

## INTERNATIONAL

# Black workers driven from farms in Zimbabwe

WEDZA, Zimbabwe (AP) — Gangs of ruling party militants and squatters occupying white-owned farms have driven more than 5,000 black farm hands and their families from their homes in eastern Zimbabwe.

Many of the displaced are living in the bush without food, shelter or sanitation, after escaping the farms with just a few cooking pots and other personal belongings.

Just 250 militants and squatters scattered among about 70 white-owned farms in the Wedza district have banded together to drive at least 5,060 people from 19 farms since July, said Steve Pratt, regional executive officer of the Commercial

Farmers Union.

Nationwide, the Ruling party militants have occupied more than 1,700 white-owned farms since March 2000, spurred by a government campaign to seize 4,600 farms owned by whites and give the land to blacks. The targeted farms make up about 95 percent of the land owned by whites.

The seizure program has left the future of the nation's 350,000 farm workers - as many as 2 million family members in all - in doubt, with fears large scale displacements will spread across farming regions.

In Wedza, one group of families, who gathered outside the police station and

district government offices to appeal for help, were threatened with arrest if they soiled the sidewalks and paths, Pratt said Thursday.

Other workers caught begging at roadsides were chased back into the dry scrubland or fled to relatives in peasant hamlets bordering the corn, tobacco and cattle rearing district about 60 miles southeast of the capital, Harare.

But despite the risks, some of the displaced still trekked daily to their farms from makeshift bush camps and peasant villages to earn their pay.

"We had hoped to get up a tented camp in the district but that hasn't been possible," Pratt said.

One black farm foreman, in hiding with his wife and two children, said militants armed with guns last month accused him of being "a spy" for white landowners. Later, they threatened to kill him if he didn't leave his house on a white-owned farm within 30 minutes.

The man, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said his family was living on donations from well-wishers in the community.

Since militants loyal to President Robert Mugabe began illegally occupying white-owned farms in March 2000, he said his workers had faced repeated assaults, intimidation and forced work stoppages. In the past month,

groups of between 15 and 150 militants had driven 110 employees and their families from the farm.

He said the militants insisted they were "liberating" the land from its white owner, who would be forced to leave the district.

"We are black people, like them. How can they say they hate us?" he asked.

The government considers the farm occupations a justified protest against unfair land ownership by the country's white minority. It has also announced plans to confiscate more than 4,600 farms - 95 percent of the farms owned by whites - without compensation and hand them over to landless blacks.

"If this is land reform, the math doesn't add up," Pratt said. "There is no doubt in my mind the intention is to break these farms, and the way to do it is to break the link between labor and management."

Faced with a growing humanitarian crisis, district farmers have approached the U.N. refugee agency, the Red Cross and other groups for help. UNHCR officials said they can only help international refugees, not the internally displaced. The charities said they needed government approval to launch any relief efforts.

"That would be very helpful, but I don't see it happening right now," Pratt said.

## Activists at youth summit: Slavery crime against humanity

By Nasseem Ackbarally  
PANA Correspondent

PORT LOUIS, Mauritius (PANA) - Mauritian youths have said that slavery should be declared as a crime against humanity.

The youths would also like to see the adoption of an international affirmative action towards descendants of slaves through access to better health, housing, water and other basic needs.

The youths—Diana Bablee, Sandiah Putyah, Visharad Beedassy, Shahed Hoolash, Valérie de Robillard and Béatrice Kong Kam Yuen—voiced their opinion at the youth summit in Durban, South Africa, which was held prior to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

According to them, human rights and human values

should be part of the education curriculum at all levels of formal education. In Mauritius, they said, regular youth camps for the different ethnic groups should be organized towards this purpose.

"The best-loser system should be removed as well as the mention of religious origin on the birth certificates of all Mauritian citizens since this detail has nothing to do with the citizenship of our country."

"There is a need to introduce history in the school curriculum to stimulate a more objective and comprehensive sense of patriotism among young Mauritians and the regular organization of debates on these issues on the radio and television," they said.

They also criticized slavery, the Negroid trade and the coolie (Indian) labor system, the holocaust of the Sec-

ond World War, apartheid in South Africa, the ethnic conflicts in Rwanda, Bosnia, etc.; and the emergence of local extremist and media groups such as Voice of Hindu, Tamil Council, Hizbollah, Sunday Vani, Zam Zam, La Voice Creole, etc., the use of racist terms by politicians for electoral gain and the discrimination against foreign workers (Chinese, Indian, Malaysian, etc.)

