

# Media Disinformation and the BBC

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

At a time of growing public disenchantment with the major media, millions now rely on alternate sources. Many online and print ones are credible. One of the world's most relied on is not – the BBC. It's an imperial tool, as corrupted as its dominant counterparts, been around longer than all of them, now in it for profit, and it's vital that people know who BBC represents and what it delivers.

It was close but not quite the world's first broadcaster. Other European nations claim the distinction along with KDKA Pittsburgh as the oldest US one. BBC's web site states: "The British Broadcasting Company Ltd (its original name) was formed in October 1922....and began broadcasting on November 14....By 1925 the BBC could be heard throughout most of the UK. (Its) biggest influence....was its general manager, John Reith (who) envisioned an independent British broadcaster able to educate, inform and entertain the whole nation, free from political interference and commercial pressure."

That's what BBC says. Here's a different view from Media Lens. It's an independent "UK-based media-watch project....offer(ing) authoritative criticism" reflecting "reality" that's free from the corrupting influence of media corporations and the governments they support.

Its creators and editors (Davids Cromwell and Edwards) ask: "Can the BBC tell the truth....when its senior managers are appointed by the government" and will be fired if they step out of line and become too critical. It notes that nothing "fundamentally changed since BBC founder Lord Reith wrote the establishment: 'They know they can trust us not to be really impartial.' " He didn't disappoint, nor have his successors like current Director-General and Chairman of the Executive Board Mark Thompson along with Michael Lyons, Chairman, BBC Trust that replaced the Board of Governors on January 1, 2007 and oversees BBC operations.

On January 1, 1927, BBC was granted a Royal Charter, made a state-owned and funded corporation, still pretends to be quasi-autonomous, and changed its name to its present one – The British Broadcasting Corporation. Its first Charter ran for 10 years, succeeding ones were renewed for equal fixed length periods, BBC is in its ninth Charter period, and is perhaps more dominant, pervasive and corrupted than ever in an age of marketplace everything and space-age technology with which to operate.

It's now the world's largest broadcaster, has about 28,000 UK employees and a vast number of worldwide correspondents and support staff nearly everywhere or close enough to get there for breaking news. It's government-funded from revenues UK residents pay monthly to operate their television receivers – currently around 22 US dollars, and it also has other growing income sources from its worldwide commercial operations supplementing its noncommercial ones at home.

Most important is how BBC functions, who it serves, and Media Lens' editors explain it best and keep at it with regular updates. They argue that the entire mass media, including BBC, function as a "propaganda system for elite interests." It's especially true for topics mattering most – war and peace, "vast corporate criminality," US-UK duplicity, and "threats to the very existence of human life." They're systematically "distorted, suppressed, marginalized or ignored" in a decades-long public trust betrayal by an organization claiming "honesty, integrity (is) what the BBC stands for (and it's) free from political influence and commercial pressure."

In fact, BBC abandoned those notions straight away, and a glaring example came during the 1926 General Strike. Its web site says it stood up against Chancellor of the Exchequer Winston Churchill who "urged the government to take over the BBC, but (general manager) Reith persuaded Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin that this would be against the national interest" it was sworn to serve.

Media Lens forthrightly corrects the record. Reith never embraced the public trust. He used BBC for propaganda, operated it as a strikebreaker, secretly wrote anti-union speeches for the Tories, and refused to give air time to worker representatives. It got BBC labeled the "British Falsehood Corporation," and proved from inception it was a reliable business and government partner. It still is, of course, more than ever.

Consider BBC's role during WW II when it became a de facto government agency, and throughout its existence job applicants have been vetted to be sure what side they're on. Noted UK journalist John Pilger explains that independent-minded ones "were refused BBC posts (and still are) because they were not considered safe."

Only "reliable" ones reported on the 1982 Falklands war, for example, that Margaret Thatcher staged to boost her low approval rating and improve her reelection chances. Leaked information later showed BBC executives ordered news coverage focused "primarily (on) government statements of policy" and to avoid impartiality considered "an unnecessary irritation."

