

The Star (SA)

Mugabe is another Idi Amin, says Uganda

Uganda's main state-run newspaper has slammed Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, comparing his policies to those of former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin.

In an editorial on Friday lamenting the state of affairs in Zimbabwe, The New Vision said Mugabe's controversial land change programme and recent demolition of shanty towns were akin to steps taken during Amin's disastrous rule.

"Zimbabwe is starving," stated the paper, which is owned by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's Movement organisation and has until now been silent on a situation that many African governments have refused to condemn.

Mugabe's government "is subjecting its own poor citizens to extreme suffering with unplanned slum demolitions", it went on to say, noting that Zimbabwe was also seeking food aid in contrast to neighbouring South Africa.

"Both countries are working out long-term legacies following a history of white minority rule," the newspaper commented. "But that is where the similarities end."

"In Zimbabwe, the Mugabe government appears to have its own survival as the primary focus. It has played the populist card in grabbing land from white commercial farmers and rewarded its cronies.

"This has resonance in the Ugandan experience when the Amin government grabbed businesses from the Asian community in 1972, precipitating economic collapse that we are yet to fully recover from," the New Vision said.

It referred to Amin's campaign to expel long-term South Asian residents who had come to Uganda during British colonial rule and formed the mainstay of the economy.

About 90 000 Indians and Pakistanis were driven from the country, causing economic chaos and driving the already destitute nation into further impoverishment, a situation the paper says exists now in Zimbabwe.

"Zimbabwe's economy has collapsed, there is no food coming from farms that had long been a food basket for the region," it said, praising South Africa's less drastic land redistribution programme as "how it should be".

The UN and some western nations have denounced the demolitions that have left 700 000 people homeless but most of Africa's governments have remained mute.

(This article was originally published on page 4 of The Star on July 30, 2005)

(Available online at:

http://www.iol.co.za/general/news/newsprint.php?art_id=vn20050730142201559C122388&sf Last viewed: August 2, 2005)