

Hello -

We would like to share with you the latest version of the Zimbabwe Developments document below. This version discusses steps the Zimbabwean government has taken to facilitate civil society in the country.

[Zimbabwe Developments](#)

Steps Toward a More Free Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean government would like to share several recent actions it has made to facilitate a freer civil society in the country. Last year, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) issued six licenses giving companies television broadcasting rights in Zimbabwe. Until then, the state-run Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) had been the only domestic television broadcaster since Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980. However, four of the six companies awarded licenses are independent broadcasters, providing a crucial expansion of freedom of speech in the television industry.

Additionally, the prevalence of cell phone usage has increased significantly in Zimbabwe in the past decade. According to statistics from The World Bank, while only 13.4 percent of Zimbabweans held cell phone subscriptions in 2008, by 2019 that number increased to 90.1 percent. From 2008 to 2017, The World Bank also found that the percentage of individuals using the internet in Zimbabwe has increased from 3.5 percent to 27.1 percent. Zimbabweans are able to access opposition media and independent social media using their smartphones and other internet devices.

These improvements have been acknowledged by the [Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance](#), which lists Zimbabwe as one of the five most-improved African countries from 2010 to 2019. The Ibrahim Index rates African governments on safety and the rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic

opportunity; and human development, and recorded that since 2010, Zimbabwe's score has improved by 7.4 points, from 38.7 to 46.1. This is the fifth-highest increase for that time period, behind only the Seychelles, Tunisia, Gambia, and Cote d'Ivoire.

While the [State Department's 2020 Human Rights Report on Zimbabwe](#) outlined several areas where improvements are necessary, it also listed several successes. For example, it noted that a Zimbabwean judge ordered the state-controlled media outlets to "produce impartial and independent broadcasts and ensure communications did not favor any political party or candidate over another." It also referenced that independent media in Zimbabwe has been "active and expressed a wide variety of views." More recently, Zimbabwe's High Court dismissed charges of communicating false charges against Hopewell Chin'ono, ruling that the law police used to arrest him earlier this year no longer exists and is thus unenforceable.

The Zimbabwean government is confident in the reforms it has made and continues its work to provide additional freedoms to the people of Zimbabwe. Below are highlights from several of the most notable independent press reports on Zimbabwe's recent efforts to promote more expansive civil liberties.

[Reuters](#): Zimbabwe Court Quashes Criminal Charges Against Journalist – April 28, 2021

- Zimbabwe's High Court quashed charges of communicating false information levelled against journalist and government critic Hopewell Chin'ono, saying the law used by police to arrest him in January no longer existed.

- "The charges were terminated by the High Court because the section under which he was charged is no longer part of our law," said Harrison Nkomo, Chin'ono's lawyer.

Deutsche Welle: African Governance Making Progress: Ibrahim Index Of African Governance – November 16, 2020

- The Ibrahim Index of Governance - which rates African governments on safety and the rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development – ranked Zimbabwe among the five most improved countries from 2018 to 2019.
- According to Nathalie Delapalme, Executive Director of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (MIF), sixty percent of Africans live in countries where governance is better in 2019 than it was in 2010.
- From 2010 to 2019, Zimbabwe's score has improved by 7.4 points, from 38.7 to 46.1. This is the fifth-highest increase for that time period, behind only the Seychelles, Tunisia, Gambia, and Cote d'Ivoire.
- Zimbabwe is one of only three countries in Southern Africa – along with Eswatini and Angola – to improve its score in Security and Rule of Law from 2010, showing an increase of 6.9 points, from 39.5 to 46.4.

Reuters: Zimbabwe Issues Six New TV Licences, Including To Defence Ministry – November 20, 2020

- In November 2020, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) issued six new TV licenses, including to four privately-owned enterprises.

- BAZ conducted public hearings to select the new broadcasters, who will have 18 months to go to air before losing their licenses.

Voice of America: Zimbabwe Opposition, Media, Applaud Court Ruling On Public Media Bias – July 26, 2019

- Zimbabwe's main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), welcomed a ruling by the Masvingo High Court, declaring that the country's two public media – Zimpapers and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) – violated the constitution by not giving fair access and coverage to opposition parties in the 2018 elections.
- In the ruling, Justice Joseph Mafusire ordered Zimpapers and ZBC to “ensure that their communications do not show bias in favor of one political party or its candidates against another.”
- After the ruling, Zimbabwean Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi told parliament that the government has taken into consideration concerns raised by observer groups and other media stakeholders, and plans to adopt changes before the next elections.

If you have any questions about what is going on in Zimbabwe, please feel free to email me at deirdre@mercuryllc.com.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Stach

DISSEMINATED BY MERCURY PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LLC, A REGISTERED FOREIGN AGENT, ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF ZIMBABWE. MORE INFORMATION IS ON FILE WITH THE DEPT. OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, DC