

Whose mother, wife, sister is this? Sanctions hurt ordinary people stupid

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Experts in Washington, discussing whether or not Zimbabwe is a source of shame or opportunity for Africa, were unanimous in their position that targeted sanctions were hurtful to the country, and must be removed, but equally held the government and the ruling Zanu-PF party accountable for the poor state of the economy and overall decline.

Organized by the Washington-based think-tank Cato Institute panelists of the discussion, titled 'Zimbabwe: Africa's Shame and Opportunity', challenged the United States and members of the international community such as the European Union, all of which recently extended sanctions on Zimbabwe, citing lack of reforms under the newly-elected government of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, to drop them.

Zimbabwe has been calling for the removal of what it terms illegal sanctions, since their imposition almost two decades ago, and have blamed them for the country's economic demise. In particular, the government of Zimbabwe has chided the U.S. over the Zimbabwe Economic and Recovery Act of 2001 (ZIDERA), which despite noting some improvements in Zimbabwe, was recently extended by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Panelist and RTHK Washington Correspondent, Barry Wood, who was recently in Zimbabwe, sided with critics of the sanctions who argue the sanctions hurt the ordinary citizens, and not the intended target of high level officials, which include Mnangagwa and his predecessor Robert Mugabe.

Echoing that point was fellow panelist and longtime critic of the Zimbabwe's government, Professor Steve Hanke of Johns Hopkins University, who, while maintaining that the government and its ruling party officials, operate "like an organized criminal syndicate or crime syndicate," submitted that the sanctions have failed to make the government accountable.

Hanke advised the U.S. and the international community to adopt a different strategy that excludes sanctions and foreign aid, which he said, also doesn't help.

Visiting fellow, W. Gyude Moore of the Center for Global Development, who was also on the panel, reinforced the point that sanctions don't work.

"Sanctions that target the people of Zimbabwe ordinarily is not going to work and in the long term is not going to help resolve the issues in Zimbabwe," Moore said.

Though the panelist appeared to back Zimbabwe's position on the ineffectiveness of the sanctions, they didn't spare the government blame for the country's state of the economy.