This has been BBC practice since inception – steadfastly pro-government and pro-business with UK residents getting no public service back for their automatic monthly billings to turn on their TVs – sort of like force-fed cable TV, whether or not they want it.

Back on BBC's web site, it recounts its history by decades from the 1920s to the new millennium when post-9/11 controversies surfaced. BBC only cites one of them rather pathetically. This critique gives examples of its duplicity across the world.

### **Misreporting on Iraq - Deception over Truth**

The controversy BBC mentioned was the so-called Hutton Inquiry into the death of Ministry of Defense weapons expert Dr. David Kelly. On July 18, 2003, reports were he committed suicide, but they were dubious at best. Here how BBC explained it: "a bitter row with Government" emerged after a "Today programme suggested that the Government 'sexed up' the case for war with Iraq in a dossier of evidence about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. (BBC governors) backed the report, rejecting (PM) Tony Blair's (demands) for a retraction."

"The row escalated over the following weeks when editorial flaws became evident." Then

came Kelly's "suicide." It made daily headlines because he was the source of the BBC report. "The Hutton Inquiry followed, and on January 28, 2004 chairman Gavyn Davies resigned when Lord Hutton's findings were published. The following day the remaining governors accepted the resignation of Director-General Greg Dyke."

True to form, BBC suppressed the truth, so here's what we know. David Kelly, as an insider, accused authorities of faking a claim of Iraq WMDs that could be unleashed in 45 minutes with devastating effects. He then mysteriously turned up dead (three days after appearing before a televised government committee) to assure he'd tell no more tales with potentially smoking-gun evidence for proof. He apparently had plenty.

What BBC and the Blair government suppressed, a Kelly Investigation Group (KIG) examined and revealed. Consider these facts:

- Kelly's death was pronounced suicide without an autopsy;
- Lord Hutton was aging and never before chaired a public inquiry, let alone one this sensitive making daily headlines;
- no formal inquest was ordered and was subsumed into the Hutton Inquiry;
- evidence showed Kelly's body was moved twice;
- a supposed knife, bottle of water, glasses, and cap reported by later witnesses weren't seen by the first ones who found Kelly;

— hemorrhaging from a left wrist arterial wound was ruled the cause of death, but there was little blood to substantiate it; other suspicious findings also suggested a thorough independent investigation was warranted.

In fact, evidence became clear that the real agenda was cover-up. Key witnesses weren't called to testify. An anesthesiologist specialist read two KIG accounts (of known facts) about Kelly's death and concluded that "the whole 'suicide' story (was) phony in the extreme....He was clearly murdered." Another surgeon confirmed that Kelly couldn't have died of hemorrhage as reported. It's impossible to bleed to death from that kind of arterial severing.

Three other doctors also examined evidence, commented, and concluded that Kelly didn't commit suicide. The doctors and KIG then wrote an 11 page letter to the Coroner, cited their concerns in detail, and got no response. In a follow-up phone call, the Coroner said that he saw the police report and felt everything was in order.

In the meantime, the Hutton report came out and was leaked a day early to defuse a possible murder angle. Concurrently, the Coroner refused to reopen the investigation, the Hutton Inquiry was bogus, it never proved suicide and, in fact, was commissioned to suppress Blair government lies, whitewash the whole affair, and end it with considerable BBC help.

In this instance, things didn't play out as BBC planned, thanks to correspondent Andrew Gilligan. On May 29, 2003, he delivered what became known as his "6:07 AM dispatch" and said his source (David Kelly) alleged that the government "sexed up" the September dossier with the 45 minute WMD claim knowing it was false. He was immediately reigned in on subsequent accounts, but the damage was done, and Gilligan upped the stakes in a June 1

Mail on Sunday article.

In it, he quoted Kelly blaming Alastair Campbell (Blair government's 1997 – 2003 Director of Communications and Strategy) for embellishing the dossier to provide cause for war against Iraq. The fat was now in the fire with Kelly through Gilligan accusing the Blair government of lying and BBC having to find an out and get back to business as usual.

