

Press Statement: Keeping the pressure on Mugabe

European Parliament, Brussels - 20 February 2013

Tomorrow (21.02.2013) Robert Mugabe turns 89 and astonishingly remains in power in Zimbabwe. In the last 72 hours there have been significant developments, not least in Brussels where European governments agreed to suspend a limited number of "targeted measures" against the Mugabe regime. These include suspending sanctions in place against Gilbert Moyo, a Zanu-PF thug who has been at the centre of politically motivated intimidations, abductions and beatings in the Chegutu farming area.

Geoffrey Van Orden MEP, who has spearheaded the European Parliament's campaign in support of democratic change in Zimbabwe, and who last night launched the Parliament 'Friends of Zimbabwe' group, commented:

"I am deeply concerned that decisions for selecting those that should be suspended from the list have not been well thought through. I have met Ben Freeth, a victim of one of Gilbert Moyo's beatings, and heard his story. Yesterday, I again listened to the account of Timolene Tibbett, another former Zimbabwean farmer, who has suffered at the hands of Zanu-PF henchmen.

"I believe we must recognise the possibility of positive developments in Zimbabwe. The European Union has always said that targeted measures could be eased once there was serious change. I support doing this provided we do not remove people from the list that have caused great suffering to Zimbabwean citizens and not been held to account for their actions.

"I will be continuing to monitor and investigate the actions of the European Union on this matter and call into question their decision making when I believe it to be mistaken.

"The suspension of a limited number of targeted measures provides recognition of some progress in Zimbabwe, in particular regarding naming a date for the Constitutional Referendum and moving towards a presidential election."

"I, along with my colleagues in the newly inaugurated 'Friends of Zimbabwe' group, am committed to the future freedom and prosperity of the people of Zimbabwe and will be watching closely for any action that harms her people."

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Geoffrey Van Orden MBE MEP is Conservative Defence and Security Spokesman. Over many years he has initiated the European Parliament's tough resolutions on Zimbabwe. He has been personally banned by Mugabe from entering Zimbabwe.

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