

ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION (ZHRO)

UK Company No. 12099469 — Registered in England & Wales
4 Horton Place, Angmering, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN16 4GL
john.b@zhro.org.uk | www.zhro.org.uk



Petition to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom — 21 April 2026

FORMAL PETITION

*To the Right Honourable the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
cc to FCDO and Commonwealth.*

**Concerning: The Destruction of Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution, the Violence and Abuse of Power by
the ZANU PF Regime, and the Persecution of Zimbabwean Citizens at Home and in the Diaspora**

Submitted by: Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisation (ZHRO) Limited in association with ZAPU, CCC and ROHR

Delivered to 10 Downing Street: 14:00 - 21 April 2026

THE PETITIONERS

The following individuals, all lawfully resident in the United Kingdom, present this petition in their own names and on behalf of the wider Zimbabwean diaspora community across the United Kingdom. Their names are recorded here not only as a matter of formal record, but as a public testament to the courage required to speak out against a regime that persecutes dissent at home and seeks to suppress it abroad. Several of the petitioners are themselves survivors of political violence, intimidation, and forced displacement at the hands of the ZANU PF regime.

#	Full Name	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Address
	John Christopher BURKE (Organiser only)	28 November 1953	Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire	4 Horton Place, Angmering, Littlehampton, W. Sussex BN16 4GL
1	Charles KANYIMO	18 March 1974	Zimbabwe	15 Weavers Chase, Wakefield, South Yorkshire WF2 9UE
2	Phylis Melody MAGEJO	16 April 1973	Marondera, Zimbabwe	120 Lammack Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 8LA
3	Elizabeth CHITENGO	26 October 1982	Harare, Zimbabwe	5 Tintern Close, Portsmouth PO6 4LS
4	Genius Khatazile MAMWADHU	29 May 1992	Harare, Zimbabwe	Flat 5, 330A London Road, Leicester LE2 2PJ
5	Josephine Sipiwe JENJE- MUDIMBU	10 October 1965	Zimbabwe	31 St Cuthbert's Road, Stockton-on-Tees, Teesside TS18 3JN
6	Kelvin Thembinkosi MHLANGA	2 August 2002	Harare, Zimbabwe	11 Cholmeley Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3NJ

PREAMBLE

We, the petitioners named above, humbly petition the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to take urgent and substantive action in response to the ongoing and escalating assault by the Government of Zimbabwe — under President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and the ruling ZANU PF party —

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upon the democratic rights, constitutional freedoms, and fundamental human rights of the people of Zimbabwe.

This petition is submitted on 21 April 2026, three days after Zimbabwe’s 46th Independence Day on 18 April 2026. That anniversary, which was once a day of genuine national pride, has under the current regime become a hollow celebration of power by an elite that has comprehensively failed the people in whose name it claims to govern. For the majority of Zimbabweans — whether at home or in the diaspora — it marks not liberation but continued subjugation.

The United Kingdom has a particular responsibility in this matter. As the former colonial power, as a member of the Commonwealth, and as a nation that has historically championed the rule of law, democratic governance, and the protection of human rights, the United Kingdom is uniquely placed — and, we respectfully submit, uniquely obligated — to speak clearly and act decisively in defence of Zimbabwe’s people.

We present this petition in five parts: a historical account of the ZANU PF regime’s abuses; a detailed exposition of the current constitutional crisis; an account of the regime’s transnational repression of the diaspora; a summary of ZHRO’s Model Constitution as a positive alternative; and our formal demands of the Prime Minister.

FOREWORD

by Tendai Biti

Former Finance Minister of Zimbabwe

Leader, Constitutional Defence Forum

Member, Platform for African Democrats

Published: The Common Sense (South Africa), 19 April 2026

In southern and eastern Africa, incumbency is trumping human rights. The unspoken rule is that the former liberation movement leaders will support each other’s rigged elections and violent repressions, or at least acquiesce in silence.

While the world sleeps, Zimbabwe is turning increasingly authoritarian. On Monday, 16 February 2026, following a cabinet meeting chaired by President Emmerson Mnangagwa, the government announced the publication of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Bill (No. 3) 2026 — commencing a 90-day public “consultation” period before it goes to parliament.

The Bill proposes that the president will no longer be directly elected, but will instead be chosen by members of parliament — where, due to a long history of gerrymandering and election rigging, the ruling party is almost certainly assured a majority. Among its 21 proposals, the presidential term is to be extended from five to seven years, pushing the next election to 2030; the president gains the power to appoint 10 additional senators; the public interview process for judicial appointments is removed; and the voters’ roll is moved from the nominally independent electoral commission to the Registrar-General’s office.

Those who have had the temerity to air criticism of this constitutional power grab have been arrested, harassed, and had their freedom of movement and expression curtailed. Civic society leaders, students, war veterans, lawyers, and workers have been under attack.

