

ROLLS ROYCES IN BIRMINGHAM, STARVATION IN ZIMBABWE

A Statement on the Zimbabwe Achievers Awards, Birmingham, 15–16 May 2026

Issued by the Independent Zimbabwean Diaspora | May 2026

This week, as the Zimbabwean government sends its Minister of Youth, Tino Machakaire, to Birmingham for the Zimbabwe Achievers Awards gala, we — the independent Zimbabwean diaspora — feel compelled to speak plainly about what this event represents and what it conceals.

We do not begrudge Zimbabwean achievement. We celebrate it. The diaspora's talent, resilience and success in the face of the regime that drove so many of us from our homes is something we honour every day. But we will not stand silently while the Zanu PF regime uses a glittering gala in Birmingham to launder its international image at the very moment it is passing an unconstitutional constitutional amendment in Harare, arresting journalists, silencing opposition and condemning an entire generation of Zimbabwean youth to poverty, unemployment and exile.

The Zimbabwe Achievers Awards is not a celebration of Zimbabwe. It is a celebration of the Mnangagwa regime's version of Zimbabwe. Those are not the same thing.

THE MINISTER IN THE ROOM — WHO IS TINO MACHAKAIRE?

The presence of Tino Machakaire, Minister of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training, at the ZAA gala this week requires some context that the event's organisers may not have provided to their audience.

The Rolls Royce

In July 2021, while serving as Deputy Minister of Youth, Machakaire spent US\$770,000 on a Rolls Royce Phantom. He reportedly paid GVE London £330,000 for the vehicle and £30,000 for shipping. Duty on the vehicle was estimated by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority at a further US\$275,000. This was a single vehicle purchase by a government minister in a country where the majority of citizens cannot afford basic medicines, where public hospital patients sleep on floors, and where lecturers at the University of Zimbabwe were on indefinite strike over unpaid salaries. When journalists asked about the car, Machakaire said: "I don't know anything about this story."

The Tax Evasion Questions — and the Silencing of the Lawyer Who Asked Them

In 2025 and 2026, former legislator and lawyer Fadzayi Mahere publicly questioned Machakaire about a purported US\$8 million tax evasion case linked to vehicle importation, which she suggested had been investigated by the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission. Rather than answer those questions, Machakaire sued Mahere for defamation in Zimbabwe's judiciary — a judiciary widely regarded as captured by the ruling party. In March 2026, the High Court of Zimbabwe ordered the attachment of Mahere's property to recover US\$33,395 in damages. A prominent opposition lawyer was financially ruined for asking accountability questions of a minister. This is not justice. This is lawfare.

The Bona Mugabe Appointment

In March 2026, Machakaire appointed Bona Chikore — daughter of the late former President Robert Mugabe — as Deputy Chairperson of EmpowerBank, Zimbabwe's youth-focused microfinance institution. This appointment, placing the daughter of the man whose misrule defined Zimbabwe's first four decades of independence into a youth empowerment body, captures perfectly the dynastic patronage that defines the Mnangagwa government's approach to youth policy.

This is the Minister of Youth who comes to Birmingham to celebrate Zimbabwe's achievers — while the youth he is supposed to serve are unemployed, fleeing the country, and being threatened with prosecution under the Patriotic Act if they speak out from abroad.

THE ZIMBABWE BEHIND THE GALA — IN NUMBERS

We invite the ZAA organisers, their sponsors, and their guests to consider the following facts about the country whose minister graces their stage this week.

Youth unemployment: Over 90% in the informal economy — *World Bank / ZimStat estimates*

Inflation: Measured at 635%/year as recently as January 2026 — *Economist Steve Hanke, Johns Hopkins University*

Harare livability: 167th out of 173 cities globally — *Economist Intelligence Unit Global Livability Index 2024*

Corruption ranking: 157th out of 180 countries — *Corruption Perceptions Index 2023* — confirmed by US Embassy Harare, December 2024

Maternal mortality: Up to 462 deaths per 100,000 live births — *Documented during FLAIR Summit controversy, June 2025*

Doctors in country: Severe shortage — healthcare system described as 'in shambles' — *Centre for Natural Resource Governance report, 2025*

Skilled Zimbabweans abroad: Estimated 900,000 to 5 million in diaspora —

Government of Zimbabwe / ZHRO research

Zero — constitutionally entitled but systematically denied — Section 67,

Constitution of Zimbabwe

These are not abstract statistics. They represent the daily reality of the young Zimbabweans whose Minister is attending a gala in Birmingham this week. They are the reason the diaspora exists. They are what 46 years of Zanu PF rule — corruption, violence, incompetence and neglect — has produced.

