

Forced evictions in Zimbabwe

European Parliament resolution of 21 October 2010 on forced evictions in Zimbabwe

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its numerous previous resolutions on Zimbabwe, most recently that of 8 July 2010¹,
 - having regard to Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27(3) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 14(2) of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Articles 7(1)(d) and 7(2)(d) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,
 - having regard to Council Decision 2010/92/CFSP² of 15 February 2010, renewing until 20 February 2011 the restrictive measures against Zimbabwe imposed under Common Position 2004/161/CFSP³, and to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1226/2008⁴ of 8 December 2008 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 314/2004 concerning certain restrictive measures in respect of Zimbabwe,
 - having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 22 February 2010 on Zimbabwe, and to the conclusions of the 10th EU-South Africa Ministerial Political Dialogue of 11 May 2010 on Zimbabwe,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Zimbabwe has ratified,
 - having regard to the July 2005 report by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Human Settlement Issues, Anna Tibajuka,
 - having regard to the EU-ACP Partnership Agreement (Cotonou Agreement), signed on 23 June 2000,
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas up to 20 000 people living in an informal settlement known as Hatcliffe Extension, on the outskirts of Harare, have been threatened with forced eviction for failing to pay prohibitively high lease renewal fees charged by the authorities,
- B. whereas the Government of Zimbabwe is demanding lease renewal fees of up to USD 140, without consulting residents about the fees or the renewal process, which sets a restrictively short timeframe within which to renew lease agreements or face forced eviction; whereas a shortage of housing for low-income people has led to the building of backyard cottages or

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0288.

² OJ L 41, 16.2.2010, p. 6.

³ OJ L 50, 20.2.2004, p. 66.

⁴ OJ L 331, 10.12.2008, p. 11.

extensions, which are now in apparent breach of building regulations,

- C. whereas the residents of Hatcliffe Extension are some of the poorest people in Zimbabwe, a country with a per capita income of less than 100 USD and chronic unemployment of around 90 %; whereas these forced expulsions are also destroying an informal employment sector, thereby depriving families of a stable income,
 - D. whereas most residents were allocated the plots of land after being forcibly evicted by the authorities under the country's 2005 mass forced eviction programme, Operation Murambatsvina, in which around 700 000 people lost their homes and livelihoods,
 - E. whereas Operation Garikai, which was designed to cater for the victims of evictions, was wholly inadequate as a remedy for the serious violations of the right to adequate housing perpetrated under Operation Murambatsvina,
 - F. whereas, five years after the mass forced evictions, residents of the Operation Garikai settlements are surviving in deplorable conditions without access to basic essential services,
 - G. whereas the issue of exorbitant lease fees is not restricted to Hatcliffe, and whereas the residents of other informal settlements around the country are also under threat of state-sanctioned forced eviction,
 - H. whereas the appalling humanitarian, political, and economic situation in Zimbabwe is continuing to deteriorate, with millions of Zimbabweans continually at risk of starvation and surviving on food aid, in a country with the world's fourth-highest rate of HIV prevalence, fuel shortages and the sharpest rises in child mortality,
1. Demands an immediate end to the threat of mass forced evictions in Zimbabwe, and insists that relief and humanitarian agencies be granted unrestricted access in order to assist those under threat and other internally displaced people;
 2. Calls on the Government of Zimbabwe immediately to scrap the arbitrarily imposed lease renewal fees, which residents simply have no means of paying; insists, in this connection, that the Zimbabwean authorities cease to use land-zoning laws coupled with forced evictions for party political gain, as was the case during the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina campaign; calls on the Government of Zimbabwe, therefore, to develop a housing policy that meets residents' needs, in consultation with all the victims of forced expulsions;
 3. Reminds the Government of Zimbabwe of its duty, under international conventions, to provide adequate housing for all those low-income people forcibly evicted from their homes, and to guarantee the rights to life, security and food, as well as providing protection for its citizens from the cycle of insecurity and from further violations by offering security of tenure and affordable payment plans for leases, inter alia by using mining-sector revenue to meet the needs of its people;
 4. Suggests that the Government of Zimbabwe conduct an assessment of the material and social losses caused by Operation Murambatsvina and other forced evictions, with a view to compensating all those who have lost their homes, livelihoods and social networks, including those living on or near the Marange diamond fields, and calls on it to consult local communities before taking any decisions;

5. Insists that the Government of Zimbabwe review and modify Operation Garikai, in genuine consultation with survivors, so as to address the housing needs of all survivors of Operation Murambatsvina;
6. Deeply regrets that Zimbabwe's attempts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which are already severely off track, will only be further jeopardised by such mass evictions;
7. Recalls that the fight against HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality is being undermined by the government's abusive practices, such as its eviction programme, which has disrupted access to basic health care and education;
8. Calls on South Africa and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), in their own interests as well as those of Zimbabwe and the wider southern African region, to take further measures to encourage a return to full democracy in Zimbabwe and respect for the rule of law and the human rights of the people of Zimbabwe; recognises that Robert Mugabe and his close supporters continue to be a stumbling block in the process of political and economic reconstruction and reconciliation in Zimbabwe, plundering as they do its economic resources for their own benefit;
9. Emphasises the importance of dialogue between the European Union and Zimbabwe, and welcomes the progress that has been made in this direction;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States and candidate countries, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Governments and Parliaments of Zimbabwe and South Africa, the Co-Presidents of the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the African Union institutions, including the Pan-African Parliament, the UN Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the SADC and the Commonwealth Secretary-General.