



MTHWAKAZI REPUBLIC PARTY

<https://mthwakazirepublicparty.org>
mrp.pres@proton.me / mqoekamoyo@proton.me
MQONDISI MOYO
@MQONDISIMOYOMRP
+27 78 935 3725 OR +263 78 410 3677



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Bulawayo, Matabeleland

Mthwakazi Republic Party: **The Mine, the Vote, and the Right to Build a State**

Bougainville shows that economic viability and resource control belong inside self-determination, not outside it.

BULAWAYO, MATABELELAND – The Mthwakazi Republic Party today said Bougainville's path toward independence confirms a principle that applies directly to Mthwakazi: a people cannot be told to prove economic viability while the state that denies their political status controls the land, minerals, infrastructure, tax base, and investment policy needed to build that viability. On 30 January 2026, Reuters reported that Bougainville rejected a proposed Chinese mining partnership for the Panguna copper and gold mine and directed Bougainville Copper to engage instead with India's Lloyds Metals & Energy Limited. Reuters reported that Bougainville is seeking independence from Papua New Guinea by 2027, that Panguna is viewed as essential to building Bougainville's economy, and that Bougainville currently generates only 5.3% of its budget internally.[1]

"Bougainville teaches a lesson every African capital should understand: resources do not make a people less entitled to self-determination. Resources make consent more important. If a people must prove it can build a state, it must also be allowed to discuss how its own land, minerals, water, borders, infrastructure, and tax base will support that state."

Reuters previously reported that Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said Bougainville must be able to fund about half of its budget if independence is to succeed. The same report stated that Bougainville Copper projected \$36 billion in revenue over 20 years from Panguna, and that the mine's past operations were tied to conflict, environmental damage, and grievances over revenue distribution.[2]

"This is the circular trap used against peoples like Mthwakazi. The state says: you cannot be free until you prove viability. But the same state controls the resources, appointments, licensing, investment policy, land administration, and revenue flows that would prove viability. Bougainville exposes that fraud. Economic viability must be part of the self-determination process, not a weapon against it."

Bougainville's 2019 referendum produced an overwhelming vote for independence. The result did not automatically create a new state because the final status remains tied to negotiation and ratification by Papua New Guinea's parliament. But the Bougainville



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process shows that post-colonial borders are not the end of the legal and political inquiry. They can be followed by autonomy, referendum, negotiated transition, constitutional work, resource planning, and international engagement.[3]

The MRP said Bougainville must also be read as a warning. Panguna was not merely a mine. It became a symbol of extraction without fair benefit, environmental injury, unequal revenue distribution, and political domination. The lesson for Mthwakazi is not “mine at any price.” The lesson is consent, ownership, environmental repair, local benefit, and institutions strong enough to prevent resources from becoming another instrument of oppression.[4]

“Mthwakazi does not ask investors to ignore history. We ask them to learn from it. Resource development without consent produces bitterness, instability, and resistance. Resource development with consent, property rights, environmental responsibility, and local benefit can help build a lawful state.”

Mthwakazi is not an empty political slogan. MRP’s economic prospectus identifies a territory of approximately 159,597 square kilometres covering Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Bulawayo, and parts of the Midlands, with major opportunities in mining, agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, transport, renewable energy, financial services, digital development, and diaspora investment. The same prospectus identifies resources including gold, coal, coal-bed methane gas, lithium, nickel, chrome, platinum-group metals, rare-earth elements, diamonds, cement materials, quarry stone, livestock, irrigation potential, Victoria Falls, Hwange National Park, Matobo Hills, rail links, border posts, airports, industrial capacity in Bulawayo, and regional transport corridors.[5]

The MRP said these resources should not be treated as Zimbabwean spoils while Mthwakazi’s people are told to remain silent. The economic question must be asked honestly: who controls the resources, who receives the licenses, who gets the jobs, who bears the environmental costs, who benefits from tax revenue, who decides land policy, and who accounts for past dispossession and violence?

“Mthwakazi has resources. Mthwakazi has people. Mthwakazi has land. Mthwakazi has a diaspora. Mthwakazi has a history of commerce, farming, rail, industry, tourism, and regional connection. What Mthwakazi does not have is the right to govern its own future. That is the political problem.”

MRP’s economic planning documents propose low and simple taxation, protection of property rights, an independent judiciary, a small but effective government, anti-corruption enforcement, special economic zones, transparent investment processes, and a sovereign fund for resource revenues. The party’s policy framework also emphasizes capacity before recognition: institutional consolidation, documented consent, external



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alignment, continuity of law and property, minority protection, and credible governance architecture.[6]

The MRP has pursued peaceful and lawful process. In September 2023, the party submitted a petition to the Southern African Development Community seeking self-determination for Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands. Southern Eye reported on 14 May 2026 that the petition carried 25,880 signatures and was registered by the SADC Secretariat under reference number 3951863. The same report stated that MRP remains committed to peaceful, democratic, and lawful means despite President Emmerson Mnangagwa's public threat that secession advocates are "shortening their lives." [7]

"A people that petitions SADC is not making war. A people that prepares an economic prospectus is not making chaos. A people that asks how its minerals, land, water, borders, and institutions should serve its own future is asking the most normal question in politics: who governs, with whose consent, and for whose benefit?"