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“Only last week, the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Jessie Majome, was unceremoniously removed from her post after she had dared to hold a press conference in which she attacked the Bill.”

— Tendai Biti, 19 April 2026

The Constitution Defenders Forum has had its leaders arrested and detained for holding private meetings to discuss the constitutional bill. Its offices have been barricaded. Its leaders are under constant surveillance. Professor Lovemore Madhuku was heavily assaulted by thugs in his office in the presence of the police. Doug Coltart, son of Bulawayo Mayor David Coltart, was cornered by party thugs, assaulted, and had his mobile phone stolen.

On 30 and 31 March 2026, Parliament held public consultative meetings. In broad daylight, ZANU-PF flooded these meetings and ensured that no alternative voices could speak against the Bill. The few who dared were either arrested or seriously attacked.

“Zimbabwe is now under a de facto state of emergency — a slow-boil coup aimed at authoritarian consolidation through a blatantly unconstitutional constitutional amendment.”

— Tendai Biti, 19 April 2026

Zimbabwe’s current Constitution was adopted by 94.5% of Zimbabweans after a referendum in March 2013 — the very democratic mandate that the Mnangagwa regime now seeks to bypass entirely. Democrats were originally campaigning for a referendum and a delay in the consultation process. However, given the levels of violence and intimidation — including the removal of the ZHRC Chairperson for performing her constitutional duty — the position of the democrats is now unequivocal: the Bill must be withdrawn entirely, for the sake of peace and legitimacy in Zimbabwe. As the United States turns away from values-based foreign policy, and as Europe is distracted by Ukraine, we look to the region — and to the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe’s historic partner. Being on the right, democratic side of history is not merely a moral imperative. It offers leaders the opportunity to create leverage globally by solving problems through diplomacy. The opposite also holds.

Which side of history will the United Kingdom choose?

Source: Tendai Biti, “Zimbabwe: Who Wants to Be on the Right Side of History?”, *The Common Sense (South Africa)*, 19 April 2026.

<https://www.thecommonsense.co.za/Editorials/zimbabwe-who-wants-to-be-on-the-right-side-of-history>

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ZIMBABWE WILL NOT BE SILENCED: DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION

Henry I. Makambe

ZHRO Member — Walk for Freedom Participant (105km, 2025) 13 April 2026

On 21 April 2026 Zimbabweans will rise to say NO to constitutional manipulation and YES to democracy.

The proposed amendments known as CAB3 are not just legal changes — they are a direct threat to our Constitution, our freedoms, and the future of our nation. They risk extending power beyond the will of the people and weakening the very institutions meant to protect us.

We refuse to accept this.

Zimbabwe's Constitution was built through the voices of its people. It must not be reshaped to serve some political interests.

- Term limits matter.
- Accountability matters.
- Our votes matter.

Across the country and beyond, citizens are speaking out — despite fear, despite intimidation — because this is bigger than politics. This is about justice. This is about protecting the principle of one person, one vote.

On this day we will deliver a petition that carries one clear message:

- No to dictatorship.
- No to constitutional abuse.
- Yes to democracy.
- Yes to the will of the people.

This is a call to every Zimbabwean. Stand up. Speak out. Be counted.

The future of Zimbabwe cannot be decided in silence.

APPENDIX: EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE ZHRO PETITION

The Injustice of CAB3 and the Constitutional Crisis in Zimbabwe

1. What is CAB3? Background and Key Facts

The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill, 2026 — formally designated House Bill 1 of 2026 and known colloquially as CAB3 — was gazetted on 16 February 2026 by the Speaker of Parliament following Cabinet approval under the chairmanship of President Emmerson Mnangagwa himself. It represents the most sweeping proposed changes to the 2013 Constitution since that constitution was adopted following years of multi-party negotiation and a public referendum.

The Bill is closely linked to the ZANU–PF party’s “2030 Agenda”, adopted at their 2024 annual conference in Bulawayo. President Mnangagwa’s second and constitutionally final term of office is due to expire in 2028. He will be 86 years old at that point. Despite publicly denying ambitions to remain in office beyond that term, his government has now tabled legislation that would extend his tenure by two years to 2030 and fundamentally alter the constitutional architecture of Zimbabwe.

2. The Principal Provisions of CAB3 and Their Democratic Consequences

Abolition of the Direct Presidential Election

Perhaps the most consequential single clause of CAB3 eliminates the direct popular election of the President of Zimbabwe, replacing it with election by a joint sitting of Parliament. In practical terms, this means the ordinary citizen would no longer vote directly for their head of state. Given that ZANU–PF holds a parliamentary supermajority — secured following a series of controversial opposition recalls — this change entrenches the ruling party’s grip on executive power without any requirement to win the support of ordinary voters. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) itself warned that removing the electorate from the direct presidential vote risks diminishing popular sovereignty and weakening public trust in institutions.

