



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, LONDON
30 March 2022

PRESENTATION:
BARONESS KATE HOEY



It is an honour to be on this stage again with Ben Freeth, [Executive Director of the Mike Campbell Foundation], and to have the opportunity of saying a few words about my involvement as a supporter of the Mike Campbell Foundation, and of the struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe.

Gatherings such as this are vital to raise awareness among all the competing international developments and rolling news stories of the deeply entrenched and long-lasting horror of the crisis in Zimbabwe.

As you have heard, we had hoped Nelson Chamisa might also be with us, and we all understand why he has not been able to join us.

I first met Nelson some fifteen years or so ago in Harare during one of my undercover fact-finding visits to Zimbabwe.

I was immediately struck by his integrity, his energy, and his brave commitment to serving and delivering for the well-being and progress of the people of Zimbabwe.

We had to keep constantly on the move so that we could not have our conversation or whereabouts compromised.

As we did so, Nelson calmly spoke of his vision for the future.

He also told me calmly, yet passionately and persuasively in graphic detail, about the full horror of all that was being done by the regime and its agencies to intimidate, to harm and to kill those whom it perceived as threats to its corrupt power and ability to maintain control.

I have remained in regular contact with Nelson, and it has been impressive to see his courage and constancy.

This has been shown over recent months in his energetic and inspiring leadership in rallying support for the Citizens Coalition for Change [formed in January 2022] during the by-election campaigns – travelling up and down the country and addressing huge public assemblies of people of all ages and backgrounds who long for a better and brighter future for the nation of Zimbabwe.

I admire also his work to build international support and solidarity with those of us in parliaments and legislatures around the world who care about Zimbabwe.

We need many more people in governments around the world, and in the media and among those who can bring influence online, to call to account and to shame the ZanuPF thugs - and their stooges in the army, the police and the judiciary.

The enduring crisis in Zimbabwe blights the whole of Africa, and particularly the {Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Apart from a few brave leaders whom we can all admire, heads of government have been mealy-mouthed and complicit in the oppression and violent persecution of those in Zimbabwe who stand for freedom, democracy and integrity in public life.

Sadly, we see too many aid agencies [and] diplomats falling for the lies and evil charm of Mnangagwa and his ZanuPF thugs.

We see the pattern set by Mugabe and his cronies being carried forward with sustained intensity and malign vigour by Mnangagwa – according to plans cunningly crafted long ago.

Some of us tried to warn of the danger and futility of expecting change from the Crocodile and his criminal cronies, and we were dismissed as being needlessly pessimistic and lacking in understanding of their wonderful qualities.

We were told they would open up a new chapter for Zimbabwe, of peace, economic efficiency and prosperity.

They have certainly opened up a new chapter, but it is of the same horror story of corruption, greed and violent oppression.

The only expertise ZanuPF has ever shown has been for brutality, lying, theft and terror.

The perseverance and persistence of the people of Zimbabwe, whether inside the country or abroad, continues to impress me.

A whole generation has grown up never knowing or being able to enjoy the riches and resources in which Zimbabwe abounds.

These must be restored to the ownership and for the benefit of the nation as a whole, of all its people – who are themselves the nation's richest resource of all.

We see so many of them contributing to the prosperity and progress of the many other nations to which they have been forced to live in exile.

I long to see the Diaspora able to return to rebuild, and to work alongside those whom we must admire most – those who have fought valiantly as champions of change.

In doing so we honour the memory of all have given their lives in the struggle, or who died never being able to return to the land they loved.

That is why we are here this evening, and that is why I commend the work of the Mike Campbell Foundation.

