



Zimbabwe Genocide Watch 2023

By Abigail Francis, Genocide Watch

During the Gukurahundi (1983 to 1987), the Zimbabwean army's Fifth Brigade committed genocide against the [Ndebele](#) ethnic group in Matabeleland, murdering over [20,000](#) people. The army utilized the [Bhalagwe concentration camp](#) to execute these murders. Robert Mugabe, leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU-PF) from the majority Shona ethnic group, ordered the genocide to defeat the Ndebele opposition leader, Joshua Nkomo, in an attempt to create a [one-party state](#). The Zimbabwe government has never tried the perpetrators of the Gukurahundi. [Public discussion](#) of the genocide is forbidden. Zimbabwe's current President, Emmerson Mnangagwa led the genocide.

Mugabe used violent tactics to remain in power for [37 years](#). He punished Ndebele opposition voters by withholding [food aid](#) to Matabeleland. Food distributors even required a [ZANU-PF membership](#) card to be displayed before food aid would be given. In 2008, ZANU-PF militias killed [200 civilians](#) after the opposition Movement for Democratic Change won a plurality in the first round of presidential elections.

In [2017](#), a military coup deposed Mugabe, replacing him with Mugabe's "crocodile," Emmerson Mnangagwa from ZANU-PF. He was re-elected in [2018](#) in disputed elections. Mnangagwa has continued Mugabe's brutal suppression of [protests and political opposition](#).

Due to government confiscation of productive farms owned by white farmers and rampant corruption, [60%](#) of Zimbabwe's population now faces food insecurity. The inability of Mnangagwa's government to control [hyperinflation and to provide basic social services](#) has destroyed Zimbabwe's economy.

Mnangagwa' ZANU-PF maintains its hold on the majority Shona ethnic group. Mnangagwa was reelected President in August 2023. EU observers say the election was neither free nor fair.

Zimbabwe has high rates of gender-based violence. [A quarter of Zimbabwean women over 15](#) have reported experiencing sexual violence. Activists correlate the high rate of domestic violence with the widespread practice of [child marriages](#). The country's inflation and lack of food have forced families to marry off their daughters to receive early payment of their [bride price](#).

LGBTQ people face [discrimination, violence, and denial of fundamental rights](#) in Zimbabwe. Under the Criminal Law Act 2006, it is illegal for men to engage in [same-sex sexual activity](#). There have been reports of "[corrective rape](#)," especially against LGBTQ women.

Genocide Watch considers Zimbabwe to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination** and **Stage 10: Denial**.

Genocide Watch recommends that the government of Zimbabwe should:

- Recognize the Gukurahundi as a genocide and prosecute remaining perpetrators.
- Stop the suppression of opposition political parties and hold free and fair elections.
- Discourage child marriage by outlawing payment of bride price for minors under 18.
- Reject legislation targeting LGBTQ people.
- Prosecute "corrective rape."