Extension of Presidential and Parliamentary Terms

CAB3 proposes extending presidential, parliamentary and local authority terms from five to seven years. The effect on President Mnangagwa personally is to prolong his existing second term by two additional years, postponing any election from 2028 to 2030. Under the country’s own constitution as it currently stands, term limits are an entrenched provision. Senior constitutional lawyers, including Douglas Coltart — who himself participated in drafting Zimbabwe’s 2013 Constitution — have argued that any amendment affecting the term of the incumbent president requires approval through a national referendum under Sections 328(7), (8) and (9) of the Constitution. The government has resisted this interpretation. Critics have described the government’s approach as an attempt to manipulate constitutional provisions in order to circumvent the will of the people.

Dismantling of Independent Oversight Bodies

CAB3 proposes the abolition of two independent constitutional commissions: the Zimbabwe Gender Commission and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, transferring their functions to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission. It also transfers authority over the voters’ roll from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) — established precisely to provide impartial electoral oversight — to the Registrar-General, an office under direct executive control. Opposition

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leaders and civil society groups have warned that this shift could enable manipulation of voter registration in future elections. The Bill additionally enlarges the Senate and grants the President power to appoint ten additional senators on the basis of professional skills, expanding executive influence in the upper chamber.

3. A Flawed and Coercive Consultation Process

Section 328(3) of the Constitution triggered a mandatory 90-day public consultation period when the Bill was gazetted. Public hearings were held between 30 March and 4 April 2026 — just four working days to cover an entire nation of over 15 million people. Harare, a city of three million inhabitants, was allocated only three hearing venues; Bulawayo, Zimbabwe’s second largest city with over 700,000 residents, was given just two. Legal experts and civic organisations condemned the process as fundamentally inadequate.

The hearings themselves were marred by serious and well-documented abuses. The Alliance for Community Based Organisations (ACBOs) compiled a report drawing on observations from 51 hearing venues across Zimbabwe. Its findings concluded that while attendance was high in many areas, high turnout did not guarantee meaningful participation. Participants were reportedly denied access to venues, prevented from speaking, or discouraged from expressing dissenting views. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission — Zimbabwe’s own constitutional human rights watchdog, which deployed monitoring teams across all provinces — documented a pattern of rights violations at multiple venues, including the use of men armed with whips to vet participants in Mashonaland West. The Commission found that people with views differing from the proposed amendments were threatened and silenced.

At the Nketa Hall in Bulawayo, a woman who opposed the Bill was chased from the venue and assaulted outside with stones while police reportedly stood by. A journalist and a lawyer were assaulted during proceedings. Students in Bindura and young people in Bulawayo and elsewhere were reported to have been abducted. Major civil society groups — the Defend the Constitution Platform, the Constitution Defenders Forum, the National Constitutional Assembly and the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe — formally withdrew from the process, describing the hearings as a theatre of coercion that had entirely departed from the spirit and letter of the Constitution. The ARTUZ stated the hearings had degenerated into ruling party rallies, with participants bused in to manufacture the appearance of consent.

4. International Human Rights Organisations Speak Out

Human Rights Watch published a detailed report in March 2026 documenting violence and intimidation against opponents of the presidential term extension stretching back to October 2025. On 28 October 2025, the offices of the Southern African Political Economy Series Trust in Harare were badly damaged in a suspected arson attack, hours before a planned civil society dialogue on Zimbabwe’s constitutional crisis. A suspected ZANU–PF arsonist reportedly abducted the night guard before the attack. Human Rights Watch called on Zimbabwe’s leaders to demonstrate commitment to the rule of law by respecting the constitution and international human rights obligations for freedom of expression and assembly, stating that civil society, legal experts and ordinary people should be permitted to express their views without fear.

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Amnesty International, in a statement issued ahead of the public hearings, urged the Zimbabwean authorities to guarantee without discrimination the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Amnesty noted that key opponents of the Bill — including the National Constitutional Assembly’s Lovemore Madhuku and the Constitution Defenders Forum’s Tendai Biti — had been arrested, detained and assaulted. The organisation warned that restriction of public debate shuts down genuine participation, accountability and the rule of law, and that past incidents of violence and suppression of dissenting voices made concrete action to guarantee safety a necessity.

International IDEA, in an analysis published in March 2026, described CAB3 as exemplifying executive consolidation through constitutional disruption. The analysis noted that the cumulative effect of the Bill’s provisions represents a fundamental reordering of Zimbabwe’s constitutional system, increasing presidential authority while weakening mechanisms for popular participation and democratic accountability. The author observed that it remained technically possible, but highly implausible, that the Bill would be defeated in Parliament given ZANU–PF’s supermajority and the compliance of traditional leaders in the Senate.

