

Can Zimbabweans trust the 'crocodile' President Emmerson Mnangagwa?

ITV in Zimbabwe by John Ray, Africa Correspondent

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As every local knows, and every visitor is warned, crocodiles lurk in the broad stretches of the Zambezi River above Victoria Falls.

So here's the question Zimbabweans are about to decide; is there one 'crocodile' they can trust?

That's the nickname of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, earned for the bite he put into his job as Robert Mugabe's lieutenant.

Last November, with the army, he ousted Mugabe, and next week, in search of legitimacy, he leads Mugabe's old party into this nation's first Mugabe-free elections for 38 years.



Mnangagwa, whose face is printed on his party's campaign uniform, has received mixed reviews since taking over from Mugabe. *Credit: ITV News*

That alone is as dizzying a prospect for Zimbabweans as the view from the top of the country's most famous attraction.

We're in Victoria Falls because it's a model for how Mnangagwa would like Zimbabwe to be – open for business and attractive to foreign investment.

And we don't have to travel far from the tourist markets to see the evidence of this country's ruined economy and the desperate need for cash.

Alexander Ndlovu carves wooden elephants that will sell for a couple of dollars each. He needs to make a hundred a month to feed his family.



Alexander Ndlovu carves wooden elephants for a living. *Credit: ITV News*

"The Old Man, he was the problem," he tells me.

His village has no roads, no jobs, and a single tap. Five miles away there are luxury hotels and expensive bars.

"Now he has gone, we have hope for change because we have suffered too much."

Victory for Mnangagwa is by no means assured. He's facing a fierce challenge from a revitalised MDC Alliance.

There are deep suspicions on the opposition side that the government will rig the election. Same old ZANU-PF, they say.

But Mnangagwa is doing his best to look plausible. He insists voting will be free and fair. He's invited international monitors to oversee the process.

And here's something else Mugabe would never do.

Last weekend, we watched him hugging a baby and wooing the dwindling band of white farmers.



Mnangagwa holds a baby on the campaign trail, something Mugabe would never have done. *Credit: ITV News*

To black and white alike, Zimbabwe is open for business, is his message.

But Dave Conolly isn't convinced. And you can't blame him. For twenty years he's fought efforts to take his farm from him.

Last Easter, months after Mnangagwa took power with all his promises of a fresh beginning, he finally lost possession. He's still waiting for compensation.

He shows us the ruins of the farm house. Inside, his family's possessions lie scattered and ransacked.



Dave Conolly's farm house has been ransacked and destroyed. *Credit: ITV News*

"I don't trust them," he says. "All sorts of promises come out before the election. After the election they continue with the raping and the looting of the land."

Mugabe's gone, but is this a new era or the same the old Zimbabwe?

The nation decides next Monday.

<http://www.itv.com/news/2018-07-24/zimbabwe-president-emmerson-mnangagwa/>

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