It wouldn't be simple with an exposed Campbell diary entry revealing he intended to go after Gilligan and apparently Kelly and do whatever it took to nail them. It all played out for days with Campbell demanding an apology and retraction, BBC wanting it to go away, Kelly's July death, and other Blair allies defending the government with threats about reviewing BBC's Charter until it ended predictably and disgracefully.

BBC cut a deal. Saying they resigned in late January 2004, it fired Gilligan along with Chairman Gavyn Davies and Director-General Greg Dyke. Even they weren't immune to dismissal at a time of an "aberrant" report that later proved true. For BBC, it was back to business as usual under new management supporting two illegal wars showing no signs of ending or BBC reporting truthfully about them.

From the start, it championed Tony Blair's "moral case for war," was a complicit cheerleader for it with the rest of the media, and found no fault with Washington and London's blaming Iraq's regime for what it didn't cause or could do nothing to prevent. Instead, round the clock propaganda ignored the facts and barely hinted at western responsibility for the most appalling crimes of war and against humanity that continue every day.

It's the way BBC reports on everything. Fiction substitutes for fact, news is carefully filtered, wars of aggression are called liberating ones, yet consider what former BBC political editor Andrew Marr wrote in his 2004 book on British journalism: Those in the trade "are employed to be studiously neutral, expressing little emotion and certainly no opinion; millions of people would say that news is the conveying of fact, and nothing more."

Even worse (and most humiliating) was his on-air 2003 post-Iraq invasion comment that he'd like to erase: "I don't think anybody (can dispute) Tony Blair. He said that they would be able to take Baghdad without a bloodbath, and that in the end the Iraqis would be celebrating. And on both these points he has been proved conclusively right. (Even) his critics (must) acknowledge that tonight he stands as a larger man and a stronger prime minister as a result."

So much for truth and accuracy and a free and impartial BBC. It continues to call a puppet prime minister legitimate; an occupied country liberated; a pillaged free market paradise "democracy;" with millions dead, displaced and immiserated unreported like it never happened.

### **Supporting Aggression in Afghanistan**

BBC was no better on Afghanistan and considered the war largely over when Kabul fell on November 13, 2001. The bombing continues, but it was yesterday's news, and only Taliban "crimes" matter. Unmentioned was how John Pilger portrayed the country in his newest book "Freedom Next Time." He called it more like a "moonscape" than a functioning nation and likely more abused and long-suffering than any other.

Contrast that description with BBC's reporting that Afghanistan is now free from "fear, uncertainty and chaos" because the US and UK "act(ed) benignly; (their) humanitarian military assault is beneficial (but those) meddlesome (Taliban) are trying (to) undermin(e) our good work." Unreported is what really lay behind the 9/11 attack and the price Afghans and Iraqis keep paying for it.

### **BBC's Disturbing Balkan Wars Reporting**

BBC's shame is endless, and consider how it reported on the 1990s Balkan wars that evoked popular support on the right and left. Slobodan Milosevic was unfairly vilified for the West's destruction of Yugoslavia. Things culminated disgracefully with a 1999 seventy-eight day NATO assault on Serbia. Its pretext was protecting Kosovo's Albanian population, but its real aim was quite different – removing a head of state obstacle to controlling Central Europe, then advancing east to confront a few others.

Milosevic was arrested in April 2001, abducted from his home, shipped off to The Hague, hung out to dry when he got there, then silenced to prevent what he knew from coming out that would explain the conflict's real aim and who the real criminals were.

The war's pretext was a ruse, Kosovo is a Serbian province but in 1999 was stripped away. Ever since, it's been a US-NATO occupied colony, denied its sovereignty, and run by three successive puppet prime ministers with known ties to organized crime and drugs trafficking. It's also home to one of America's largest military bases, Camp Bondsteel, and it's no exaggeration saying the territory is more military base than a functioning political entity.

Then on February 17, 2008, during a special parliamentary session, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence. It violated international law but got something more important – complicit western backing (outweighing a one-third EU nation block opposition). It also got one-sided BBC support. Its reporting took great care to ignore an illegal act, leave unmentioned that Kosovo is part of Serbia, or explain the UN's (1999) Security Council Resolution 1244. It recognizes the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" and only permits Kosovo's self-government as a Serbian province. No longer with plenty of BBC help making it possible.