5. A Pattern of Constitutional Manipulation: Regional and Historical Parallels

CAB3 is not an isolated event but part of a well-documented continental pattern of what analysts have termed constitutional capture — the use of legal mechanisms to entrench ruling parties against the democratic will of the people. Uganda scrapped its presidential term limits in 2005 and again in 2017. Rwanda held a referendum in 2015 that extended the presidential term of Paul Kagame. Cameroon removed term limits in 2008, entrenching Paul Biya’s decades-long presidency. In each case, constitutional language and formal processes were used to provide a veneer of legitimacy to what was in substance an extension of personal rule. Commentary published in the Mail & Guardian in April 2026 described Zimbabwe as having now joined this pattern, stating that the most enduring threats to democracy often arrive clothed in legality, eroding accountability whilst entrenching power.

6. The Economic Consequences of Democratic Regression

Zimbabwe already ranks in the bottom quartile globally on World Bank Governance Indicators for Rule of Law, Voice and Accountability, and Control of Corruption. Analysis published in April 2026 argues that this is not merely a political assessment but directly translates into higher country risk premiums that every Zimbabwean business and citizen pays through higher borrowing costs, lower private investment, reduced trade credit and limited access to international capital markets. The same analysis argues that nations that fail economically almost always fail institutionally first — and that the question for Zimbabwe is therefore whether CAB3 moves its institutions of governance toward greater or lesser strength as engines of economic development. The ZHRC has further noted that reforms narrowing democratic space directly undermine the economic confidence that the government’s own stated “open for business” agenda depends upon.

7. The Role of ZHRO and the Diaspora Voice

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisation (ZHRO), based in the United Kingdom, was formed to promote human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent United Nations conventions, specifically in relation to Zimbabwe and the wider SADC region.

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ZHRO monitors abuses of human rights through on-the-ground member reporting and the testimony of those who have fled Zimbabwe and are seeking asylum in the UK. The organisation obtains and seeks redress for victims of human rights abuse, and it advocates internationally — including through formal petitions delivered to the UK Government at 10 Downing Street, to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, to the Commonwealth Secretariat, and to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The ZHRO petition of 21 April 2026 is an act of peaceful, lawful and constitutionally grounded advocacy in defence of Zimbabwe’s own 2013 Constitution. It reflects the voice of Zimbabweans in the diaspora who — because they have left a country in which the government has demonstrably used violence, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and the suppression of free expression to silence dissent — may speak more freely than many of their compatriots at home. It should be noted that the government of Zimbabwe has itself acknowledged this, having intensified its scrutiny of diaspora individuals alleged to be engaging in advocacy activities aimed at publicising events in Zimbabwe. This targeting demonstrates that diaspora advocacy is effective — and precisely why those who value freedom have a duty to continue it.

8. Conclusion: Why This Petition Matters

Zimbabwe’s 2013 Constitution was not handed down by those in power. It was forged through years of negotiation, public consultation and referendum — a genuine expression of what the people of Zimbabwe sought to establish for their nation. It built in term limits, direct presidential elections, independent commissions, separation of powers, and entrenched protections precisely because Zimbabwe’s history had shown what happens when such safeguards are absent. CAB3 seeks to dismantle a number of these protections, under a process that has itself been accompanied by intimidation, violence and the exclusion of dissenting voices.

The petition being delivered on 21 April 2026 carries a simple, lawful and just demand: that the Government of Zimbabwe honour its own constitution, respect the will of its people, uphold the right to peaceful protest and expression, and reject the imposition of constitutional changes that serve the interests of a political minority rather than the citizens of Zimbabwe as a whole. The evidence assembled in this appendix, drawn from the Zimbabwean government’s own institutions, from internationally respected human rights bodies, from constitutional experts, from civic organisations within Zimbabwe, and from the testimony of those living in exile, affirms beyond reasonable doubt that those concerns are grounded in fact, and that the demand for constitutional integrity is both just and urgent.

Principal Sources

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3. Human Rights Watch, “Zimbabwe: Violence and Intimidation Against Opponents of Presidential Term Extension”, 10 March 2026.
4. Amnesty International, “Zimbabwe: Authorities Must Guarantee Free Expression and Safety Ahead of Public Hearings”, March 2026.
5. Al Jazeera, “Zimbabweans Fear Planned Constitutional Change Will Kill Political Choice”, 2 April 2026.