THE TIMING — WHAT IS HAPPENING IN HARARE THIS WEEK

The ZAA gala takes place on 15 and 16 May 2026. We draw attention to what is simultaneously happening in Zimbabwe this week.

- The Constitutional Amendment Bill 3 (CAB3) — which proposes extending presidential and parliamentary terms from five to seven years, replacing direct popular election of the president with election by a joint sitting of parliament, and allowing Mnangagwa's current term to be retrospectively extended — is expected to pass imminently. It will do so through a parliament whose composition was itself described as illegitimate by commentators including Senator David Coltart, following the unlawful recall of opposition members.
- The public consultation process on CAB3, documented by the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission itself as 'highly managed' with 'limited space for dissenting voices,' involved the physical barring of opposition citizens from consultation venues and documented violence against those who attempted to attend.
- Vice President Constantino Chiwenga, who reportedly opposes CAB3, and Vice President Kembo Mohadi, who is non-committal, both failed to appear at the Zanu PF politburo meeting of 6 May 2026 — the last before the parliamentary vote. Mnangagwa appeared flanked only by the Secretary General and Party Chair where his deputies would normally sit.
- South African President Ramaphosa has reportedly urged Mnangagwa privately to abandon the bill, meeting him at his private farm alongside Wicknell Chivayo — a businessman under South African investigation for alleged money laundering linked to Zimbabwe's 2023 election procurement.
- On the same days as the ZAA gala, ZHRO and allied diaspora organisations are delivering petitions to 10 Downing Street on CAB3, on transnational repression, and on the Gukurahundi genocide. The independent diaspora speaks with one voice this week — and it is not the voice of the regime's Minister of Youth.

A regime that is passing an unconstitutional power grab in Harare does not send its Minister of Youth to Birmingham to celebrate achievement. It sends him to manage perceptions. We name that for what it is.

WE HAVE SEEN THIS BEFORE — THE FLAIR SUMMIT PRECEDENT

This is not the first time the Zanu PF regime has attempted to use a UK-based prestige event to launder its international image. In June 2025 the diaspora successfully blocked First Lady Auxillia Mnangagwa from attending the First Ladies of African Impact and Resilience (FLAIR) Summit in London.

That campaign, led by ZHRO and allied diaspora organisations, resulted in: the withdrawal of Labour MP Dawn Butler from the summit after she was informed of the concerns; sustained pressure that caused the summit organisers to quietly remove Auxillia Mnangagwa from the programme; the Zimbabwean government's spokesperson George Charamba being reduced to the claim that she had simply had a 'full plate' of other engagements; and a subsequent acknowledgement from the Zimbabwean government that it was intensifying scrutiny of diaspora activists who had 'tarnished Zimbabwe's image' — which was itself confirmation that the campaign had succeeded.

"There is no justification for allowing Auxillia Mnangagwa to parade on international platforms while her government jails journalists and silences dissent." — Demonstrator outside 10 Downing Street, June 2025

The parallel with this week's ZAA event in Birmingham is direct. A regime minister. A prestige UK event. A carefully managed image. An attempt to present the Mnangagwa government as internationally legitimate and diaspora-endorsed at the precise moment it is consolidating power at home through unconstitutional means.

We refused to allow that in June 2025. We refuse to allow it in May 2026.

OUR MESSAGE TO THE ZAA ORGANISERS AND THEIR GUESTS

We do not seek to disrupt the celebration of genuine Zimbabwean achievement. We respect and honour the individuals who have succeeded despite everything the Zanu PF regime has done to make success impossible for ordinary Zimbabweans.

