

Zimbabwe Farm Violence Worries Investors

Written by Rudi Prinsloo
Thursday, 09 April 2009 09:05 -



Finance Minister Tendai Biti, hunting for money to pay the government's day-to-day expenses, raised concerns Wednesday that violence and difficulties with Zimbabwe's power-sharing deal are keeping visitors away.

The coalition formed in February brought together President Robert Mugabe and longtime opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai to address the nation's economic and humanitarian crisis.

Biti, an ally of Tsvangirai, cited a fresh wave of seizures of white-owned farms since the coalition was sworn in two months ago, remaining political differences and the continued detention of some opposition activists.

"We are very unhappy with the situation of farm invasions," Biti said.

The coalition government agreed to end farm seizures but they have continued. Many observers say this shows Tsvangirai's lack of power over Mugabe. Farmers' organizations say about 100 farms have been targeted in recent weeks, most by Mugabe party officials and their supporters.

The state media reported Wednesday that, since March 22, police have arrested six white farmers in southern Zimbabwe for refusing to vacate properties claimed to have been designated state-owned land.

In the Chegutu district 110 kilometers (70 miles) southwest of Harare, farmer Martin Joubert and seven other people were in police custody Monday on allegations of kidnapping, the state Herald reported.

Attorney David Drury said the eight men denied kidnapping militants who attempted to take over Joubert's land April 3. A truck loaded with mangoes was prevented from leaving the farm and its cargo, bound for South Africa, rotted, Drury said.

Since Mugabe began his land redistribution program in 2000, some 4,000 whites have lost their properties, leaving about 400 still on their land, many under almost permanent siege.

Years of seizures have disrupted the economy in the former regional breadbasket, leading to the world's highest inflation rate and chronic shortages of food, gasoline and basic goods.

Since the formation of the coalition government, financial institutions, investors and foreign donors have demanded democratic reforms and the restoration of law and order as conditions for resuming funding and balance-of-payments support.

Biti told reporters Wednesday the new government receives revenues of about \$20 million a month when it needs \$100 million.

Zimbabwe has asked its neighbors for \$2 billion - half to support retail and other sectors, and

Zimbabwe Farm Violence Worries Investors

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

Thursday, 09 April 2009 09:05 -

the rest to help schools and restore health and municipal services. It has said it needs billions more from other donors.

But regional leaders have made it clear that they have limited resources and have not made any specific financial pledges to Zimbabwe.

Source : Sapa-AP /po/gj

Date : 08 Apr 2009 18:03