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8. Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC), press statement on monitoring of CAB3 public hearings, April 2026.
9. Alliance for Community Based Organisations (ACBOs), report on observations from CAB3 hearings across 51 venues, April 2026.
10. Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisation (ZHRO), About Us and Zim Updates (zhro.org.uk), various dates 2021–2026.
11. The Zimbabwean / Zimbabwe Situation, “Constitution Amendment Bill No. 3: What the Economists Have Not Said”, April 2026.
12. World Bank Governance Indicators (most recent available), Rule of Law and Voice and Accountability indicators for Zimbabwe.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE APPENDIX

Further Evidence: Developments of 18–20 April 2026

Incorporating the ZAPU State of the Nation Address; the ZHRO/Citizens Protest Movement demonstration at Zimbabwe House, London; and subsequent legal and political developments

A. ZAPU State of the Nation Address — Michael Sibangilizwe Nkomo, President of ZAPU, 18 April 2026

On Zimbabwe’s 46th Independence Day, 18 April 2026, Michael Sibangilizwe Nkomo — President of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), son of the liberation hero Joshua Nkomo and a consistent voice in ZHRO’s petition work — delivered a State of the Nation Address entitled “Taking Back Our Independence.” It is reproduced in substance here as direct testimony from a senior Zimbabwean political leader corroborating every central argument in this petition.

The Promise vs the Reality

President Nkomo opened his address with a direct challenge: “Today we gather to celebrate independence, but we must also ask a difficult question: Are we truly independent — or are we simply surviving under a new system of control?” He reminded Zimbabweans that the liberation generation did not fight for a country where hospitals have no medicine, schools have no teachers, roads destroy vehicles, water does not come from taps, and young people have no jobs. “This is not what our liberation heroes died for,” he stated.

CAB3 is Not Reform — It is a Reversal

On CAB3, President Nkomo was unambiguous: “The 2013 Constitution was a victory for the people. It promised devolution, accountability, and limits on power. But today, that Constitution is being butchered piece by piece. Constitutional Amendment Bill 3 is not reform — it is a reversal. It is reversing the gains of independence. It is concentrating power, weakening institutions, and silencing the voice of the people. When you weaken the Constitution — you weaken the people.”

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Centralisation: A Parallel Government Over the People

President Nkomo provided specific and concrete evidence of how power has already been stripped from ordinary Zimbabweans even before CAB3. Local councils — the most immediate tier of government — have been systematically stripped of their authority. Environment and health are now controlled by EMA; water by ZINWA; electricity by ZESA; roads funding by ZINARA; procurement by PRAZ. Forests, parks and local revenues are all directed to Harare. The consequence is that councils are blamed for failures but have no power to address them; communities pay but do not benefit; and decisions are made far from the people. “This is not devolution,” Nkomo stated. “This is centralisation of power.” He identified CAB3 as the constitutional layer on top of this existing system of centralised control, one that will lock it in permanently.

National Wealth, Land and Gukurahundi

President Nkomo raised additional dimensions of injustice that CAB3 seeks to entrench. On land, he warned that farmers given land during reform are now being required to pay for title deeds — meaning the poor risk losing their land to banks and ultimately to “the powerful and connected elites.” On national resources, he noted that Zimbabwe exports lithium, gold, chrome and other minerals with no local industry, no jobs, no value addition: “We export wealth — and import poverty.” The Mutapa Investment Fund, into which national assets have been placed, was identified as lacking transparency, accountability and meaningful parliamentary oversight. On Gukurahundi — the massacre of approximately 20,000 Ndebele civilians by the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade in the 1980s — President Nkomo was unequivocal: “You do not compensate injustice — you correct it. We demand return of all ZAPU and ZPRA properties. Justice begins with restoration — not negotiation.”

The Final Call

President Nkomo concluded with a direct and historic call: “Independence was not the end of the struggle. It was the beginning. We did not fight to change rulers — we fought to control our own destiny. Today, that destiny has been taken away from the people. And now — the time has come to reclaim our Constitution, reclaim our land, reclaim our resources, and reclaim our dignity. Zimbabwe belongs to its people. And the people must take it back. Only then will Independence Day be celebrated with jubilation and pride, by all Zimbabweans at home and abroad.”

B. The 18 April 2026 Demonstration at Zimbabwe House, London

On Saturday 18 April 2026 — Zimbabwe’s 46th Independence Day — a significant demonstration took place outside Zimbabwe House, 429 The Strand, London WC2B 4LA. The protest was organised by the Citizens Protest Movement, a coalition of UK-based Zimbabwean civic organisations including ZHRO, the Constitutional Defenders Forum (CDF), and allied groups. The choice of Independence Day was deliberate: a statement that the freedoms won in 1980 must not be surrendered to executive manipulation 46 years later.

