

**A Presentation by Rejoice Ngwenya, COMALISO Zimbabwe at the
21st KWASIZABANTU MINISTERS' CONFERENCE Monday
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Conference Theme: "Revival – God at Work"
Paper Title: "Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right - My Case Against
Zimbabwe's Violent Land Reform."**

Greetings to you all! Salibonani.

Many of you and those that have followed my previous EWC opinions wonder why I refer to Zimbabwe and South Africa's land reform policies 'a crisis'.

In preparing this paper, I encountered several good reasons why we Africans – Black Africans in Zimbabwe and South Africa need our land back. If you visited Rhodesia or Zimbabwe before 1990, you would have found almost 80% of arable fertile land in the hands of 5 000 white commercial farmers. In a country where 70% of the population survives on farming, these statistics would be disturbing. If one inquires further, one will encounter Colonialists applying measures to subdue our ancestors, moving them to Bantustans and Tribal Trust Lands. Moreover, they designed laws to prevent Black Africans from owning land in the so-called white areas. I refer in my title to this 'wrong'.

As men and women of faith, you know how God's people have undergone eras of conflict, tribulation, persecution and oppression. This is an integral aspect of humanity resultant from the fall of man in Eden. Even His own chosen – the Children of Israel – were subjected to Babylonian and Egyptian¹ bondage. God took it upon himself to appoint patriarchs and prophets to lead their struggle for liberation. He designated the land of

¹ Exodus 2:23 - And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

Canaan for his people, allowing Joshua to conquer its inhabitants². Up to today, there is still violent disagreement between the Jews and the Arabs on who the true owner of the land is. Yet God does things for the good of humankind, because he is God. When humanity attempts to do the same – we end up with Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Vladimir Lenin, Christopher Columbus, Jan van Riebeeck, Cecil John Rhodes and the Robert Mugabes of Africa.

My point: the earth and its contents belong to God³. When man applies own wisdom to dispense justice, he fails dismally, as we experienced in Zimbabwe. We all agreed that colonial land expropriation was inhuman, ungodly and a gross violation of human rights. However, since politics is by design, ungodly, it was not surprising that Mugabe convoluted land reform not only for political expediency but also as revenge. By 1982, his government knew they could embark on a sensible land resettlement at the expiry of the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement⁴. There was ambivalence, since he appreciated the importance of private property rights and how Zimbabwe was a breadbasket. Zimbabwe's agricultural value chain was critical in the country's development formula so to tamper with it would unleash a deadly domino effect of economic catastrophe.

I am not saying we black Zimbabweans were content in rural areas, but we had adapted and moved on. Thousands of black families settled in smallscale farming areas while others owned companies under black economic empowerment schemes. Small-scale farmers contributed more grain to the national strategic reserve. It is only in 1998 we demanded constitutional reform and multi-party democracy that Mugabe reacted by

² Numbers 31:7 - And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

³ Deuteronomy 10:14 - Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens [is] the LORD'S thy God, the earth [also,] with all that therein [is].

⁴ The 1979 agreement guaranteed freedom of deprivation of property and 20 white seats for only 10 years.

expropriating land. He blamed the Commercial Farmers Union for bankrolling Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change. Between then and now, the calamitous results of Zimbabwe's violent Expropriation without Compensation (EWC) are there for all to see. However, in order to save time and space, I will paraphrase them into five topics:

Politically: Mugabe's version of land reform poisoned both Zimbabwe's external and internal politics. Polarisation between those for and against escalated. Opposition were labelled puppets of the West, sell-outs and as I would be termed in South Africa, "proponent of white capitalist interests". Supporters of fast-track land reform were termed racists, greedy and heartless murderers. Villagers invaded farms out of spite for innocent white citizens. The West responded by imposing political and economic sanctions⁵ which remain until this day. Zimbabwe is still isolated, a failed pariah state despite conceited efforts by Emmerson Mnangagwa to present a frivolous masquerade of political reformation.

Economically: the free world does not forgive violators of private property rights. Zimbabwe slid into obscene poverty, with GDP falling by 50% and production plummeting to a mere 30% resulting in 90% unemployment. Now we face a US\$6 billion-dollar import bill, no proper currency of our own and paltry foreign reserves. Professor Steve Hanke of John Hopkins University estimated Zimbabwe's inflation between 2005 and 2009 at more than 80 billion percent! Even increased exports of tobacco, gold and platinum have not placated ZANU.PF from the tragedy of EWC. Ironically, our money is still valueless as authorities grope around in search of evasive national currency credibility.

⁵ Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Amendment Act of 2018 (ZiDERA) – a 'law' adopted by the US Congress for Zimbabwe to improve its democracy as a condition of re-engagement with the United States of America.

Human rights wise: Mugabe tightened the noose on rights, resulting in thousands of citizens killed or maimed due to disputed elections. Thousands were displaced from commercial farms as desperate ones trekked to South Africa. He promulgated Apartheid-type laws like AIPPA⁶ and Public Order Security Act to restrict civil liberties and silence opposition. There is no justice that results in so much hatred for one another.

International relations wise: Property violations pitted Zimbabwe against the world. This 'bad boy' image turned us into a high-risk investment and tourist destination. International airlines boycotted us. USA issued travel warnings. Money transfers through visa cards and letters of credit were banned. Insurance premiums on doing business with Zimbabwe escalated. What manner of country has no friends? The Chinese are not our friends, only the new breed of economic imperialists.

Food security wise: Commercial farming activities evaporated, exposing 5 million Zimbabweans to starvation⁷ while eliminating horticultural exports. Up to today, we still import wheat⁹ and soya beans. Shocking!

Let me conclude with few spiritual references. A nation that loves one another prospers. Vengeance is for the Lord, who also demands that we should not steal from but learn to forgive each another. You and I were not there when van Riebeeck and Rhodes abused our fore fathers, yet now are enlightened of humanity, property rights and nobility of forgiveness. A nation at war does not prosper e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Central Africa Republic and South Sudan. Any policy that evokes anger and causes conflict cannot be good. King Ahab¹⁰ and Jezebel concocted ways to

⁶ According to <https://www.herald.co.zw/cabinet-approves-aippa-repeal/>, current President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government has bowed down to pressure and initiated steps to repeal the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

⁷ <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/02/53-million-zimbabweans-need-food-aid-un/> - as of 2019, by the way!

⁹ <https://www.herald.co.zw/gmaz-wheat-stuck-at-beira-over-122m/> - up until about 2000, Zimbabwe's winter wheat production was sufficient for our needs. EWC plundered irrigation investments and left the country exposed, despite existence of large water bodies like Mutirikwi, Odzi and Darwendale dams.

dispossess Naboth of his vineyard, purely out of greed. Their lives ended badly.

South Africa has its own issues of corruption, poverty and unemployment. Why would you want to entrust such an important policy with a State that is responsible for such corruption as at Bosasa, ESKOM, PRASA and SAA? At least your country has a strong functional economy and democracy. Thousands of Africans traverse our continent to re-settle in this beautiful industrialised rainbow country. EWC, as adopted and implanted by greedy politicians will destroy all this goodness. I urge you to preach the message of respect for property rights. Even KwaSizabantu Mission will not be spared from the poisonous fangs of property grabbing. Thousands of lives dependant on this Mission will be disrupted. The same goes for other churches and their properties. God is at work for the good of humanity. EWC will turn South Africa into another Zimbabwe. That, brothers and sisters, cannot be God's plan. Two wrongs will never make a right. I thank you.

¹⁰ 1 Kings 21: 1-24 is the story of Jezebel and Ahab murdering Naboth for his vineyard. The couple died a cruel death