

PRESS STATEMENT

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5 APRIL 2023



CALL FOR A SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE ALLEGED 'GOLD MAFIA SYNDICATE'

ZIMCODD expresses great concern over the Al Jazeera documentary titled 'Gold Mafia' episode 1 and 2. This is a 4-episode documentary series which exposes alleged gold smuggling syndicates, Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs), money laundering, corruption, state capture, power dynamics and the abuse of diplomatic immunity and privileges. We acknowledge the progressive development of the story and government's statement responding to this issue and proffer immediate recommendations for investigation and resolution of the matter.

The broadcast episodes show that Zimbabwe is losing an average of US\$ 500 kgs of gold per week to gold smuggling syndicates who claim to have connections to the highest echelons of power. Key public institutions such as the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) and Fidelity Printers and Refiners who are custodians of gold production and exportation are all implicated. This points to the scale and magnitude of the gold smuggling which has possibly been institutionalised. While the gold smuggling process is so sophisticated as to fit squarely under white collar crime, the implications are detrimental to Domestic Resource Mobilisation (DRM) and Public Service Delivery (PSD).

The most brutal impact of gold smuggling is that it worsens socio-economic challenges that Zimbabweans are facing by stealing an opportunity to robustly generate revenue to address the same. These social and economic ills being encountered by the citizens include but are not limited to the following:

- 7.7 million people are living in extreme poverty,¹
- 3.8 million rural people are in need of food assistance,²
- 1.6 million urban people are in need of food assistance,³
- 4.8 million children living in poverty⁴
- 1.6 million children living in extreme poverty⁵
- 10% of children aged between 6-24 months are consuming a minimally acceptable diet.⁶
- 4.6 million students are in need of Basic Education Module Assistance (BEAM)

1. World bank 2021 Report

2. ZIMVAC Report 2022

3. ZIMVAC Report 2022

4. UNICEF 2021 Zimbabwe Annual Report

5. UNICEF 2021 Zimbabwe Annual Report

6. <https://borgenproject.org/child-poverty-in-zimbabwe/#:~:text=The%20State%20of%20Child%20Poverty%20in%20Zimbabwe%20Zimbabwe,as%20children%20account%20for%2048%25%20of%20the%20population>

25%20of%20the%20population

- Approximately 68% of pre-primary aged children (3-5 years) and 47% adolescents (13-18 years) are not in school.
- Only 1 Radiotherapy machine for 16 million citizens

The arrogance and boastfulness of one Uebert Angel in the documentary stating how he can easily smuggle national resources is not only a cause for concern but a mockery of our national security. The ignorance or wilful misrepresentation of the same person as being the second in command in our governance system again is a breach to our national constitution. To this end, ZIMCODD is appealing to the Office of the President and Cabinet to immediately relinquish Mr. Angel from his appointment and revoke all diplomatic privileges pending further investigations. It is very apparent that the individual has misrepresented Zimbabwe as a haven of sanctioned criminality, a contrast to ambassadorial roles.

To this end, ZIMCODD further calls upon the Office of the President and Cabinet to set up a Special Commission of Inquiry to ascertain guilt and hold all implicated officials accountable. The Special Commission of Inquiry must adopt the following standards and model.

The Special Commission of Inquiry must;

- suspend licences of the implicated pending investigations,
- be headed by a reputable former head of state or diplomat and a high court judge.
- be independent and empowered to fulfil its mandate.
- broadcast all its investigations.
- be given the power to subpoena.
- consist at least three reputable members of parliament from both the ruling and opposition party.
- collaborate with the same investigations which are being carried out in South Africa for the same cause, so as to triangulate facts and findings.
- have a running time frame of three months.
- have the legal authority to access any relevant document.
- have the authority to freeze properties of the implicated persons.
- give sound and actionable recommendations.

The successful establishment of this Special Commission of Inquiry will enable Zimbabwe to unearth the nitty-gritties of gold smuggling, its networks and implications. The findings will also shape court proceedings in a bid to prosecute and recover all lost revenue.

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