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ZANU–PF Disruption Attempt — and Failure

ZHRO had warned in advance that ZANU–PF disruptors were likely to attempt to break up the protest — and so it proved. Chenayi Mutambasere, a spokesperson for the Zim for All Foundation and one of the demonstration’s organisers, documented what happened in real time on social media. Her account, corroborated by multiple witnesses, describes arriving at 10:40 am to find ZANU–PF supporters already in position, who immediately produced loudspeakers and began singing threatening songs including “Tengesa uone mashura” and “Pasi nemhandu” as soon as the protest team began to set up. A physical confrontation followed, with one individual in an orange T-shirt pushing Mutambasere and stamping on her foot. Crucially, the Metropolitan Police — who had been notified of the demonstration in advance — responded promptly and diffused the situation. Police officers informed organisers that one of the individuals in the ZANU–PF group was an Embassy official. Mutambasere commented: “This diplomatic post must serve all Zimbabweans, not just the young not so young 4ED.” The ZANU–PF presence was insufficient in numbers and the protest proceeded. As Josephine Sipiwe Jenje-Mudimbu recorded on social media: “They were dismissed by the police and left in half. Nanyangura Yawona!”

Voices from the Demonstration

The demonstration attracted a broad coalition: ZHRO members, CDF UK Federation activists, journalists, and prominent figures including Lord Oates and Makomborero Haruzivishe (CDF diaspora spokesperson). Participants wore black in solidarity with political prisoners and those who died for the cause of One Man One Vote. Written testimony submitted to ZHRO by participants captures the mood and the arguments.

Kelvin Mhlanga, a ZHRO member present on the day, wrote: “On Zimbabwe’s Independence Day, we gathered outside the Embassy of Zimbabwe in London not to celebrate, but to demand accountability. Independence was paid for with blood, sacrifice, and the courage of those who fought for freedom, justice, and the will of the people. Today, Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 3 disregards that legacy — undermining democratic principles and concentrating power in ways that betray the foundation of our nation. Those who fought for Zimbabwe’s freedom must be turning in their graves. This was more than a protest — it was a stand. A message that Zimbabweans, both at home and in the diaspora, refuse to be silenced.” Also present at the demonstration was Dhara Blessed Mhlanga — one of Zimbabwe’s most internationally recognised independent journalists, serving as Digital Editor and Head of Broadcasting for Alpha Media Holdings and founder of Heart and Soul TV (HStv). His presence at the 18 April protest in London was itself an act of extraordinary personal courage, given that at that time he remained subject to an active criminal prosecution in Zimbabwe — a prosecution that arose from nothing more than his journalistic work and his willingness to speak the truth to an international audience. His case is set out in the dedicated section below, as it illustrates with devastating clarity exactly why the ZHRO petition and the resistance to CAB3 are necessary.

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Shamiso Moyo wrote: “The people of Zimbabwe are clear on the constitution issues. ZANU–PF cannot single-handedly change the constitution. The constitution is every Zimbabwean’s birthright. One party cannot change it as if it were a ZANU–PF constitution. The reason the war for liberation was fought was to gain our rights, freedoms and dignity. The issue of one man one vote was the reason the war was fought among other things. Forty-six years later ZANU–PF is dragging us to the sixties when the war started. This will not be tolerated.” Moyo also highlighted the significant point that ZANU–PF’s push for CAB3 may be connected to internal party factional disputes: “ZANU–PF’s modus operandi is that when they have factions in their party they want to settle their scores using the constitution. This is just a replay of what happened in 2017. The whole country cannot be held at ransom to settle ZANU–PF leadership battles.”

Impact and Regional Resonance

The demonstration was observed and commented upon inside Zimbabwe itself. The Zimbabwean political intelligence monitoring account Team Pachedu noted: “The London demo made a huge impact than anticipated. Many in ZANU–PF did not see the momentum against CAB3 growing organically the way it is. The regime had banked on the collapse of CCC but never saw the likes of [Chenayi Mutambasere] taking the mantle. Harare, you are next — the world awaits our reaction.” David Coltart — Mayor of Bulawayo, former Education Minister, and one of the lawyers who helped draft Zimbabwe’s 2013 Constitution — called on all Zimbabweans that day to wear black “to mourn those who died for the cause of One Man One Vote; to resist those who wish to entrench rule by the few over the many; and to stand in solidarity with all those in prison for standing up for the dignity of all.” Prominent journalist Hopewell Chin’ono used the occasion to address the fundamental point that independence itself was not a ZANU–PF achievement: “People went to fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe not on a party ticket. They went to fight as Zimbabweans. ZANU and ZAPU were merely vehicles that were used to fight for the independence of the country.”

C. 15th April 2026: House of Lords Debate and Hansard Record

Full Hansard Record (15 April 2026): <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2026-04-15/debates/1EA673B6-3380-4CEC-9227-C38EF6C6D8AC/ZimbabweConstitution>

On 15 April 2026, members of the UK House of Lords delivered a forceful condemnation of Zimbabwe's proposed Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 3) Bill 2026 (CAB3), describing its core provisions as fundamentally anti-democratic. The intervention came just days before the planned Petition Handover on 21 April 2026, adding significant Parliamentary weight to the growing campaign against CAB3.

