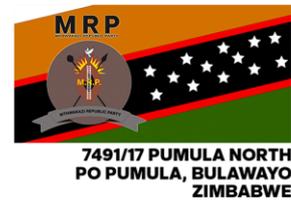




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PRESS RELEASE

South Africa's Implied Recognition Office of the President Mthwakazi Republic Party 16 March 2026

The Mthwakazi Republic Party notes the statement issued on 15 March 2026 by the government of South Africa concerning Israel's response in proceedings before the International Court of Justice. In that statement, the South African government declared that Israel's conduct denies Palestinians "the most basic of human rights – including the right to self-determination."¹

The Mthwakazi Republic Party observes that the doctrine invoked by South Africa is universal in nature. The principle of self-determination, once asserted as a binding norm of international law, cannot be confined to a single people or a single dispute.

If the denial of self-determination constitutes an internationally actionable violation of law — as South Africa has argued before the ICJ — then that principle applies to every nation whose sovereignty has been suppressed by an existing state. Among those nations is the Matabele nation of Mthwakazi.

The Established Precedent

Israel itself emerged through the doctrine of self-determination exercised by the Jewish people in their historic homeland, and remains one of the clearest examples of successful modern state formation under that principle.

Self-Determination as a Universal Principle

Self-determination is recognized in international law through the United Nations Charter, which identifies the equal rights and self-determination of peoples as a foundational purpose of the United Nations.²

The International Court of Justice has affirmed this principle on multiple occasions, including in the Namibia Advisory Opinion (1971), the Western Sahara Advisory Opinion (1975), and the Kosovo Advisory Opinion (2010).³

The criteria for statehood are defined in the Montevideo Convention of 1933, which requires:

- a permanent population
- a defined territory
- an effective government
- the capacity to enter into relations with other states⁴

Recent international practice recognizing Palestinian statehood despite the absence of effective sovereign governance has produced what may be described as the Palestine Precedent: the extension of recognition to a political entity primarily on the basis of asserted self-determination rather than demonstrated fulfilment of the Montevideo criteria.

By bringing its case before the International Court of Justice, South Africa has formally endorsed this doctrine as a universally applicable norm of international law.

Once invoked, it applies universally. South Africa cannot now argue otherwise.

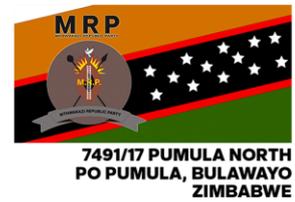
A state that asserts a universal legal principle before the International Court of Justice cannot subsequently deny its application to similarly situated peoples without conceding that the principle itself is not law but political preference.

The principle is further entrenched in African regional law. Article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights — the Banjul Charter — provides:



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*All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen. Colonized or oppressed peoples shall have the right to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community. *5 Zimbabwe ratified the African Charter on 30 May 1986. Zimbabwe is therefore bound by Article 20 as a matter of treaty obligation under African regional law — independent of any UN instrument, independent of the ICJ proceedings, and independent of any argument that international self-determination norms represent external Western imposition on African states.

The African Charter is an African instrument, adopted by African states, binding on Zimbabwe following its ratification on 30 May 1986. Article 20 does not require Western sponsorship or ICJ litigation to activate. It is already in force. It already applies to the Matabele nation.

South Africa's invocation of universal self-determination before the ICJ also interacts with a foundational doctrine of African statehood: *uti possidetis juris*, the principle that colonial administrative borders should remain the borders of newly independent states. That doctrine was adopted by African governments in order to preserve stability following decolonization. However, the doctrine South Africa now asserts — that denial of self-determination constitutes an international legal violation — necessarily places that principle in tension with claims by distinct peoples whose political identity and territorial continuity predate colonial administrative borders. Once the right of peoples to self-determination is elevated to a universal legal obligation, the permanence of colonial administrative boundaries can no longer be treated as absolute.

The court South Africa has chosen has already addressed this tension directly. In its 2010 Kosovo Advisory Opinion, the ICJ held that international law contains no prohibition on declarations of independence. The permanence of colonial borders is not an absolute principle in the court's own jurisprudence. South Africa cannot invoke the ICJ's authority while excluding the ICJ's conclusions.

The Matabele Nation

The Matabele nation existed as the sovereign Kingdom of Mthwakazi prior to British conquest in 1893. That kingdom possessed defined territorial boundaries, governance institutions, military organization, and diplomatic relations with neighbouring polities. British colonial expansion extinguished that sovereignty and incorporated Matabeleland into colonial Rhodesia. No voluntary treaty of union was concluded between the Matabele nation and the colonial authority that absorbed it. The kingdom was conquered. Its sovereignty was extinguished by force.

When Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, the constitutional structure of the new state preserved the territorial framework imposed by that conquest.

