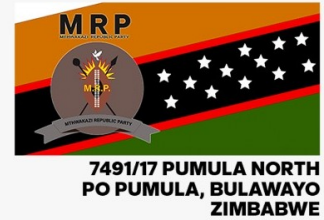




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ASK WHAT IS HAPPENING TO YOUR COUNTRY

Statement by Mqondisi Moyo, President, Mthwakazi Republic Party

Date: 22 August 2026 | Ref: MRP-220826-01a

Jewish history in this land did not begin with Rhodesia.

Daniel Montague Kisch was in Lobengula's kingdom in the early 1870s and served as an adviser to King Lobengula, two decades before the colonial state existed. Whatever else may be said about the relationship between Jews and this land, it did not arrive with the settler. It preceded him.

I begin there deliberately, because the rest of this history has too often been filed under somebody else's story.

They were never many.

At its height, the entire Jewish population of this country numbered just over seven thousand people. The national population was then approaching four million. Jews therefore accounted for about two people in every thousand. In Bulawayo, where Jewish life was strongest, the community reached a little more than three thousand at its peak.

And yet consider what they did.

The Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation was established in 1894. Jews became merchants, industrialists, doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants, teachers and civic leaders. They established industries. They were prominent in furniture, farming and clothing. They employed people. They built businesses and institutions.

Bulawayo's first mayor was Jewish. Several later mayors were Jewish. Bulawayo's first newspaper was owned and edited by a Jew. Rev. Moses Isaac Cohen, the spiritual leader of the Bulawayo Jewish community, helped shape the development of public education and served as a mediator in industrial disputes.

Jewish families built schools, synagogues, welfare organisations, sporting institutions, businesses and factories. They put down roots, raised families and helped build the place they called home.

Their numbers were tiny.

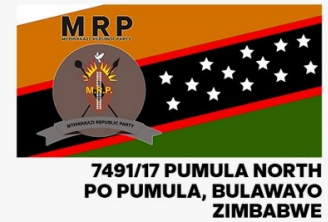
Their contribution was not.

We should be capable of saying that plainly.



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We should also be capable of saying what follows.

I will not romanticise Rhodesia in order to honour them. The colonial order inflicted profound injustice on the indigenous peoples of this land. Honouring what Jewish families built here does not require anyone to forget conquest, racial discrimination or dispossession. A mature country must be capable of holding more than one truth at the same time. We can condemn the injustices of the colonial period. We can condemn the failures and abuses that followed it. And we can recognise the ordinary human beings, including a very small Jewish minority, who nevertheless built lives, professions and institutions that became part of the fabric of this country.

There is a harder thing still, and I would rather say it myself than have somebody else say it for me.

In the 1930s, while Jews in Europe were searching desperately for countries willing to receive them, the authorities of Southern Rhodesia placed barriers in their way. People fleeing a catastrophe were treated as an immigration problem.

We know now where that catastrophe led.

There is something painful about remembering that from Bulawayo today. Governments here once asked how many Jews they should allow in.

I want the Matabeleland of the future to ask a different question.

How do we persuade them to come back?

Because we lost them.

Current community estimates suggest that only about eighty Jews remain in Zimbabwe. A community that had been here for more than a century, and that had contributed far beyond its size, has almost disappeared. Families whose names were part of the life of this city are now in South Africa, Israel, Britain, the United States, Australia and elsewhere.

I will not pretend every family left for the same reason. Political instability played its part. War played its part. Economic destruction played its part. Insecurity and uncertainty played their parts. At times there was hostility and antisemitic rhetoric as well. History is more complicated than a single cause.

But the result is not complicated.

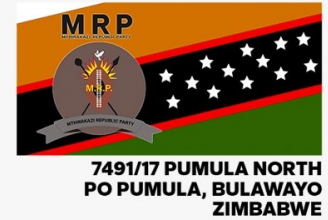
They are almost gone.

And here is what I want to say to my own people first, before I say anything to anybody else.



