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The World Food programme has been importing basic foodstuff items like maize meal and cooking oil into Zimbabwe because of the real threat of famine. A dry season and a drop in over 40% in planting of maize by commercial farmers is a factor in producing a shortage of food. However, President Mugabe has been carrying out a policy of removing white commercial farmers from land without compensation. He sees them as a legacy of white colonialism and privileged. For decades a promise of land reform never came about, but now it is happening. Yet he is not distributing land to any landless black person, for example the farm workers. They are going to members, and usually highly placed members, of Zanu PF.

Other crops like tobacco have plummeted in terms of the harvest and therefore the country does not have the cash to buy in food.

For some months people in certain areas of Zimbabwe have been resorting to eating roots of plants and boiling grasses for nutritional requirements because of the short supply. The government has seized maize that has been used to sustain farm labourers and their dependants and livestock.

The urban areas especially have been suffering from famine, but so are rural areas. The farms went to party members and now, where the government has a hand in it, food is being distributed to party members and those who are approved. Members of the opposition are finding themselves without land and without food.

This is a classic terror tactic, seen in the days of Stalin in the Soviet Union. The lawlessness is government generated; the rule of law is replaced by a rule of power and arbitrary justice. There are instruments of law but they all, one way or another, end up under State power. Some white farmers have been killed.

Whilst ruling party militants illegally occupied some two thousand white-owned farms with a knock on effect to black settlers, the court rulings to remove squatters were ignored by the government itself. President Robert Mugabe described land seizures as justified.

The government has targeted more than 4 500 farms - about 95 percent of farms owned by whites - for confiscation.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has called for a credible land reform programme in Zimbabwe. He wants to have this within the rule of law and to be fair. There is a need for land reform.

Mugabe is in his late seventies and has been in power since independence in 1980. He sees the land grab as part of justice and economical development, at least in his speeches. Others think it is a terror tactic when otherwise he would lose a fair and free election.

Not all famines then are disasters simply caused by adverse weather conditions or difficulties with the land. They are consequences of political decisions or even used as political weapons.