

# Zimbabwe

## Key Terms and People

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### People

**Mbeki, Thabo:** South Africa's former president who served as chief mediator for the 2008 Zimbabwe peace talks. He was widely criticized for failing to publicly denounce President Mugabe's oppressive rule.

**Mugabe, Robert:** President of Zimbabwe government since 1980. Mugabe's government has systematically and forcefully attempted to silence political opposition and civilians throughout his rule, spurring accusations of crimes against humanity and war crimes. He and his senior officials have systematically stripped the assets of what was once the best performing economy in Africa.

**Tsvangirai, Morgan:** President of the Movement for Democratic Change, or MDC, and Zimbabwe's main opposition leader. Tsvangirai contested the first round results of the 2008 presidential election, claiming he won a majority of votes. He withdrew from the second round of elections on the grounds that the election would not be free due to violence and government intimidation. During the presidential campaign and in the ensuing violence, Tsvangirai and his MDC supporters were victims of police brutality.

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### Groups

#### ARMED GROUPS

**Green Bombers:** Youth militia organized, supported, and deployed by ZANU-PF to disrupt rallies and attack civilians.

**Liberation War Veterans:** Militias loyal to Mugabe that are led and partly composed of veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation war. Spearheaded the seizure of white-owned farms in 2000 and were used to intimidate voters during elections. Many of the self-styled war veterans did not actually serve in the liberation struggle.

#### POLITICAL PARTIES

**Movement for Democratic Change (MDC):** Founded in 1999, the MDC was formed from the labor movement in Zimbabwe, and is the main opposition party to Mugabe's ZANU-PF. Despite multiple victories in various elections since 1999, the MDC has been denied equitable participation in the government, and has been forcefully intimidated and physically threatened by President Mugabe's government.

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**Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF):** Led by President Robert Mugabe, ZANU-PF has been the ruling party in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980.

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## Peace Agreements and Processes

**September 2008 Power-sharing deal:** Mugabe and Tsvangirai signed a power-sharing deal after months of negotiations following a post-election run-off that ZANU-PF claimed showed no decisive winner. The deal stipulated that Mugabe would remain President and Tsvangirai would serve as Prime Minister in a new government. However, cabinet seats were not determined at the signing, and the two sides have been unable to agree on how to equally distribute these positions, resulting once again in deadlock. Control of the security services has been particularly contentious.

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## Other Useful Terms

**Hyperinflation:** Zimbabwe's official annual inflation rate reached 231 million percent in early October, and the current deadlock in talks between the ruling ZANU-PF and opposition parties is likely to push hyperinflation higher. Over the past several years, many Zimbabweans have resorted to the barter system after extreme inflation rendered their currency worthless.

**The Law and Order Maintenance Act:** A repressive law adopted during the colonial period and supported by President Mugabe. The act gives the government great power to restrict political freedoms and rights.

**Southern African Development Community (SADC):** Regional alliance of fourteen southern African states, focused on coordinating development projects in the region. With former South African President Mbeki serving as their chief mediator, SADC has played a key role in the post-election negotiations in Zimbabwe.

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