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We understood that departure as a Jewish story. We treated it as a demographic fact about somebody else. That was a failure of comprehension, and it was ours.

The conditions that make a country unliveable for a small and historically vulnerable minority are usually conditions that will not remain confined to that minority. Scapegoating, arbitrary power, expropriation, lawlessness and the collapse of equal citizenship do not stop at the edge of a minority. What reaches the vulnerable first eventually reaches others.

The country did not decline because its Jews left. Their departure was instead evidence of pressures that would later become impossible for the wider society to ignore.

When Jews begin to ask whether their children have a future in a country, that country should treat the question as an early warning about the condition of its institutions.

We did not treat it that way. We should have.

I do not presume to lecture countries richer, older or more powerful than ours. I have no standing to do so and no intention of trying. I can only tell them what this looks like from the other side, because we have already made that mistake and we are still living inside the result.

We once had a small Jewish community here. We watched it become smaller. We treated that as a Jewish demographic fact.

Only later did we understand that the forces making them uncertain about their future were also damaging ours.

So when Jews begin asking whether their children have a future in your country, do not ask only what is happening to the Jews.

Ask what is happening to your country.

This is not only our history.

Baghdad once had a Jewish community numbered in the tens of thousands. So did Cairo and Alexandria. Jewish communities that had lived for centuries in Tripoli, Algiers and Sana'a are now shadows or memories. They left, fled or were expelled under differing combinations of persecution, dispossession, insecurity and political pressure. Their histories differ, and I do not pretend otherwise.

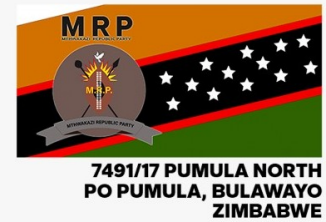
But governments should notice when an ancient minority concludes that it no longer has a future among them.

I speak about this as the leader of a people whose own mass killing by the state remains unresolved, whose dead still await full accounting, and whose



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history has too often been treated as an inconvenience to the national story. I do not compare our suffering with the Holocaust. I say only that we know something about what happens when a state decides that memory itself is negotiable.

If we are prepared to be honest about the failures of the past, we must be equally ambitious about the future.

We are trying to recover from decades of bad governance, economic decline and institutions that too often failed the people they were supposed to serve. We do not have the luxury of recreating those failures under a different flag.

A new country has one advantage that an old political system often does not. It can ask, from the beginning: what works?

We should look around the world without embarrassment. Where another country has found a better way to protect property, educate children, encourage enterprise, attract investment, develop technology, administer justice or protect minorities, we should study it. Where an institution works, we should learn from it. Mthwakazi should take the best ideas we can find and adapt them intelligently to our own circumstances.

Mthwakazi should not aspire merely to become another state. It should aspire to become an exceptionally well-governed one.

That is why I am prepared to say now, before we hold power, what a free Matabeleland will guarantee.

A movement that possesses no sovereign state can still declare in advance the terms on which it intends to govern. I would rather be held to a promise made in advance than praised for one made after the fact.

Equal citizenship. Irrespective of ethnicity, religion or language, as a founding constitutional principle and not a later amendment.

Equal protection of religious institutions. The synagogue, the church, the mosque and the traditional sacred place, protected on identical terms, without hierarchy among them.

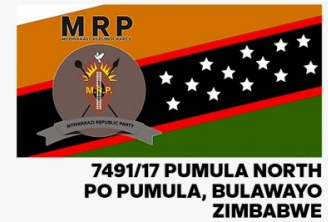
Rejection of scapegoating. A free Matabeleland will not tolerate the scapegoating of any community for the failures of the state. That includes antisemitism in all its forms, whether expressed as religious hatred or ethnic hostility, or repackaged for political convenience — because a country that permits hatred of its smallest community has already begun permitting hatred of everybody else.

Equal application of self-determination. Mthwakazi cannot demand recognition for itself while declaring the national self-determination of any other people uniquely



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illegitimate. A standard that applies to us must apply to everybody, and a standard that excludes one people alone is not a standard. It is a prejudice with paperwork.