Key Parliamentary Interventions:

Baroness Kate Hoey questioned whether CAB3's changes — removing direct presidential elections, abolishing the Electoral Commission, and weakening judicial appointments — amounted to an anti-democratic transformation. She also called out ongoing brutality against opposition figures and civil society, urging the UK to speak out against the "tyranny of the ZANU-PF regime."

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Lord Callanan (Conservative) stated the changes were "profoundly undemocratic", extending the presidential mandate and abolishing elections. Lord Bruce of Bennachie (Liberal Democrat) said ZANU-PF's justification showed "utter contempt for democracy." Lord Lemos (Government Minister) acknowledged serious concerns, confirmed the UK Ambassador had raised issues with Zimbabwe's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and stressed that any reform must be "inclusive, transparent, and fully consistent with democratic principles and the rule of law."

Key CAB3 Provisions Under Fire

Replacing direct popular election of the President with election by a joint sitting of Parliament. Extending presidential, parliamentary, and local authority terms from 5 to 7 years — potentially extending Mnangagwa's current term to 2030. Abolishing or weakening key independent institutions, including the Electoral Commission and judicial appointments. Public hearings in March/April 2026 were marked by reports of restricted debate and intimidation.

D. Further Legal Challenges and Political Developments Since the Petition

Constitutional Court Hearing Set for 20 May 2026

In a significant legal development, Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court has set 20 May 2026 as the date for hearing a challenge brought by a group of war veterans represented by Professor Lovemore Madhuku, seeking to block the proposed constitutional amendments. A seven-member ConCourt bench will hear the matter. The war veterans argue in their court papers that President Mnangagwa violated Sections 90(1), 90(2)(b), and 196(2) of the Constitution by chairing and presiding over the Cabinet meeting that approved a Bill that would directly extend his own term of office. Multiple further legal challenges have been filed in the Constitutional Court by other civic groups and individuals, and the High Court has been asked on an urgent basis to bar Parliament from proceeding to further stages of the Bill until fresh, genuinely inclusive public hearings are conducted.

Judiciary Under Scrutiny

Concerns about judicial independence have deepened following a High Court ruling on 17 April 2026 — the day before Independence Day — by Justice Pisirayi Kwenda striking off the urgent roll a case brought by Professor Madhuku and Tendai Biti against the police for unlawfully suppressing their meetings on CAB3. Madhuku had provided evidence in his founding affidavit that on 1 March 2026, five balaclava-wearing men broke into Bumbiro House — which serves as both his law firm and NCA headquarters — and beat him with truncheons while he and colleagues were meeting to discuss CAB3. Biti documented police blocking a meeting on 28 February 2026. Both cases involved private gatherings on private property, which under Zimbabwean law require no police notification. Critics have described the court's decision to strike the matter off the urgent roll as a stalling tactic consistent with the pattern of executive influence over the judiciary documented in this appendix.

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The Assault on Doug Coltart: Violence Inside a “Public Consultation”

One of the most symbolically significant individual incidents of the entire CAB3 process took place on 31 March 2026 at the City Sports Centre in Harare. Doug Coltart — a human rights lawyer, legal adviser to the Zimbabwe Solidarity Movement, and the son of Bulawayo Mayor David Coltart — attended the public hearing in his professional capacity to monitor proceedings and provide legal oversight. As he attempted to leave the venue at the conclusion of a session that had already descended into disorder, he was set upon by a group of suspected ZANU–PF supporters. He was physically assaulted; his eyeglasses were broken; and both his mobile phone and glasses were stolen. The individual who grabbed his phone was identified by witnesses and later named on social media as Luckmore Tinashe Gapa, described as a senior ZANU–PF official. Video footage of the incident circulated widely and drew international condemnation. Journalists covering the hearings were also targeted: ZANU–PF supporters blocked them from leaving the venue and demanded that they delete footage from their cameras and phones. No arrests were made. His father, Mayor David Coltart, issued a public statement: “I am disgusted that my son Doug Coltart was assaulted by thugs at the Constitutional hearing in Harare this afternoon. His glasses were broken and his cell phone was stolen. Doug is one of the most peaceful people one could ever hope to meet.” The Mayor noted that he himself had been denied the opportunity to express his views on CAB3 at the Bulawayo hearings. The significance of this incident cannot be overstated. This was not violence in the streets: it was violence inside the very public consultation process that the government claims provides democratic legitimacy for CAB3. A qualified lawyer attending as a professional monitor was physically attacked and robbed by a named ZANU–PF official. The attacker has not been charged. The hearing continued.

The Case of Dhara Blessed Mhlanga: A Journalist Hunted for Telling the Truth

Dhara Blessed Mhlanga — known as “Dhara B” — is Digital Editor and Head of Broadcasting for Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) and the founder of Heart and Soul TV (HStv News), one of Zimbabwe’s leading independent digital media outlets. His record of persecution at the hands of the ZANU–PF regime constitutes a textbook illustration of the systematic war on press freedom that CAB3 would entrench further.