We ask only that the organisers and guests of the Zimbabwe Achievers Awards consider the following questions before they welcome the Minister of Youth to their stage:

- How does a Minister of Youth justify spending US\$770,000 on a Rolls Royce in a country where 90% of young people work in the informal economy with no job security, no pension and no safety net?

- How does a Minister of Youth justify using Zimbabwe's courts to financially destroy a lawyer who asked questions about an alleged tax evasion investigation — rather than simply answering those questions?
- What has the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training actually delivered for Zimbabwe's young people in the nearly three years since it was created? What are the measurable outcomes? What evidence exists of systemic improvement in youth employment, education access or economic opportunity?
- Is the presence of a Zanu PF minister at a diaspora awards ceremony a celebration of the diaspora's achievements — or an attempt by the regime that drove the diaspora into exile to claim credit for what the diaspora has achieved despite the regime?

We ask British organisations, sponsors, media outlets and public figures associated with the ZAA to consider those questions too. The FLAIR Summit organisers learned, to their cost and embarrassment, what it means to be associated with the Mnangagwa regime's image management operations. We extend the same warning, respectfully and in good faith, to those involved with this event.

OUR MESSAGE TO THE UK GOVERNMENT

Lord Johnson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the FCDO and Minister for Africa, has stated in the House of Lords that the UK has abandoned 'megaphone diplomacy' in favour of 'quiet engagement' with Zimbabwe.

We ask: what has that quiet engagement achieved? CAB3 is passing. Journalists are in prison. The Varakashi digital militia is being equipped with new tools to target diaspora activists. Named UK-based Zimbabweans are being threatened in state-aligned media with violence on return. The Home Office is refusing protection claims from those named individuals on the basis that there is 'no substantive evidence' of specific risk to them.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights published its report on transnational repression in July 2025. It found that the UK's response was inadequate. The Government responded in October 2025. Seven months later, a Zanu PF minister is in Birmingham for a gala, the Varakashi militia has new digital tools, and the Home Office is still relying on country guidance from September 2021.

Quiet diplomacy with a regime that conducts digital warfare against its own citizens abroad, jails journalists, passes unconstitutional power grabs and threatens diaspora activists by name is not diplomacy. It is complicity. We call on the UK Government to speak — loudly, clearly and without further delay — in defence of Zimbabwean human rights.

CONCLUSION

The week, on 15 May 2026, as Tino Machakaire attends a gala in Birmingham, representatives of ZHRO and allied diaspora organisations will be delivering petitions to 10 Downing Street. Those petitions address CAB3, transnational repression, and the Gukurahundi genocide. They are signed by members of the Zimbabwean diaspora from across the United Kingdom — people who left Zimbabwe because of the regime whose minister attends tonight's gala, and who continue to fight for the Zimbabwe that was promised in 1980 and has never been delivered.

We are not against achievement. We are against the weaponisation of achievement by a regime that has spent 46 years destroying the conditions in which ordinary Zimbabweans could achieve anything at all.

Zimbabwe's achievers are not Zanu PF's achievement. They are Zimbabwe's achievement — in spite of Zanu PF.

This statement is issued jointly by:

- MyRight2Vote — Chief Felix Ndiweni of Ntabazinduna (in exile) — <https://z-dc.com>
- Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) — <https://zapu.org>
- Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisation (ZHRO) — <https://zhro.org.uk>
- Citizens Coalition for Change — Diaspora — <https://ccc-diaspora.com>
- Restoration of Human Rights Organisation (ROHR) — <https://rohr-zimbabwe.org>
- Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WoZ)

For media enquiries and further information: john.b@zhro.org.uk | www.zhro.org.uk | @ZHRO_Zimbabwe

NOTE: This statement will be published simultaneously on zhro.org.uk, zexit.org, zapu.org and all organisational social media platforms. A copy is being submitted to the FCDO, the JCHR (jchr@parliament.uk), and to the MP for the constituency in which the ZAA event takes place.

ZHRO: www.zhro.org.uk | ZAPU: www.zapu.org | Zexit: www.zexit.org | @ZHRO_Zimbabwe