

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Zimbabwe Summary 26 February 2026

The government gazettes a bill seeking to extend the tenure of President Emmerson Mnangagwa (2017-present), prompting a legal battle as war veterans file a court challenge. Zimbabwe takes a significant step in its economic recovery by reaching an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on a Staff-Monitored Programme (SMP). Australia-based Invictus Energy ends talks with Qatar's Al Mansour Holdings after failing to agree on a deal that would have seen the wealthy Qatari fund take an equity stake and provide up to \$500 m in funding for the gas exploration project in Zimbabwe.

Mnangagwa's term extension bill sparks legal battle

Zimbabwe's political environment has entered a new and contentious phase following the gazetting of a constitutional amendment bill linked to President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** (2017-present) that could significantly reshape the country's governance framework and potentially extend his stay in office. The proposed legislation, formally introduced as **Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 3**, has triggered fierce debate within Zimbabwe and beyond. At the heart of the controversy are sweeping changes to presidential term limits, electoral processes, judicial oversight, and the role of traditional leaders in politics. A court challenge has already been filed, setting the stage for what could become one of the most consequential constitutional battles since the adoption of Zimbabwe's **2013 Constitution**.

The most politically explosive element of the bill is its [proposal](#) to extend presidential and parliamentary terms from five years to seven. If adopted in its current form, this change could allow President Mnangagwa, who began his current term following the 2023 elections, to remain in office beyond the existing constitutional limit, potentially until 2030. Critics argue that this effectively alters the democratic compact agreed upon in the 2013 Constitution, which introduced firm two-term limits for presidents. While the bill does not explicitly abolish term limits, opponents contend that extending the length of terms for an incumbent would undermine the spirit, if not the letter, of constitutional safeguards.

Another major provision seeks to transform how Zimbabwe elects its president. Instead of a direct popular vote, the bill proposes that members of Parliament would elect the president. This shift from a national ballot to a parliamentary selection system would fundamentally change Zimbabwe's political structure, concentrating decisive power within the legislature, where the ruling **ZANU-PF** party holds a commanding majority.

The bill also introduces changes to electoral administration. Responsibility for managing the voters' roll would be transferred from the **Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)** to the Registrar-General's office. Additionally, a new **Zimbabwe Electoral Delimitation Commission** would be created to oversee constituency boundaries. Critics warn that these changes risk weakening institutional independence and could centralise authority over key electoral processes.

Judicial reforms are also included. The proposal would remove certain public interview requirements for senior judicial appointments, a transparency measure introduced in 2013. Civil society groups argue this could reduce public oversight of the judiciary and consolidate executive influence.

Beyond these institutional changes, the bill proposes allowing traditional leaders, such as chiefs and village heads, to engage openly in partisan politics. Under the current constitutional framework, traditional leaders are expected to remain politically neutral. The bill would also abolish the **Zimbabwe Gender Commission**, folding its functions into the **Human Rights Commission**.

The controversial bill quickly moved from Parliament to the courts. A group of liberation war veterans has [filed](#) an urgent application at the **Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe**, seeking to halt the amendment process. The applicants argue that President Mnangagwa acted improperly by presiding over cabinet deliberations on a bill from which he could personally benefit. They further contend that the Constitution's entrenched provisions on presidential term limits require a national referendum for any meaningful alteration. Attempting to pass such changes solely through Parliament, they argue, violates constitutional protections. Legal analysts note that Section 328 of the Constitution contains specific safeguards preventing amendments that extend an incumbent's tenure without following strict procedures.

The unfolding battle reflects deeper tensions within Zimbabwe's political system. Supporters of the bill argue that longer terms would provide policy continuity and reduce the frequency of costly and polarising elections. They maintain that constitutional reform is a legitimate parliamentary function. However, opponents [view](#) the proposals as a consolidation of executive power at a time when economic pressures and public dissatisfaction remain high. They argue that shifting presidential elections to Parliament and weakening independent oversight bodies risks entrenching one-party dominance.

The outcome of the court case will be closely watched. A ruling against the bill could reaffirm constitutional limits and signal judicial independence. If the amendments proceed, Zimbabwe's governance model would be significantly altered, moving away from direct presidential elections and recalibrating the balance between executive authority and institutional checks. As Zimbabwe navigates this moment, the debate is no longer just about one leader's tenure. It has become a broader test of the resilience of the 2013 Constitution and the country's commitment to democratic accountability.

Zimbabwe secures new IMF Staff-Monitored Programme

Zimbabwe has taken a significant step in its economic recovery by reaching an agreement with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** on a **Staff-Monitored Programme (SMP)**.

