**Mnangagwa’s Catch-and-Release Corruption Strategy Losing Grip on International Headlines**

The arrest and immediate release of the Former Minister of Labour and Social Welfare Petronella Kagonye on Wednesday went without any international headlines for Mnangagwa. Unfortunately the prosecutors in Zimbabwe are totally useless and clueless because the government appoints people based on politics rather than merit in order to persecute opponents. As a result the system is not able to get conviction when real criminals are before the courts. In his first few months in office, he used that strategy to give a façade to the west that he is committed to bringing sanity to the governance mess in Zimbabwe.

The ‘Zimbabwe is Open for Business’ charm almost got him the much-needed international acceptance if it wasn’t for systematic corruption that has haunted the government for decades now. In his first State of the Nation address, Mnangagwa well opened up on the extend of corruption in Zimbabwe. He described it as having ‘retarding impact on national development’. I supposed the honesty was necessitated by the desperate wish to be seen as the reformed version of Mugabe. A regenerated student of the degenerate. At that time, his regime was on international headlines with corruption investigations on the likes of the former Finance Minister Ignatius Chombo and his wife Grace.

Less than 5 years letter, two turns of events have ensued and Mnangagwa hasn’t noticed yet; He is still stuck with a bland policy and the whole world now knows he’s the wolf that hounded in sheep’s clothes. Where Mnangagwa used to trend with his sham arrests, now the likes of #Demloot expose the rot that he carried over from Mugabe to his military backed regime.

On Tuesday, after the South Africa’s Daily Maverick’s “A Study of Cartel Dynamics” report, Mnagagwa was again trending as a de facto leader of a lucrative elite corrupt cartel running the country. The report estimated that the country is potentially losing more than £10bn per year due to rampant corrupt economic activities. The report exposes him as involved or enabling corruption through price fixing, collusion and permitting monopolies. This has been proven through a thorough study into the running of industries such as agriculture, fuel, roads and mining.

His recent attempted catch-and-release on Henrita Rushwaya ended up exposing the Mnangagwa’s government as complicit in more than $1.5bn worth of gold being smuggled out of Zimbabwe every [year](https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/294-all-glitters-not-gold-turmoil-zimbabwes-mining-sector). Ms Rushwaya, who is currently out on $100 000 baiil for charges of gold smuggling, illegal possession of gold and bribery arising from her arrest on October 26 last year at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport when four bars of gold weighing 6kg were found in her possession en-route to Dubai was reinstated as Zimbabwes Miners Federation President.

The 2020 report by Crisis Group found out that Mnangagwa’s government has knowingly presided over bloodshed in the gold mining sector. They have not portrayed political willingness to review the legal and regulatory frameworks within their centralised buying scheme. The regime runs the scheme on patronage basis. Reviewing the scheme means exposing their own corrupt practices and they are not the type to cosy up to that idea.

If Mnangagwa cannot reform the largest foreign currency earning sector (mining), he will not commit to any meaningful reforms in general. His agenda is to be liked, not by doing the right thing, buy by charming his way to righteousness.

In a country where almost all government transactions are of corrupt nature, a normal government should declare a state of emergency. Zimbabwe was supposed to say ‘Open for Business’ after all stones have been turned to expose the full rot.

Mnangagwa has punished the voices of reason and released the agents of the current rot. He has painfully punished the likes of MDC Alliance trio–Netsai, Mamombe and Chimbiri and let go of scores of his corrupt cronies. The continued persecution of the Hopwel Chin’ono for exposing corruption is another sign of misaligned strategies by Mnangagwa’s regime. This is a typical example of a government that has given up on trying to service the people that it purports to serve. A government for the people, by the people do not openly punish its own citizens as we see in Zimbabwe.

Zanu Pf continues to force itself on the Zimbabweans. They know that and they are not wanted and show their resentment through blood and persecution.Mnangagwa has lost the shine before it even started. He derailed his own strategy before it passed any basic test. He is a typical example of dead charm. When history is written it shall be stated that life in Zimbabwe became so hard and vicious when this regime came into existence