International law does not separate self-determination from resources. Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that all peoples have the right of self-determination and may freely determine their political status. Article 1 also states that all peoples may freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources. In Africa, Article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights recognizes the right of peoples to existence and self-determination, and Article 21 recognizes the right of peoples to freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources.[8]

The unresolved history of Gukurahundi makes the Mthwakazi claim more urgent, not less. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum states that from 1983 to 1987 government-linked forces killed about 20,000 people in mostly ethnic Ndebele areas, and that no senior Zimbabwean official has been held responsible. Lena Reim's scholarship on Mthwakazi activism likewise links contemporary claims to unresolved violence, memory, and the absence of meaningful transitional justice.[9]

The MRP therefore calls on:

- SADC to formally engage the MRP petition registered under reference number 3951863;
- The African Union to treat Mthwakazi as a lawful self-determination question, not a security problem;
- Zimbabwe to stop using inherited borders and resource control as substitutes for consent;
- International partners and investors to apply consent, transparency, environmental responsibility, and local benefit as conditions of engagement in Mthwakazi;
- The United Nations and democratic governments to recognize that economic viability strengthens a self-determination claim when the people have the resources, plans, and institutions to build a state.



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“Bougainville has a mine, a vote, and a plan to build a state. Mthwakazi has land, resources, memory, people, and a lawful demand for consent. Our resources are not a reason to keep us politically trapped. They are part of our right to build our future.”

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Footnotes

[1] Reuters, “Pacific Island Bougainville rejects Chinese partner for mine that will fund independence,” 30 January 2026, reporting Bougainville’s rejection of a CMOC partnership, direction to engage Lloyds Metals & Energy Limited, the 2027 independence objective, Bougainville’s 72.9% shareholding in Bougainville Copper after the January 2026 PNG share transfer, and the 5.3% internal-budget figure.

[2] Reuters, “Pacific Island Bougainville’s independence path relies on economy, says PNG’s Marape,” 11 December 2024, reporting Prime Minister James Marape’s statement that Bougainville should fund about half of its budget, Bougainville Copper’s projected \$36 billion in revenue over 20 years, and Panguna’s role in past conflict and revenue grievances.

[3] The Guardian, “‘No one will stop our people’: Bougainville president defiant in push for independence,” 10 January 2025, summarizing Bougainville’s 2019 independence vote and the 2025–2027 implementation window under the Era Kone framework; see also The Guardian, “Bougainville fought a war to shut down Panguna mine. Now it wants to reopen it,” 29 June 2025.

[4] The Guardian, “Bougainville fought a war to shut down Panguna mine. Now it wants to reopen it,” 29 June 2025, discussing Panguna’s former export role, environmental and social legacy, and the link between mining, ownership, benefit, and Bougainville’s independence planning.

[5] Mthwakazi Republic Party, The Economic Prospects of Mthwakazi (investment prospectus, copy on file with MRP), especially pp. 3–7, 10–13, 16–21, and 28–29, identifying Mthwakazi’s mineral, agricultural, tourism, infrastructure, transport, industrial, and new-economy opportunities.

[6] Mthwakazi Republic Party, The Economic Prospects of Mthwakazi, pp. 5–7, 21–23, and 28–29, proposing low taxation, property-rights guarantees, rule of law, anti-corruption policy, special economic zones, and a sovereign fund; Mthwakazi Republic Party, A Path to Sovereignty for Mthwakazi: A Policy Framework for Remedial Independence (policy paper, copy on file with MRP), sections III–VIII.

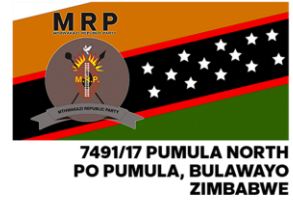
[7] Silas Nkala, “MRP in renewed push for Mthwakazi self-determination,” The Southern Eye, 14 May 2026, reporting the SADC petition, 25,880 signatures, reference number 3951863, peaceful-democratic framing, and Mnangagwa’s “shortening their lives” threat.

[8] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 1; United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples,” 14 December 1960; African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Articles 20–21.



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[9] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Zimbabwe: Overview," last edited 29 January 2025; Lena Reim, "'Gukurahundi Continues': Violence, Memory, and Mthwakazi Activism in Zimbabwe," *African Affairs* 122, no. 486 (2023): 95–117, DOI: 10.1093/afraf/adac043.

Mqondisi Moyo

President, Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP)

Email: mrp.pres@proton.me

Website: <http://mthwakazirepublicparty.org>

Phone: +27 78 935 3725

Matabeleland demands justice, fairness, and recognition. Enough is enough.

Sisonke Sibambene SinguMthwakazi Sesikulungisa!