### **Targeting Hugo Chavez and Assailing His Democratic Credentials**

BBC misreports everywhere at one time or other, depending on breaking world events and the way power elitists view them. Consider Venezuela and how BBC reported on Chavez's most dramatic two days in office and events preceding them. Its April 12, 2002 account disdained the truth and headlined "Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez (was) forced to resign by the country's military. (His) three years in power (ended) after a three-day general strike....in which 11 people died....more than 80 others (were) injured," and BBC suggested Chavez loyalists killed them. It reported "snipers opened fire on a crowd of more than 150,000 (and it) triggered a rebellion by the country's military."

During anti-Chavez demonstrations, "Mr. Chavez appeared on the state-run television denouncing the protest, (then BBC falsely reported corporate TV channels it called independent ones) were taken off the air by order of the government. (High-ranking) military officers rebell(ed) against Mr. Chavez. (He) finally quit after overnight talks with a delegation of generals at the Miraflores presidential palace."

"BBC's Adam Easton, in Caracas at the time, says there are noisy celebrations on the streets, (and former army general) Gueaipauro Lameda said Mr. Chavez's administration had been condemned because it began arming citizens' committees (and) these armed groups....fired at opposition protesters."

In another report, BBC was jubilant in quoting Venezuela's corporate press. They welcomed Chavez's ouster and called him an "autocrat," "incompetent" and a "coward." They accused him of "order(ing) his sharpshooters to open fire on innocent people (and) betray(ing his) country."

BBC went along without a hint of dissent or a word of the truth, but where was BBC when a popular uprising and military support restored Chavez to office two days later? It quietly announced a "chastened....Chavez return(ed) to office after the collapse of the interim government....and pledged to make necessary changes." In spite of vilifying him in the coup's run-up, cheerleading it when it happened and calling it a resignation, BBC put on a brave face. It had to be painful saying: "The UK welcomed Mr. Chavez's return to power, saying that any change of government should be achieved by democratic means."

It's hard imagining Caracas correspondents Greg Morsbach and James Ingham see it that way. Morsbach called the country a "left-wing haven" on the occasion of 100,000 people taking part in the 2006 World Social Forum in the capital. He said the city is "used to staging big events (opposing) 'neo-liberal' economic policies," then couldn't resist taking aim at Chavez. "Five hundred metres away from the (downtown) Hilton," Morsbach noted, "homeless people scavenge in dustbins for what little food they can find." He then quoted a man named Carlos "who spent the last three years sleeping rough on the streets" and felt Bolivarianism did nothing for him.

It's done plenty for Venezuelans but Morsbach won't report it. Under Chavez, social advances have been remarkable and consider two among many. According to Venezuela's National Statistics Institute (INE), the country's poverty rate (before Chavez) in 1997 was 60.94%. It dropped sharply under Bolivarianism to a low of 45.38% in 2001, rose to 62.09% after the crippling 2002-03 oil management lockout, and then plummeted to a low of around 27% at year end 2007. In addition, unemployment dropped from 15% in 1997 to INE's reported 6.2% in December 2007.

Morsbach also omitted how Chavez is tackling homelessness. He's reducing it with programs like communal housing, drug treatment and providing modest stipends for the needy. His goal - "for there (not) to be a single child in the streets....not a single beggar in the street." It's working through Mission Negra Hipolita that guides the homeless to shelters and rehab centers. They provide medical and psychological care and pay homeless in them a modest amount in return for community service. No mention either compares Venezuela under Chavez to America under George Bush (and likely Britain under anyone) where no homeless programs exist, the problem is increasing, nothing is being done about it, and the topic is taboo in the media.

Instead in a BBC profile, Chavez is called "increasingly autocratic, revolutionary (and) combative." He's a man who's "alienated and alarmed the country's traditional political elite, as well as several foreign governments," (and he) court(s) controversy (by) making high-profile visits to Cuba and Iraq" and more. He "allegedly flirt(s) with leftist rebels in Colombia and mak(es) a huge territorial claim on Guyana."



