

LETTER TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD: MS HILAL ELVER

The man-made starvation in Zimbabwe and resulting humanitarian disaster

From: Meryl Harrison, Retired Chief Inspector of the Zimbabwe National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ZNSPCA)

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Your recent statement on conditions in Zimbabwe [dated 28 November 2019], made heart breaking reading.....many reasons were given, but the elephant in the room, *which the report failed to mention* – was the Mugabe-inspired illegal invasion of thousands of highly productive, commercial farms, 90% of them lost their farms.

These farms were bringing in more than half the country’s foreign exchange, and was the source directly or otherwise, of most the Government’s tax revenues.

At the time, I was Chief Inspector for the Zimbabwe National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ZNSPCA), and for four long years, myself and my small team returned to invaded farms (after the farmers were refused permission to collect their animals and equipment), to rescue animals that ranged from children’s pets, to livestock and wildlife.

We witnessed first-hand the destruction of farm equipment, irrigation systems, fencing stolen for making snares, livestock axed, thousands of battery hens left to die, horses denied grazing, dipping of cattle stopped, over 500 farm security dogs left in their kennels, or tied to trees and left to die.



Photos added from Zimbabwean farm invasions archives

Large herds of both dairy and beef cows had to go for direct slaughter if the farm was in a Red Zone area, and with no one to care for them - this included prize bulls, cows in calf, that were trucked to local abattoirs, many of these booked up for over 6 months.

We witnessed hundreds of pigs left to die when the “war vets” would not let the farm workers feed them, and only allowed us to remove two truck loads.....the stronger pigs ended up eating the weaker pigs.

The national dairy and beef herds are down by over 60% – the gene pool painstakingly built up over generations – lost.

Farms were not given to the poor and landless, but to Mugabe’s friends, senior officials in the Police, Army, Air Force, High Court judges and Bishops.

Thousands of farm workers who were forced to leave the farms, now have no work, nowhere to live and no access to the schools and clinics which once thrived on the commercial farms.

Surely the role of the United Nations should now be to get farmers, whatever their colour or creed, back onto the derelict farms, perhaps growing drought resistant crops, introducing breeds of cattle that can survive in times of drought, so that Zimbabwe can once again be known as the Bread Basket of Africa?

Regards

Meryl Harrison*

Retired Chief Inspector of ZNSPCA

- To read the preliminary observations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Ms. Hilal Elver, on her Official visit to Zimbabwe from 18 - 28 November 2019, click on the following link:
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25348&LangID=E>
- To read the press release of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Ms. Hilal Elver, on her Official visit to Zimbabwe from 18 - 28 November 2019, click on the following link:
- <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25363&LangID=E>

Note: Extract from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food: “I cannot stress enough the urgency of the situation in Zimbabwe. Currently, 60% of Zimbabwe's population of 14 million is considered food-insecure, living in a household that is unable to obtain enough food to meet basic needs. By the end of this year, in only a few weeks, the food security situation is expected to worsen with an estimated 8 million people requiring urgent action to reduce food consumptions gaps and save livelihoods...”

Comment on drought and irrigation: When the Zimbabwean commercial farmers were still on the land (prior to 2000 when the brutal farm invasions began), the country could sustain two consecutive years of drought and remain completely food secure. This was because of the farmers’ massive investment in water - dams, canals and irrigation equipment, much of which was destroyed during the farm invasions.

On the back of property rights, Zimbabwe developed more than 80 percent of southern Africa's irrigation dams within its borders - despite it being a relatively small country. The total number of dams built was 10,747. When property rights were destroyed and the irrigation systems wantonly destroyed, poverty resulted.

Food and Agricultural Organisation: 2.3.1: Of the estimated 12 430 dams in southern Africa (excluding South Africa) covering an area of 126 089 ha, 10 747 (117 662 ha) are situated in Zimbabwe (Ersdal, 1994). Thus, 86% of the small water bodies and 93% of their surface area lie in Zimbabwe, which forms only 6.8% of the geographic area in the region.

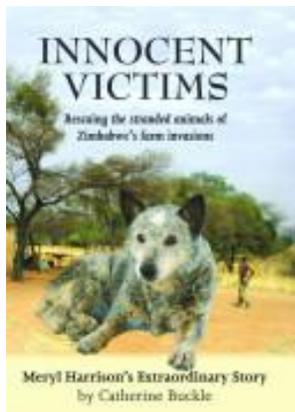
<http://www.fao.org/3/w7560e/w7560e02.htm>

***INNOCENT VICTIMS: RESCUING THE STRANDED ANIMALS OF ZIMBABWE'S FARM INVASIONS**

This book is the story of Meryl Harrison's Extraordinary Story by Cathy Buckle in Zimbabwe

"In December 2002, Meryl Harrison moved a large audience to tears at the BBC Animal Awards Ceremony, having been flown from her native Zimbabwe to receive their Special Award. There she told her tale of the countless animals caught up in five years of the Zimbabwean land invasions, as farmers and families were forced from their homes to make way for Mugabe's 'war veterans'.

Many had to leave their animals behind, and it was Meryl's mission on behalf of the under-funded Zimbabwe National SPCA (ZNSPCA) to go into these destroyed farmsteads to rescue countless domestic animals and wounded livestock.



Nandi, pictured on the book-jacket of this heart-warming account of her animal rescues, is just one of the many ordinary pets she managed to save.

The bravery of Meryl and her small team, as they overcame huge obstacles to find and return these traumatised animals to health and to their loving owners, has earned her world-renown. But she didn't do it for any human praise – she did it for the animals, the innocent victims of human folly." – Cathy Buckle, 2009

Further reading/...

Visit Cathy Buckle's website:
<http://cathybuckle.co.zw/>

To read more about Innocent Victims by Cathy Buckle:
<https://the Fraser.com/2012/12/19/innocent-victims-by-catherine-buckle-extract-4/>