

Unity Accord

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Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo

The Unity Accord was an agreement between Zimbabwe's two major nationalists movements namely the [Zimbabwe African People's Union](#) led by [Joshua Nkomo](#) and the [Zimbabwe African National Union](#) led by [Robert Mugabe](#). The agreement was signed on 22 December in 1987 to form a united nationalist political party and end ethnic violence which had marred the country since the early 1980s.

Background

Soon after the country attained independence in 1980, there was a brutal suppression of Zimbabwean civilians, mostly supporters of Joshua Nkomo, by Zimbabwe's North Korean trained 5th Brigade in the predominantly [Ndebele](#) regions of Zimbabwe. The sad event which became known as the [Gukurahundi](#) massacres claimed 20,000 innocent lives. Former Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA)

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combatants waged armed banditry against the civilians in Matabeleland, and destroyed government installations.^[1] Both ZAPU's [Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army](#) (ZIPRA), and ZANU's [Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army](#) (ZANLA), developed rivalries for the support of the people and would fight each other. When Zimbabwe won independence, there was therefore need for peace between the two sides which had fought against the settler regime in the 1970s.

Agreement



Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo signing the Unity Accord in 1987

On the 22nd of December 1987, Nkomo and Mugabe signed an agreement that merged the two parties into one. On 18 April 1988, Mugabe announced an amnesty for all dissidents, and Nkomo called on them to lay down their arms and 22 dissidents surrendered in the following weeks. That marked the end of the dissidents problem. The provisions of the agreement are:

- That Zanu-PF and PF-Zapu have irrevocably committed themselves to unite under one political party
- That the unity of two political parties shall be achieved under the name [Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front](#) (Zanu PF)
- That President Mugabe shall be First Secretary and President of Zanu PF
- That Zanu PF shall have two second secretaries and Vice-Presidents who shall be appointed by the First Secretary and President of Zanu PF
- That Zanu PF shall seek to establish a socialist society in Zimbabwe on the guidance of Marxist-Leninist principles
- That Zanu PF shall seek to establish one-party state in Zimbabwe
- That leadership of Zanu PF shall abide by leadership code
- That existing structures of Zanu PF and PF-Zapu shall be merged in accordance with the letter and spirit of this agreement

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- That both parties shall, in the interim, take immediate vigorous steps to eliminate and end insecurity and violence prevalent in Matabeleland
- That Zanu PF and PF-Zapu shall convene their respective congresses to give effect to this Agreement within the shortest possible time
- That, in the interim comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe is vested with full powers to prepare for the implementation of this agreement and to act in the name and authority of Zanu PF.^[2]

Unity Day

22 December was made a public holiday in 1997 and since then it is remembered for bringing together peace and reconciliation. It is marked with national celebrations among them sporting events, including a soccer championship in which the winning team receives the Unity Cup. In the city of [Masvingo](#), the general public and leading political figures gather at the Great Zimbabwe National Monuments for a concert featuring a number of musicians.

Legacy and Meaning

The Unity Day in Zimbabwean history has become associated with ethnic unity cohesion between the country's major ethnic groups; the [Shona](#) and the [Ndebele](#). It has been celebrated in various ways and it has been declared a national holiday on Zimbabwe's calendar. Joshua Nkomo cemented his *Father Zimbabwe* title due to his role in bringing a unified Patriotic Front. ZANU PF nationalists have painted a somewhat glorious picture of the Unity Accord by stressing the developmental aspects of the agreement.^[3]

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References

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