



Home Office Release – October 2009 Returns to Zimbabwe

The Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, Phil Woolas:

I am announcing today our intention to make changes over time to our returns policy to Zimbabwe, recognising the different categories of people currently living in the UK. This reflects developments in Zimbabwe following the formation of the Inclusive Government led by Prime Minister Tsvangirai.

As Prime Minister Tsvangirai has set out, including during his visit to the UK in June, there have been some positive changes in the situation in Zimbabwe over the past six months. While a great deal remains to be done to institute the political and other reforms set out in the Global Political Agreement, the indiscriminate violence which marred the elections of 2008 has abated. And the formation of the Inclusive Government has led to improvements in the economy, schools and the availability of basic commodities. In response to this changed situation some Zimbabweans in the UK are considering returning home to help rebuild their country. I consider we should be doing more to help them.

On 1 February we announced enhancements to the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) package for Zimbabweans. AVR packages are available for individuals of all nationalities who are within the asylum system. The standard package provides support to help them reintegrate into their home country, including £4,000 for vocational training, assistance in setting up a business and a flight home. Since February the package for Zimbabweans has been supplemented with an extra £2,000 of reintegration assistance. This includes an additional £500 cash on departure, an extra £1,000 'in kind' assistance for business set-up, a £500 basic subsistence package and cholera prevention kits.

We are today changing the way we deliver our supplementary package for Zimbabweans such that the total value remains the same but, instead of providing the assistance 'in kind', cash payments will now be phased in over a six month period through the IOM office in Harare. Making cash available to those who go home will support economic reform in Zimbabwe - enabling people to return voluntarily and use their skills to support change and help rebuild Zimbabwe with capital behind them. The scheme will also be extended until 31 December and will be reviewed at that point.

Alongside these changes to our voluntary returns package we have also considered carefully our position on enforced returns to Zimbabwe. We have kept this issue under review since the Home Office first deferred enforced returns to Zimbabwe in September 2006 and the courts have found that not all Zimbabweans are in need of international protection. The UK Border Agency will therefore be starting work over the autumn on a process aimed at normalising our returns policy to Zimbabwe, moving towards resuming enforced returns progressively as and when the political situation develops.



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The Agency takes its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention seriously. We will continue to consider each case on its individual merits and where someone needs protection it will be granted. However, we have always expected those found not to be in need of protection to return home. We prefer these individuals to return voluntarily and the enhancements to the AVR scheme will support this, but where they choose not to do so we are bound to take steps, over time, to enforce the law.

For further information or advice on this Home Office Release on Zimbabwe, please contact the Alsters Kelley Immigration Team.

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If you need any further information about matters in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to contact us.