Government officials and IMF representatives [announced](#) in early February that they had concluded staff-level discussions that lay the groundwork for a 10-month SMP, a milestone aimed at consolidating recent macroeconomic gains and strengthening policy credibility. An SMP is an informal policy agreement between the IMF and a member country in which the government commits to pursue specific economic and structural reforms. Unlike a formal IMF lending arrangement, an SMP does not involve direct financial assistance or approval by the IMF's Executive Board. Instead, it serves as a mechanism for IMF staff to monitor and report on a country's progress in implementing agreed policies. In Zimbabwe's case, this staff-level agreement must still be approved by IMF management before it formally begins. Nevertheless, the move signals a significant improvement in relations between **Harare** and the IMF, following years of stagnation and financial isolation.

For Zimbabwe, agreeing to an SMP is part of a broader [strategy](#) to restore international financial credibility and address longstanding fiscal and monetary challenges. The government has been seeking to demonstrate that its economic policies are sustainable and credible, particularly in the context of arrears clearance and debt restructuring efforts under the structured dialogue platform with the IMF and other creditors. By committing to such reforms and having progress regularly monitored, Zimbabwe [aims](#) to showcase a credible track record

that could unlock future access to concessional financing or IMF lending once arrears are resolved. This is crucial because Zimbabwe remains in arrears with many official creditors, a barrier that currently prevents formal IMF financial support.

The timing of the SMP reflects a period of relative economic improvement in Zimbabwe. According to the IMF's statement and external reporting, economic growth in 2025 exceeded earlier expectations, driven by strong performance in key sectors such as agriculture and mining. Growth figures were reported above initial projections, while inflation, historically a major challenge, fell to around 4.1% in January 2026, reaching its lowest level in decades.

For 2026, the IMF projected growth of approximately 5%, with inflation [expected](#) to remain in single digits. These indicators represent a marked improvement from the hyperinflation and exchange-rate volatility that plagued Zimbabwe's economy for much of the past two decades. Despite these gains, significant challenges remain, as stable growth does not automatically translate into improved external financing conditions, and longstanding external arrears continue to restrict Zimbabwe's access to international capital markets.

A successful SMP could [help](#) Zimbabwe lock in policy gains and signal to international partners, including the **World Bank**, **African Development Bank**, and bilateral lenders, that economic management is on a more sustainable footing. This could bolster efforts toward arrears clearance, debt restructuring, and eventual access to concessional loans.

Invictus cancels deal with Qatar's Al Mansour Holdings

Australia-based **Invictus Energy** has ended talks with **Al Mansour Holdings** after failing to agree on a deal that would have seen the wealthy **Qatari** fund take an equity stake and fund gas exploration in Zimbabwe. Under the original deal, Al Mansour [was](#) to buy a 19.9% stake in Invictus for \$24.5m and provide up to \$500m in follow-on funding to advance the **Mukuyu** gas discovery to commercial production. The Qatari fund was also set to take a board seat.

The breakdown of the strategic deal between Invictus Energy and Al Mansour has weakened some of the hype surrounding a wave of deals Qatar signed across **Africa** in 2025. In August, Al Mansour Holding [announced](#) a series of investments across Africa, with deals in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, **Mozambique**, **Zambia** and **Botswana**.

For Zimbabwe's government and Invictus shareholders, the arrangement promised much-needed capital and strategic heft to unlock one of **Southern Africa's** largest non-producing gas discoveries, a development that could underpin domestic power generation and export revenues if fully realised. However, by January 2026, Invictus Energy formally terminated the subscription agreement and the **Al Mansour Oil and Gas (AMOG)** joint venture as repeated delays to the settlement signalled strain in the talks. Invictus said it remains focused on progressing its core assets in the **Cabora Bassa Basin** and is engaging alternative strategic and funding partners, including industry players.

The Invictus collapse matters not just for one project, but because it was part of a much larger Qatari expansion narrative across Africa in 2025 that was marked more by memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and pledges than binding contracts.