According to the youths, nobody is born a racist "but that it is either the family or school environment that turns one to become racist. We are all born free from all these considerations (race, skin color, caste, ethnicity, religion) which are purely man-made."

They submitted several points as measures of prevention, education and protection aimed at the eradication of racism.

"All international laws against all forms of racial discrimination and intolerance be effectively applied and seen to be applied in every country; dissemination of all these laws to every citizen of each of these countries through conferences, media and printed matter," they said.

The youths also want the harmonization of all local laws with international laws on these issues and ensure their effective application, the setting up of an International Penal Court to judge all crimes considered as crimes against humanity.

"A legal framework to ensure freedom of religion and equal opportunity to employment; to create awareness through the mass media and conferences on these issues in order to create mutual understanding of each other's culture so as to achieve unity in diversity," they said.

## Nigerian army chief denies alleged coup plot

LAGOS, Nigeria (PANA)—Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, Maj.-Gen. Alexander Ogomudia, has denied the report of an alleged military coup plot in the country, for which some junior officers were said to have been arrested, the News

Agency of Nigeria reported.

The coup report was contained in the current edition of the locally published *Insider Weekly* magazine. Speaking with journalists in Abuja, Ogomudia challenged the magazine to substantiate its report by producing facts

on the whereabouts of the arrested officers.

He said no officer of the Nigerian Army had been arrested for questioning over a coup plot as reported by the magazine. "I can assure you that the Nigerian Army is at peace with itself.

The army has good and loyal officers who look forward to their career as professional soldiers," he said. "Those who stand the truth on its head rather than on its feet must be prepared for the consequences," the Army Chief warned. In a country with a long history of military coups, reports of failed plots, whether real or imagined, make a good sell.

Nigeria returned to democratic rule May 29, 1999, after 15 straight years of military rule, and there have been deliberate government efforts to re-professionalize the country's politicized army and subjugate its personnel to civilian authority.

## Campaigners call for justice on apartheid-induced debt

LUSAKA, Zambia (PANA) - Campaign groups from Europe and Southern Africa have issued a demand that specifically calls for the cancellation of debts incurred by countries close to South Africa over their fight against the apartheid regime.

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Research in Lusaka presented the demand at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

The campaigners for the cancellation of debts incurred by Southern African states during their fight against racism and apartheid released a report that shows that states that took part in the struggle against apartheid are still paying a heavy price through unsustainable debt.

The report said Zambia could have incurred debts amounting to \$5.3 billion as a result of its involvement in the de-colonization of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa.

Much of this debt arises from the economic sabotage and the destruction of key infrastructure in repeated military incursions, particularly by the South African national defense force.

Furthermore, "billions of dollars of trade losses" are estimated to have been incurred from sanctions against apartheid South Africa, its counter-sanctions, and the need to build alternative trade routes, such as the rail link via distant Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania.

Other debts are said to have been incurred from the hosting of thousands of refugees as well as from the extra defense expenditures into which Zambia was forced to participate.

The report estimates that in spite of having qualified for debt relief under the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's heavily indebted poor countries scheme in 1990, Zambia's debt repayments are actually set to rise from average annual payments of \$141.5 million in 1998-99 to \$174 million in 2001-2005.

This is because repayments became due for a 1992/3 IMF loan of \$2.2 billion given to help Zambia repay old debts. Charity Musamba of Jubilee 2000, one of the organizations campaigning for debt relief for Zambia, said: "The people of Zambia fought long and hard to end apartheid. Now they are having to fight for their basic rights to health and education while their government struggles to repay apartheid-caused debts."

Also in the campaign for review of apartheid era debts is the South African movement, Jubilee South Africa, whose activist Neville Gabriel is being quoted as saying it would be unfortunate for creditors to ignore the opportunity to make reparations. Also in the campaign is Action for Southern Africa based in Europe.

## DR Congo signs oil deal with South African firms

KINSHASA, DR Congo (PANA)—DR Congo's government and two South African companies—First Rand Bank and Tepco Petroleum—have signed a \$30 million agreement in Kinshasa for the supply of petroleum products to DR Congo.

Congolese Mines and Hydrocarbons Minister Simon Tumawaku said the South African government-guaranteed contract

is for an initial eight-month period. "It (the agreement) illustrates the excellent relations existing between the two parties and South Africa's confidence in the Congolese government," he said.

Congo, which is at war, produces oil, but much of it cannot be refined at home because they are heavy crude. The domestic refinery handles only light crude.