Commander Threatens Election Integrity

This document also states that: “Zimbabwe has a history of elections that fall far short of international and regional standards, characterized by the involvement of the military in deeply flawed electoral processes. The government has not remedied some of the flaws of the August 2023 election that Southern African Development Community (SADC) observers documented. Election periods in Zimbabwe, especially in 1985, 1990, 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2008, were characterized by widespread political violence, committed mainly by ZANU-PF, its allies, and government security agencies, including sections of the army.”⁵

Agence France Presse in July 2024 states that: “Zimbabwe's opposition has faced a wave of arrests after disputed August 2023 elections in which the ruling ZANUPF won a majority in parliament. Critics have long accused ZANU-PF -- in power since independence in 1980 -- of stifling dissent.”⁶

A report published in 2024 by *Freedom House* commenting on events of 2023 notes that: “General elections in August were marred by violence, electoral irregularities, and allegations of intimidation.”⁷

This document also states that: “The Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has dominated Zimbabwean politics since independence in 1980 by carrying out severe crackdowns on the political opposition, critical media, and all sources of dissent.”⁸

It is also pointed out in this document that: ““Endemic corruption, a vast patronage governance system, weak rule of law, and poor protections for workers and land rights remain critical challenges.”⁹

A report issued in April 2024 by the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of 2023 states that: “National presidential, parliamentary, and local elections held August 23-24 were widely reported to not be fair and free of abuses and irregularities.”¹⁰

This document also states that: “While voting was largely peaceful, there were targeted incidents of violence and intimidation before and following the elections. On August 3, ZANU-PF supporters threw stones at CCC members preparing for a rally in a Harare suburb, resulting in one death and several injuries. NGO Zimbabwe Peace Project recorded 384 human rights abuses in August, including threats, harassment, intimidation, assault, and arson, two-thirds of which were perpetrated by ZANU-PF members or FAZ. There were persistent reports of ruling party intimidation tactics to make citizens nervous and “stay in line” at the voting booth, including coffins left outside known opposition supporters houses as “warnings” and ZANU-PF rallies held under the guise of community meetings that community members were compelled to attend.”¹¹

This report also states that: ““Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings; cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; political prisoners; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence, threats of violence, and unjustified arrests or prosecutions against journalists,

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *Agence France Presse* (17 July 2024) Zimbabwe opposition leader, dozens of others denied bail

⁷ *Freedom House* (2024) *Freedom in the World 2024 Zimbabwe*, p.1

⁸ *ibid*, p.1

⁹ *ibid*, p.1

¹⁰ *United States Department of State* (22 April 2024) *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Zimbabwe*, p.13

¹¹ *ibid*, p.14

ensorship, arrests for libel, and passage of the Patriot Act that had a chilling impact on freedom of expression; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation; serious government corruption; serious government restrictions on or harassment of domestic and international human rights organizations; extensive gender-based violence, including domestic or intimate partner violence, sexual violence...”¹²

Amnesty International in February 2024 comments on: “...weaponizing the criminal justice system to target and harass political opponents...”¹³

In March 2024 *Bertelsmann Stiftung* states that: “The Mnangagwa regime has employed a series of measures aimed at systematically dismantling the opposition. Besides ongoing arrests and repression, it is widely believed that the regime utilized its influence on the judiciary...”¹⁴

This document also states that: “...both the opposition and civil society have continued to raise questions about the legitimacy of specific institutions, such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), which they believe are partisan and captured by the state. This sentiment is fueled by the intertwining of ZANU PF and the state.”¹⁵

This report also points out that: “..., for over two decades, Zimbabwe’s political landscape has been shaped by ZANU PF, the governing party, and the MDC, the main opposition party. Throughout this period, there was a consistent rural-urban divide, with rural areas dominated by the ruling ZANU PF and urban areas dominated by the opposition.”¹⁶

Interviews conducted by UNHCR with *United Nations News* in August 2023 points out that: “The UN chief was concerned about the arrest of electoral observers, reports of voter intimidation, threats of violence, harassment and coercion.”¹⁷

A report published in November 2023 by the *European Union Election Observation Mission* states that: “The 23 August 2023 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe were marked by a curtailment of rights and freedoms and the lack of a level playing field, which limited voters’ ability to make their choices in a genuinely free and pluralistic environment. A palpable fear of violence underlay the electoral process throughout, and a climate of retribution developed after the elections.”¹⁸

The *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* in November 2023 notes: “...reports in recent months of several opposition activists being kidnapped and tortured in Zimbabwe...”¹⁹

¹² *ibid*, p.2).

¹³ Amnesty International (15 February 2024) Zimbabwe: Opposition leader’s conviction a travesty of justice

¹⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung (19 March 2024) BTI 2024 Country Report Zimbabwe, p.3)

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.14

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.14

¹⁷ United Nations News (27 August 2023) Guterres calls for peaceful resolution of election disputes in Zimbabwe

¹⁸ European Union Election Observation Mission (17 November 2023) European Union Election Observation Mission Zimbabwe 2023; Final Report; Harmonised Elections 23 August 2023, p.4

¹⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (17 November 2023) Zimbabwe: Killing of opposition activist

References

Agence France Presse (17 July 2024) *Zimbabwe opposition leader, dozens of others denied bail*
<https://advance.lexis.com/r/delivery/content/1626722979/download/229557364/FullDoc/false>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Amnesty International (17 July 2024) *Zimbabwe: Authorities must immediately release detained opposition members*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/zimbabwe-authorities-must-immediately-release-detained-opposition-members/>

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Amnesty International (15 February 2024) *Zimbabwe: Opposition leader's conviction a travesty of justice*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/zimbabwe-opposition-leaders-conviction-a-travesty-of-justice/>

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Associated Press (27 June 2024) *Zimbabwe police quash opposition courthouse protest over prolonged detention of activists*

<https://advance.lexis.com/r/delivery/content/1626720390/download/229557182/FullDoc/false>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Bertelsmann Stiftung (19 March 2024) *BTI 2024 Country Report Zimbabwe*

https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2105814/country_report_2024_ZWE.pdf

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

European Union Election Observation Mission (17 November 2023) *European Union Election Observation Mission Zimbabwe 2023; Final Report; Harmonised Elections 23 August 2023*

https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2101116/EU_EOM_ZWE_2023_FR.pdf

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Freedom House (2024) *Freedom in the World 2024 Zimbabwe*

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/zimbabwe/freedom-world/2024>

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Human Rights Watch (10 July 2024) *Zimbabwe: Army Commander Threatens Election Integrity*

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/10/zimbabwe-army-commander-threatens-election-integrity>

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Human Rights Watch (8 July 2024) *Zimbabwe: SADC Should Respond to Intensified Crackdown on Opponents*

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/08/zimbabwe-sadc-should-respond-intensified-crackdown-opponents>

Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (17 November 2023) *Zimbabwe: Killing of opposition activist*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/zimbabwe-killing-opposition-activist>

This is a subscription database
Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

United Nations News (27 August 2023) *Guterres calls for peaceful resolution of election disputes in Zimbabwe*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/guterres-calls-peaceful-resolution-election-disputes-zimbabwe>

This is a subscription database
Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

United States Department of State (22 April 2024) *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Zimbabwe*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/print/pdf/members/country-report/2023-country-reports-human-rights-practices-zimbabwe>

This is a subscription database
Accessed Wednesday 24 July 2024

Sources Consulted:

Amnesty International
BBC News
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
New Humanitarian
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld

Contact Information

Refugee Documentation Centre
Legal Aid Board
48/49 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Ireland

Email: research@legalaidboard.ie