Planner

Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe) Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** decision

Jul 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** 2026 National budget Midterm review

28 May 2027 (**South Africa**) Expiry of special residence permits for **Zimbabweans** living in South Africa

Chronology

25 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters*. Mines ministry announces it has suspended exports of all raw minerals and lithium concentrates with immediate effect, alleging malpractice and leakages;

24 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimlive*. Zimbabwe has walked away from a proposed \$350m health funding agreement with the **United States**, after President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** personally directed his government to discontinue negotiations over what Harare describes as a one-sided deal that undermines the country's sovereignty;

24 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *ZimbabweMail*. The ambassador of the **European Union** to Zimbabwe, **Katrin Hagemann**, reaffirms the bloc's commitment to strengthening relations with Zimbabwe, placing renewed emphasis on trade, investment and governance;

23 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. **Jersey-based Caledonia Mining** moves closer to unlocking funding for its next big expansion in Zimbabwe, picking **Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe** and **CBZ Bank** to arrange a \$150m loan facility to push ahead with development of the **Bilboes** gold project;

20 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. **Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe** (central bank) governor **John Mushayavanhu** urges banks to reduce their charges in line with the government's push to make it easier to do business, following repeated complaints that they are excessive;

18 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald*. The **European Union** extends its arms embargo on Zimbabwe by a further year until 20 February 2027, while lifting all provisions related to the possibility of imposing a travel ban and asset freeze.

16 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Xinhua*. **BYD Zimbabwe** general manager **Clayton Chimudina** says as the global automotive industry shifts toward green energy, electric vehicles (EVs) are slowly taking off in Zimbabwe, a market long dominated by traditional internal combustion engines;

16 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald*. Foreign affairs and international trade ministry announces that **United States-based Philip Morris International (PMI)**, the world's largest tobacco company, is set to re-establish its presence in Zimbabwe nearly two decades after exiting the local market;

16 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald*. The anticipated liquidation of **South Africa-based** sugar producer, **Tongaat Hulett**, in South Africa is not expected to disrupt sugar operations in Zimbabwe, according to its Zimbabwe-based subsidiary, **Hippo Valley Estates**;

15 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Sunday Mail*. **Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ)** governor **John Mushayavanhu** says the imminent introduction of new **Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG)** banknotes will not lead to increases in prices of goods and services as the rollout will be supported by prudent management of the economy;

11 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail*. **Econet Wireless Zimbabwe** appoints former chief operating officer **Fayaz King** as chief executive of its newly created infrastructure subsidiary, **Econet InfraCo**, which is set to be listed on the **Victoria Falls Stock Exchange (VFEX)** at the end of March;

11 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Mail*. Members of Parliament press the finance and health ministries to provide a detailed account of revenues collected under Zimbabwe's sugar tax, amid growing scrutiny over the use of funds earmarked for cancer treatment equipment;

10 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald*. President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** approves a sweeping general amnesty for 2026 that will see thousands of prisoners released or have their sentences reduced, in a move that appears aimed at easing chronic overcrowding in Zimbabwe's prisons;

7 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newsday*. The **United States** government has made overtures to engage Zimbabwe "on mutually beneficial supply chain transactions" as **Washington** moves to secure critical minerals around the world;

4 Feb 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. Zimbabwe-listed **Econet Wireless** has set a \$1 billion valuation for **Econet InfraCo**, its new infrastructure development and management business, as it prepares for a listing on the **Victoria Falls Stock Exchange (VFEX)**, in what could be the largest Initial Public Offering (IPO) in Zimbabwe's capital markets history;

30 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. **Libya's** central bank is suing Zimbabwe's finance minister and national oil company for more than \$100m over loans taken out against a 2001 credit facility that Zimbabwe has allegedly failed to honour;

28 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Renewables Now*. State-owned **Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company (ZETDC)** has signed a 25-year power purchase agreement (PPA) related to the 30-MW **Vungu** solar farm, a project that is part of a solar power procurement pilot;

23 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newsday*. Beleaguered opposition politician **Nelson Chamisa** formally announces his return to frontline politics, unveiling a new political roadmap branded **Agenda 2026**, which he describes as a citizen-driven initiative aimed at "resetting Zimbabwe" after years of economic and political strain;

21 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. **Jersey-based Caledonia Mining** seeks \$100m in the market to help fund development of its new gold mine, **Bilboes**, in Zimbabwe, but demand, mainly from large **United States** institutional investors, sees orders of more than \$600m;

21 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Herald*. The **Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ)** (central bank) says over the past year, it reduced its foreign liabilities from about \$3.5 billion to \$2.5 billion by November 2025;

19 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *News Day*. **Cyprus-headquartered Karo Resources** confirms construction of its \$4.2 billion platinum project in **Mhondoro-Mubaira** is at an advanced stage, with full production targeted for the first half of 2027;

17 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Newswire*. The High Court has ordered the government to release the 2019 findings of the **Uchena Commission**, a major inquiry into state land deals that may have cost Zimbabwe \$3 billion;

15 Jan 2026 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters*. **Jersey-headquartered Caledonia Mining** notes it plans to spend \$132m in 2026 to begin developing the **Bilboes** project, which is expected to become Zimbabwe's largest gold mine, with production starting in late 2028 and reaching 200,000 ounces a year from 2029;

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