Heritage and reconnection. The future state will establish a facilitated pathway to residence and citizenship for descendants of families with a documented historic connection to Matabeleland who wish to re-establish that connection, including descendants of the historic Jewish communities of Bulawayo and Matabeleland.

Nobody should have to be ethnically Ndebele to belong fully to Matabeleland.

Nobody should have to belong to the majority religion.

Nobody should have to surrender his history, her language, their faith or their identity in exchange for acceptance.

A Jewish child growing up in Bulawayo should be able to say, without qualification: this is my country too.

That is the standard. A future Matabeleland cannot demand justice for the Mthwakazi people while withholding it from anybody else. That would not be liberation. It would merely change who holds the power to exclude.

Today we possess no sovereign state, no national army, no treasury, no diplomatic service and no seat at the United Nations. But precisely because we are asking the world to judge whether we are capable of statehood, we should say in advance what we intend to do with state power if it is ever entrusted to us.

We intend to use it to protect belonging, not ration it.

I will go further, because a principle that costs nothing is not a principle.

A sovereign Matabeleland will establish full and resident diplomatic relations with the State of Israel from the beginning of its independence, and will apply to the Jewish people the same principle of national self-determination it claims for the people of Mthwakazi.

We do not make that commitment because we expect anything in return. We make it because one standard must mean one standard. A people asking the world to recognise its right to self-determination cannot ask the world to suspend that principle for somebody else.

Departure can tell a country something about itself. Return can tell it something too.

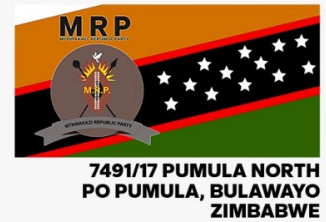
If one day Jewish families who left this country decide that their children once again have a future here, I will regard that not as a favour they have done for us, but as evidence that we have succeeded in changing what this country is.

It will tell us that we have begun to get the country right.



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And now the part I have been building toward.

To the Jews whose grandparents lived in Bulawayo. To the families who remember the streets, schools, shops, synagogues and homes of this city. To those now living in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Tel Aviv, London, New York, Sydney and elsewhere.

Come home.

Come and see the city your families helped build. Come and show your children where their grandparents lived. And if we succeed in creating the free, democratic and lawful Matabeleland for which we struggle, come and consider building here again.

We ask you to return because you belong to this history.

We ask you to return because your departure diminished us.

And we ask you to return because the country we intend to build must be one in which a small minority never again has to wonder whether there is a place for it.

Bring your children. Bring your traditions. Reopen institutions. Create new ones. Pray here if you wish. Build here if you wish. Teach here. Work here. Retire here. Raise your families here. Or simply come because this was once your family's home and you wish to make it home again.

We will protect your synagogue as we protect the church, the mosque and the traditional sacred place.

We will protect your property because the law protects everyone's property.

We will protect your freedom of worship because religious liberty belongs to everyone.

And we will protect your equality because citizens do not require the permission of a majority to belong.

If that requires us to humble ourselves before families who once concluded that their future could no longer be here, then we should humble ourselves. If we must ask them to trust us again, then we should ask.

A country's greatness is not measured by how powerful its majority becomes.

It is measured by how safe its smallest minority feels.

It is measured by whether people want to stay.

It is measured by whether those who left would ever trust us enough to return.

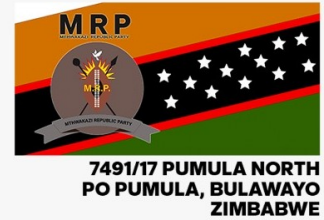
Come home.

Not to the country as it was.



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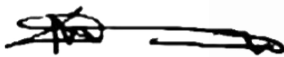
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Come home to the country we have learned that we must become.

A free country. A democratic country. A country governed by law. A country secure enough in its own identity that it has no reason to fear anybody else's.

That is the Matabeleland worth fighting for.

And that is the Matabeleland I hope will one day be worthy of welcoming its Jews home.



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