The Matabele people subsequently experienced the Gukurahundi massacres between 1983 and 1987, during which Zimbabwe's Fifth Brigade — trained by North Korea — killed in excess of 20,000 victims. ⁶

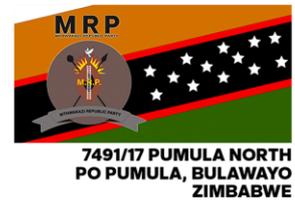
In international legal scholarship, systematic mass violence directed against a distinct people is frequently cited as the factual basis for claims of remedial self-determination, under which a population may legitimately seek restoration of sovereignty following severe state repression. ⁷

Zimbabwe has never been adjudicated, sanctioned, or formally condemned by the African Union for the Gukurahundi massacres. No reparations have been ordered. No accountability mechanism has been established. This absence is not incidental — it demonstrates that the existing state system has failed to provide the Matabele nation with the protection



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international law requires. The failure of internal and regional remedies is precisely the condition under which remedial self-determination activates under established doctrine. The denial of political autonomy to the Matabele nation therefore raises precisely the same question of self-determination now being argued by South Africa before the International Court of Justice. The Matabele nation's claim is not weaker than the claim South Africa has brought. It is stronger — supported by documented pre-colonial sovereignty, a defined territory, a permanent population, and a record of state-directed mass killing that has never been adjudicated.

Under Article 20 of the African Charter, to which Zimbabwe is a party, the Matabele nation's right to self-determination is not aspirational. It is a treaty obligation Zimbabwe has already accepted and has not honoured.

The Wider Implications

The implications of South Africa's doctrine extend far beyond the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. If denial of self-determination constitutes a violation of international law, then that principle applies to every people whose political sovereignty remains suppressed. Among them:

- the Kurdish nation, numbering approximately 35–40 million people, divided without consent between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria
- the people of Somaliland, whose declared independence has functioned for more than three decades without recognition
- the Matabele nation of Mthwakazi
- the peoples of Ambazonia, Barotseland, Caprivi, and numerous other African polities whose borders were drawn without their consent under the colonial partition of Africa formalized at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885⁸
- the Western Cape of South Africa, whose electorate has repeatedly returned governments opposed to the national ruling party and whose political identity has developed along a distinct historical trajectory

Recognition of such claims need not occur through conflict. International practice demonstrates that bilateral recognition by individual states precedes and shapes wider diplomatic acceptance. Kosovo has been recognized by more than 110 states without UN membership. Palestine has been recognized by more than 140 states. In both cases, recognition by individual states — without Security Council resolution or universal agreement — established the political and legal foundation for the claim's legitimacy. The same pathway is available to the Matabele nation.

South Africa's submission to the ICJ therefore constitutes, by operation of the doctrine it has placed before the world's principal judicial organ, an implied recognition of the legitimacy of claims by individual peoples to political sovereignty wherever suppression of self-determination is documented. That recognition is not discretionary. It is the logical and legal consequence of the argument South Africa has made. Every signatory state to the proceedings shares in it.

Statement of the Mthwakazi Republic Party

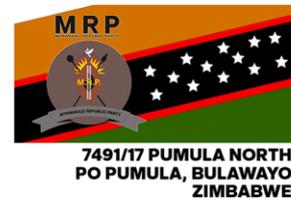
The Mthwakazi Republic Party therefore notes that the legal doctrine invoked by South Africa carries consequences extending beyond those apparently intended by its authors. If the right of peoples to self-determination is universal, it applies equally to the Matabele nation.

The people of Mthwakazi satisfy the criteria of historical identity, territorial continuity, documented pre-colonial sovereignty, and political community that underpin claims to statehood under international law.



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South Africa's argument before the International Court of Justice reinforces the legal basis for the restoration of the sovereignty of the Matabele nation. Article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights — binding on Zimbabwe following its ratification on 30 May 1986 — independently establishes that right under African regional law.

South Africa has clarified the principle. Zimbabwe remains bound by it.

The Mthwakazi Republic Party further notes that pursuit of these claims does not require statehood. Article 55 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights permits communications from individuals, NGOs, and non-state actors to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. ⁹ the question of standing is settled by the Charter itself.

The right to self-determination does not depend on political convenience. Once asserted as universal law, it applies universally.

The Mthwakazi Republic Party notes the implications accordingly.

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**Matabeleland demands justice, fairness, and recognition. Enough is enough.
Sisonke Sibambene SinguMthwakazi Sesikulungisa!**

Footnotes

¹ The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, "South Africa Notes Israel's Response Filing to the ICJ," 15 March 2026, <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/south-africa-notes-israels-response-filing-icj>

² United Nations Charter, Articles 1(2) and 55 (1945).

³ International Court of Justice, Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South West Africa), Advisory Opinion, 1971 I.C.J. 16; International Court of Justice, Western Sahara, Advisory Opinion, 1975 I.C.J. 12; International Court of Justice, Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo, Advisory Opinion, 2010 I.C.J. 403.

⁴ Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, 26 December 1933, 165 L.N.T.S. 19, Article 1.

⁵ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter), adopted 27 June 1981, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982), entered into force 21 October 1986, Article 20. Zimbabwe ratified the Charter on 30 May 1986.

⁶ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980–1988 (Harare: CCJP/LRF, 1997).

⁷ Antonio Cassese, Self-Determination of Peoples: A Legal Reappraisal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Reference re Secession of Quebec, [1998] 2 SCR 217 (Supreme Court of Canada).

⁸ Berlin Conference (Congo Conference), 1884–1885; see Saadia Touval, The Boundary Politics of Independent Africa (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

⁹ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter), supra note 5, Article 55