

## NEWSLETTER FROM CATHY BUCKLE IN ZIMBABWE



### Zimbabwe's Moral Conscience Has Gone

17 October 2024



Dear Family and Friends

Walk with me in the rain today and listen to this absurd story I have to tell you. I am writing this letter to you with the sound of the first rain of the season falling on my roof. It is very early in the morning and a gentle steady rain has set in. It is the sound of liquid gold. As dawn approaches a Heuglins Robin is singing, three African Hoopoes are running and stabbing newly dampened ground for insects. The first signs of life returning are invigorating. As soon as it is light enough, I am outside putting bowls and buckets under gutters and catching every drop of water that I can.

I have got more buckets lined up everywhere to catch rain. I know it won't be much but every single drop matters when you've had no water coming out of your taps for many months and every drop you use has to be found, carried home and then moved one bucket at a time into your home. It's hard to explain to people that it's a real push to survive for a day on less than 40 litres of water; 40 litres sounds like a lot of water until you start adding it up. You need at least 15 litres of water to flush your toilet just once a day; you need at least 10 litres for drinking, food preparation and cooking; at least 10 litres to have the smallest bucket shower you can. That's thirty-five litres gone, 5 litres are left, barely enough to wash dishes. None left for laundry, cleaning or anything else and if just one extra person comes into your house you've got a problem.

As I walk backwards and forwards in the light rain catching gutter water and filling buckets, I can't stop thinking about the most unbelievable news that has shaken Zimbabwe in the last week. Twenty-four and a half years after the Zanu PF government sanctioned the violent seizure of privately owned commercial farms, they have just announced that the people who got free farms as a result of the land seizures, would now be allowed to sell those farms to other black Zimbabweans who did not receive farms for free. How bizarre, talk about how to make money in Zimbabwe.

For newcomers to Zimbabwe's 24-year-old land reform issue, the seizure of some 6,000 commercial farms between the years 2000 and 2015 was undertaken by government supporters and war veterans. It was only Zanu PF supporters who received free farms; amongst them was a Who's Who of the country's VIPs. Lists of beneficiaries were published by the Ministry of Agriculture in the The Herald and Sunday Mail newspapers in Zimbabwe in 2002 and they named many hundreds of senior Zanu PF government officials including MPs, Ministers, Mayors, Governors, District and Provincial Administrators, Judges, Permanent Secretary's, senior officials in the Army, Air Force, Police, CIO, CID, Prisons, Diplomats, Ambassadors, Parliament, Central Bank and more; there were also senior officials in the railways, electricity, media, telecommunications, veterinary departments and more. Those same people, the beneficiaries of free farms seized from commercial farmers, are now going to be able to sell those free farms.

The government's Minister of Information, Jenfan Muswere said that all those farm beneficiaries will be issued with a 'bankable, registerable and transferable document of tenure.' BUT WAIT, how can you give tenure for land which is actually contested land? Until the government of Zimbabwe pays compensation to the farmers they seized it from, the land remains under contest. Who in their right mind would buy land that is contested?

Zimbabwe's international TV journalist, news producer and documentary film maker, Hopewell Chin'ono, put his finger on it exactly. I quote from his social media pages: "Title can only change hands when the former white farmers sign a deed of cession. A deed of cession is a legal document transferring property ownership from one party to another. Former white farmers will not sign this until they are fully compensated, as the Zimbabwean regime under Mnangagwa had committed to doing in 2018. ...As long as the properties on that land are not paid for, and the white farmers have not signed the deed of cession, anyone buying that land under a ZANUPF law is throwing money away.... As long as people can lose their farms due to party affiliation or political views, farmland will never be a worthwhile long-term investment for any serious business person ...The land is owned by the government, which must pay compensation as promised and then allow any Zimbabwean to buy it from the government without political conditions."

I am a Zimbabwean citizen by birth and residence. I was one of those farmers who farm was seized. I did not inherit the land, we bought the farm legally with a Certificate of No Interest from the Government of Zimbabwe ten years after Independence. None of those facts made any difference when the government supporters came to the gate, threw bricks and rocks, terrorized me, my farm employees and my little boy for 7 months, claimed the farm paddock by paddock, pulled a gun and threatened to kill me and eventually we all had no choice but to leave. These are the facts that I have consistently spoken out about for 24 years and they remain true to this day. Zimbabwe's moral conscience has gone.

There is no charge for this Letter From Zimbabwe but if you would like to donate please visit my website. Until next time, thanks for reading this Letter From Zimbabwe now in its 24th year, and my books about life in Zimbabwe, a country in waiting.

My new evocative photobook 'Zimbabwe's Timeless Beauty The 2024 Collection' and my 'Beautiful Zimbabwe 2025 Calendar' are now available, see the links below.

Ndini shamwari yenyu (I am your friend)

Love Cathy

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