The account then implies Chavez is to blame for “relations with Washington reach(ing) a new low (because he) accused (the Bush administration) of fighting terror with terror” post-9/11, and in a September 2006 UN General Assembly speech called the president “the devil.”

Chavez’s December 2007 constitutional reform referendum was also covered. It was defeated, the profile suggested controversial elements in it, but omitted explaining its objective – to deepen and broaden Venezuelan democracy, more greatly empower the people, provide them more social services, and make government more accountable to its citizens. Instead, BBC highlighted White House spokeswoman Dana Perino saying: Venezuelans “spoke their minds, and they voted against the reforms that Hugo Chavez had recommended and I think that bodes well for the country’s future and freedom and liberty.”

In another piece, Inghram took aim at the country’s “whirlwind of nationalisations, and threats to private companies (are) changing Venezuela’s economic climate and threaten to widen a tense social divide.” It’s part of Chavez’s “campaign to turn Venezuela into a socialist state” with suggestive innuendoes about what that implies, omitting its achievements, and reporting nothing about how business in the country is booming or that Chavez’s approach is pragmatic.

Instead, Inghram cites his critics saying “his plan is all about power” (and) bring(ing) no benefit to the nation” in lieu of letting business run it as their private fiefdom. It’s how they’ve always done it, Venezuelans were deeply impoverished as a result, and BBC loves taking aim at a leader who wants to change things for the better and is succeeding.

It refers to his “stepp(ing) up his radical revolution since being re-elected in December 2006.” Venezuela is “very divided” and its president “far too powerful (and) can rule by decree” – with no explanation of Venezuela’s Enabling Law, his limited authority under it, its expiration after 18 months, and that Venezuela’s (pre-Bolivarian) 1961 constitution gave comparable powers to four of the country’s past presidents.

BBC further assailed Chavez’s refusal to review one of RCTV’s operating licenses and accused him of limiting free expression. Unreported was the broadcaster’s tainted record, its lack of ethics or professional standards, and its lawless behavior. Specifically omitted was its leading role in instigating and supporting the aborted April 2002 coup and its subsequent complicity in the 2002-03 oil-management lockout and multi-billion dollar sabotage against state oil company PDVSA.

Despite it, RCTV got a minor slap on the wrist, lost only its VHF license, and it still operates freely on Venezuelan cable and satellite. Yet, if an American broadcaster was as lawless, it would be banned from operating, and its management (under US law) could be prosecuted for sedition or treason for instigating and aiding a coup d’etat against a sitting president. BBC ignored RCTV’s offense, assailed Hugo Chavez unjustifiably, and reported in its usual deferential to power way.

It falsely stated RCTV’s license wasn’t renewed because “it supported opposition candidates (and said) hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in Caracas....some to celebrate, others to protest.” Unexplained was that pro-government supporters way outnumbered opponents, it’s the same every time, and they gather spontaneously for every public Chavez address. Also ignored is that opposition demonstrations are usually small and staged-for-media events so BBC and anti-Chavistas in the press can call them huge and a

sign Chavez's support is waning. As BBC put it this time: The situation "highlight(s), once again, how deeply divided Venezuela is" under its "controversial" president – who's popular support is so considerable BBC won't report it.

### BBC's War Against Mugabe

On April 4, The New York Times correspondent Michael Wines wrote what BBC often reports: "New Signs of Mugabe Crackdown in Zimbabwe." It highlighted "police raids....against the main opposition party, foreign journalists (and) rais(ed) the specter of a broad crackdown (to keep) the country's imperiled leaders in power."

Below is what BBC reported the same day in one of its continuing inflammatory accounts in the wake of Zimbabwe's March 29 presidential and parliamentary elections. It pitted the country's African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) President Robert Mugabe against two opponents – the misnamed Movement for Democratic Change's (MDC) Morgan Tsvangirai (a western recruited stooge) and independent candidate Simba Makoni.

In its role as an unabashed Tsvangirai cheerleader, BBC headlined: "Mugabe's ZANU-PF prepares for battle" after its parliamentary defeat – MDC winning 99 seats; ZANU-PF 97 (including an uncontested one); a breakaway MDC faction 10 seats and an independent, one, in Zimbabwe's 210 constituencies with only 206 seats being contested; ZANU didn't contest one seat, and three MDC candidates died in the run-up to the poll.