In February 2025, Blessed Mhlanga was arrested and charged under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act with transmitting data messages that incite violence — a charge arising solely from his broadcasting of an interview with Blessed Geza, a war veteran and senior ZANU–PF figure who had criticised President Mnangagwa’s record in office. A magistrate’s court denied him bail on the extraordinary ground that his release would cause national unrest and undermine peace and security. The High Court upheld that decision. Mhlanga was held for 72 days — the majority of that time at Chikurubi Prison, a maximum-security facility described by human rights observers as unsanitary, overcrowded, and without running water in the cells. During his detention, prominent journalist Hopewell Chin’ono reported that Mhlanga had fallen seriously ill. Amnesty International declared him a prisoner of conscience and called for his immediate and unconditional release. Human Rights Watch said the charges were baseless and described his detention as a stark reminder that freedom of expression and media freedom are under serious threat in Zimbabwe. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned the repeated denial of bail as “yet another

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example of the injustice that Blessed Mhlanga has been forced to endure for simply doing his job.” He was eventually released after 72 days, but charges against him remain pending.

Far from being deterred, Blessed Mhlanga then accepted an invitation to speak at the 18th Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy in February 2026, where he delivered a testimony entitled “Silenced for Reporting: Zimbabwe’s War on the Press.” In that speech, he described directly and on the international record the state’s use of what he termed “lawfare” — the deliberate manipulation of legal processes — to silence journalists and dissenters in Zimbabwe. He challenged official narratives of reform, arguing that under the so-called Second Republic, repression had merely evolved rather than diminished. The government’s response was immediate and revealing: the Zimbabwe Republic Police’s Law and Order section launched a high-powered operation to locate and arrest him; a warrant of arrest was issued; the Information Minister publicly denounced his Geneva speech as “malicious” and “false”; a government Senator called for his passport to be revoked; and Minister Zhemu Soda threatened him with prosecution under the “Patriot Act.” Commentary published at the time noted with precision that the government’s frantic, heavy-handed reaction had proved Mhlanga’s Geneva testimony entirely correct, broadcasting to the world exactly the kind of state behaviour he had described. As one commentator observed: “The warrant of arrest, the public threats from Minister Zhemu Soda, and the legislative grandstanding regarding passport revocation are not signs of strength; they are the desperate flailings of a regime that manages to shoot itself in the foot with remarkable precision.”

It is in this context that Blessed Mhlanga’s decision to travel to the United Kingdom and take part in the 18 April 2026 demonstration outside Zimbabwe House — as a journalist, filming and assisting with coverage — must be understood. It was not merely attendance at a protest. It was a personal act of defiance, and of solidarity with the broader democratic struggle against CAB3, by a man who had already paid a severe personal price for his refusal to be silenced.

Arrests for Discussing CAB3

The pattern of arrests of people simply for discussing CAB3 has continued. Former Chiundura legislator Livingstone Chiminya and 13 others were arrested in Mkoba, Gweru, on charges of convening an “illegal gathering” to deliberate on CAB3. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) condemned the arrests as part of a broader crackdown on civil liberties, arguing they violate the constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and association. This followed the earlier arrest of Tendai Biti in Mutare. The pattern is clear: the government is using the criminal law not to maintain order but to suppress constitutionally protected civic discussion of the very Bill it is seeking to pass.

The Diaspora Vote: A Specific Injustice

The Citizens Protest Movement and its coalition members have articulated a specific and serious grievance for the diaspora community in particular. CAB3’s removal of the direct presidential election means that the long-promised diaspora vote — for which ZHRO and allied organisations have campaigned for years — would, if ever implemented, become effectively meaningless. If the president is elected not by citizens but by a ZANU–PF-dominated parliament, a diaspora vote for

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that parliament carries no direct weight in determining who governs Zimbabwe. As Makomborero Haruzivishe stated: “Parliament could not be trusted with the power to elect a president.” CAB3 therefore simultaneously removes a democratic right from all Zimbabweans and permanently marginalises the diaspora from any meaningful participation in their nation’s future.

E. The Photo Record: 18 April 2026, Zimbabwe House, London

A full photographic record of the 18 April 2026 demonstration has been compiled by ZHRO and is published on the ZHRO Flickr account at the following address:

<https://flickr.com/photos/149281364@N04/sets/72177720333143803>

The photographs constitute a contemporaneous, verifiable and public record of the demonstration and its participants. They show the flags, placards and banners of those present; the attempted ZANU–PF disruption; the police presence; and the peaceful, determined character of the protest. The archive continues to grow as further images are submitted by participants. This photographic record forms part of the evidence base submitted with this petition and may be cited or accessed by any recipient.

Additional Sources for this Supplement

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