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From: **Zimbabwe Association (ZA)**, a charity working for Zimbabwean asylum seekers and refugees in the UK

To: News Desks, Home Affairs Correspondents

RETURNS TO ZIMBABWE – Government statement (Phil Woolas)

Most Zimbabweans are keen to go home and rebuild their country but **when** the time is right. The present precarious situation – with a new wave of attacks following Tsvangirai's recent withdrawal from the Inclusive Government and SADC foreign ministers holding political crisis talks in Harare - means they are understandably cautious about returning now.

Some of those who heeded Prime Minister Tsvangirai's call in June 2009 to return home have regretted their decision. One teacher emailed ZA to say:

“attempts to re-register for teaching have been futile as we are being punished for having been away in the UK”. The teacher is now “lying low for fear of victimisation”.

Another returnee, Edwin Chingami, was murdered in August 2009 by Zanu PF youths shortly after his return, for 'being a sell out'.

ZA welcomes the improvement of the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) package for those wishing to return home voluntarily.

However, it is disappointing that the Minister's statement contains the threat of enforced removals which means those thinking of returning home voluntarily will now be suspicious about the enhanced AVR package. It is counter-productive and will result in much stress and anxiety among the Zimbabwean community in the UK.

A more positive and constructive approach would be for the UKBA to focus on achieving a long-term sustainable return to Zimbabwe, when the conditions are right.

For further information and comments please contact:

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