Results for the 60 (largely ceremonial) Senate seats were announced April 5 with ZANU-PF winning 30 and the combined opposition gaining the same number. In addition, ZANU-PF announced 16 parliamentary seats are being contested and ordered recounts for them that could change the electoral balance. Mugabe is also challenging the presidential tally, asked the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to delay releasing it and wants it retabulated because of what he calls "errors and miscalculations."

MDC officials called the move illegal, BBC seems eager to agree, and then went on the attack the way it always does against independent black republics. It can't tolerate them, but it's especially hostile to Zimbabwe. It's the former Rhodesia that British-born South African businessman, politician and De Beers chief Cecil Rhodes founded shortly after Britain invaded in 1893 and conquered Matabeleland. UK soldiers and volunteers were given 6000 (stolen) acres of land and within a year controlled the area's 10,000 most fertile square miles through a white supremacist land grab. They went further as well, confiscated cattle, and coerced the native Ndebele people into forced labor. Brits also exploited the Shonas, they rebelled, and a year later were crushed at the cost of 8000 African lives.

Decades of exploitation followed, a 1961 constitution was drafted to keep whites in power, Rhodesia declared its independence in 1965, but Britain intervened to protect white privilege. UN sanctions and guerrilla war followed, Southern Rhodesia declared itself a republic in 1970, then became the independent nation of Zimbabwe (the former Southern Rhodesia, then just Rhodesia in 1964) in April 1980 after 1979 elections created independent Zimbabwe Rhodesia.

Robert Mugabe was elected president, won overwhelmingly, remained the country's leader for 28 years, and at age 84 ran again for another term on March 29. He's called outspoken, controversial, and polarizing but for millions in Zimbabwe (and in Africa) he's a hero of his nation's liberation struggle against white supremacist rule.



America, Britain and other colonial powers, however, don't view him that way, and therein lies today's conflict. A racist UK can't tolerate an independent black republic and uses its state-owned BBC to vilify Mugabe and target him for regime change in a pattern all too familiar.

In a close March 29 election, vote-rigging is suspected, results days later weren't announced, and BBC accused ZANU-PF of knowing and concealing them as well as governing dictatorially. With no official totals, it stated "Mugabe....failed to pass the 50% barrier needed to avoid a second-round run-off." It's now been announced, by law must be held within 21 days of March 29 (by or before April 19), but AP reports "diplomats in Harare (the capital) and at the UN said Mugabe (wants) a 90 day delay to give security forces time to clamp down."

BBC expects trouble, appears trying to incite it, and denounces Mugabe loyalists as hard-line, militant and known for their violence. In battle mode, correspondent Grant Ferret from Johannesburg (BBC's banned from Zimbabwe because of its anti-Mugabe reporting) states: "Intimidation is....likely to be part of the second round. Offices used by the opposition were ransacked on Thursday night (April 3) (and) two foreign nationals (were) detained (for) violating the country's media laws." An NGO worker "promoting democracy" was also detained.

Correspondent Ian Pannell joins the assault. He stresses a crumbling economy, out-of-control inflation, people unable to cope and talking everywhere about "a struggle to make ends meet." They "spend hours queuing at the bank or waiting in line at a bakery where lines stretch around the corners. Many shops have as many empty shelves as full ones," Zimbabweans are suffering, and "80% of the workforce" has no regular job. People survive anyway they can, there's "a thriving black market," overseas remittances help, but "fields (are) without crops, shops without goods, petrol stations....low or empty, women at the side of the road begging for food, traders desperate for customers and hard currency."

There's no denying Zimbabwe is under duress, but BBC won't explain why. It never reported that ever since Mugabe's ZANU-PF ended white supremacist rule, he's been vilified for being independent, redistributing white-owned farms, mostly (but not entirely) staying out of the IMF's clutches, and waging a valiant struggle to prevent a return to an exploited past.

