

Evicted Landowners Seek Compensation

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A group of Germans and Austrians whose farmlands in Zimbabwe were expropriated during the regime of former president Robert Mugabe has asked a U.S. federal court to confirm an International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) award in their favor worth more than \$260 million, reports [Lexis Legal News](#).

In 2010, members of the von Pezold family commenced arbitration before the ICSID, alleging that the Republic of Zimbabwe breached the Germany-Zimbabwe and Switzerland-Zimbabwe bilateral investment treaties by expropriating their ownership rights, water rights and permits to use agricultural properties in Zimbabwe.

Dating back to the early 20th century when the nation was known as South Rhodesia, the von Pezolds' ownership rights include an interest in Zimbabwe's largest tobacco growing and curing operation.

In the mid-2000s, Zimbabwe compulsorily acquired mostly white-owned commercial farm properties with the stated aim of distributing them among landless Black peasants.

On July 28, 2015, the ICSID tribunal ordered Zimbabwe to return the properties and their water rights to the von Pezolds. Zimbabwe appealed but lost. On Nov. 21, 2018, an ICSID committee ordered Zimbabwe to bear in full the arbitration costs and compensate the von Pezolds for 50 percent of their attorney fees and expenses plus interest.

In their petition to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the von Pezolds state that under the awards with interest, as of July 16, 2021, Zimbabwe owes them \$263,210,747.65, £10,137,881.88, ZAR745,498.49 and €1,163.13, with interest continuing to accrue.

Tobacco Reporter has extensively covered the aftermath of Zimbabwe's controversial land reforms, most recently in June 2018.

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