



December 12th Movement International Secretariat

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

February 1, 2021

Congressman Gregory Meeks
Chairman of the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Congresswoman Karen Bass
Chairwoman of the
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Global
Human Rights

Congresswoman Joyce Betty
Chairwoman of the
Congressional Black Caucus

Re: Lift United State Sanctions on Zimbabwe

Dear Congressional Leaders,

The December 12th Movement International Secretariat once again calls on congressional Black leadership to advance the cause of global health, human rights and self-determination by lifting United State sanctions placed on the Republic of Zimbabwe for over two decades.

The COVID-19 global pandemic is accelerating its reach across the African continent, compounded by the inadequate resources and organization of health delivery systems. A reality making hundreds of millions of African people particularly vulnerable. Therefore, the two decades of sanctions that western countries have utilized toward regime change in Zimbabwe has only magnified the impact of the current pandemic on this small land locked country.

Now, with the change in Washington D.C. leadership putting Democrats in control of the executive and legislative branches of government, you are in a unique position to be a leading voice in toning down the political hyperbole that the Republic of Zimbabwe and its people are a threat to the national security of the United States. A basis for the “Zimbabwe Economic and Democracy Recovery Act.” A fundamentally flawed law and executive order premised on a untruth and constructed on the kith and keene relationship between United States and Great Britain, Zimbabwe’s former colonizer. A threat that is grounded in the premise that former Western colonies do not have a right to self-determination.

Given Black peoples decisive role in President Biden’s electoral victory and his victory speech pronouncement that he would “always have our [Black peoples] back”, we would expect that commitment be extended to our brothers and sisters on the African continent.

President Biden's NATIONAL SECURITY DIRECTIVE – 1 states, “My Administration will treat epidemic and pandemic preparedness, health security, and global health as top national security priorities, and will work with other nations to combat COVID-19 and seek to create a world that is safe and secure from biological threats.” A commitment that he goes on to emphasize in “Section 2, sub-section (c) COVID-19 Sanctions Relief. The Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Secretary of HHS and the Administrator of USAID, shall promptly review existing United States and multilateral financial and economic sanctions to evaluate whether they are unduly hindering responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and provide recommendations to the President, through the APNSA and the COVID-19 Response Coordinator, for any changes in approach.”

We hope this re-evaluation of sanctions impact on a country's ability to fight the COVID-19 pandemic would create an opening for the lifting of Sanctions placed on Zimbabwe.

A call that was advanced by Congressional members Karen Bass and Barbara Lee in a letter sent to then, Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, May 22, 2020, in which it was stated, “We write to urge the United States to ease sanctions on African nations in a manner designed to permit them to more adequately respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States should take immediate action to temporarily ease sanctions on Sudan and Zimbabwe and expand licensing of sanctions-exempt items to ensure that these countries can access essential humanitarian resources during the pandemic...” and went on to say, “ Over the past few weeks, my office has received reports that highlight the impact of sanctions on access to essential medicines and equipment, such as respirators and personal protective equipment for healthcare workers. As the world attempts to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, it is critical to ensure that countries are in the best position to tackle the impact of the virus on their populations, healthcare workers, and healthcare and public health systems. Countries with some of the most advanced healthcare systems nearly toppled as increased numbers of patients required critical care and medical professionals required essential personal protective equipment.”

One should make note that this letter to the former Secretary of the Treasury was nine months ago and underlines the urgency of lifting sanctions for a crisis that has expanded daily and which sanctions has only exacerbated.

We call on your leadership in the congress and commitment to genuine human rights in protecting the health and safety of the people of Zimbabwe.

Attorney, Roger Wareham and Viola Plummer

For the December 12th Movement

International Secretariat