Doing it hasn't been easy, however. It's meant getting little or no outside aid, bending the rules, restraining civil liberties, banning hostile journalism like BBC's, but up to now (most often) holding reasonably free and fair elections and winning every time. Despite Zimbabwe's problems, Mugabe's popular support has been strong, especially from the country's war veterans who didn't fight for freedom to hand it back to new colonial masters.

But it looks like that's where Zimbabwe is heading. The March 29 election showed weakness. The opposition made it close and forced a runoff (unless a retabulated count shows otherwise). It controls the parliament (barring a retallied change) and has strong western support that smells blood. Behind the scenes, regime change is planned and this time may succeed. An 84 year old Mugabe's time may be passing - if not now, soon.

Zimbabwe's economy has collapsed, drought problems have been severe, food and fuel shortages are acute, 83% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day, half the people are malnourished, more than 10% of children die before age five, and the country's HIV/AIDS rate is the fourth highest in the world. In addition, average life expectancy plunged to 37.3

years, inflation is out of control, conditions are disastrous, and it was mostly engineered by 2002 western-imposed sanctions.

Fifteen EU member states and Australia support them plus America after passage of the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 (ZIDERA). Its effect has been devastating on an already weakened economy. It cut off the country's access to foreign capital and credit, denied its efforts to reschedule debt, froze financial and other assets of ZANU-PF officials and companies linked to them, and effectively brought the economy to its knees.

ZIDERA states that economic and other sanctions will be enforced until the US president certifies that the "rule of law has been restored in Zimbabwe, including respect for ownership and title to property....and an end to lawlessness." Unmentioned is the Act's real purpose - restoring white supremacist rule, exploiting the black majority and doing to Zimbabwe what's happening throughout Africa and in nearly all other developing states.

If Mugabe goes, the IMF can swoop in with a promised \$2 billion (renewable) aid package for a new MDC government with the usual strings attached - sweeping structural adjustments, privatizing everything, ending social services, mandating mass layoffs, crushing small local businesses, escalating poverty, and returning the country to its colonial past under new millennium management under a black stooge of a president to make it all look legitimate.

BBC has a role in this, and it's been at it for decades. It's waged a multi-year anti-Mugabe jihad and seems now to be going for broke. For days, broadcasts practically scream regime change. Reports are inflammatory, visibly one-sided, with correspondents saying (MDC's) Tsvangirai won, election results are being withheld, no runoff is necessary, and when it's held Mugabe will use violence to retain power.

On April 5, BBC quoted Tsvangirai accusing Mugabe of "preparing to go to war against the country's people (and) deploying troops and armed militias to intimidate voters ahead of a possible runoff....thousands of army recruits are being recruited, militants are being rehabilitated and some few claiming to be war veterans are already on the warpath."

Tsvangirai wants the courts to force officials to release the results, Zimbabwe's High Court is hearing MDC's petition, but earlier it was claimed "armed police prevented MDC lawyers" from petitioning the Court to get them. BBC quoted one of them saying "police had threatened to shoot them," then quoted Tsvangirai again saying Zimbabwe's central bank was printing money for bribes and government-financed violence and intimidation campaigns.

BBC also suggests that international intervention is needed "to prevent violence if a second round is held (because) violence and intimidation (have) been characteristic of past (Zimbabwe) elections." It quotes another MDC spokesman saying ZANU-PF will "use a runoff to exact revenge....it's a strategy for retribution."

Its correspondent Peter Biles reports "the ruling party remains divided....many (want) a change of leadership, and believe under Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe has no future." BBC hammers at this daily in a full-court press to force out Mugabe either willingly or with outside intervention, and now is the time.

A broadcaster is supposed to be neutral, fair and balanced and BBC states "Honesty and

integrity (is) what (it) stands for.” BBC is dedicated to “educate (and) inform, free from political interference and commercial pressure.”

The US-based Society of Professional Journalists states in its Preamble that it’s the “duty of the journalist (to seek) truth and provid(e) a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. (They must) strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility....Seek truth and report it....honestly, fairly, courageously.”

In serving power against the public interest for 86 years, BBC fails on all counts.

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