

## Lancaster House Agreement

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### Proceedings During the Lancaster Talks

The **Lancaster House Agreement** was a political consensus which brought the independence of [Zimbabwe](#) from Rhodesian rule. The agreement came into being after a series of negotiations between the nationalist parties and the Rhodesian Front between September and December 1979.<sup>[1]</sup> The Agreement was facilitated by the British and the American governments to bring to an end the 14 year war in Rhodesia between the Rhodesians and the guerrilla movements.

### Prelude to the Agreement

The emergence of nationalist movements such as the [Zimbabwe African National Union](#) (ZANU), the [Zimbabwe African People's Union](#), the United National African Congress (UANC) and the [National Development Party](#) (NDP) had brought massive political instability in the colony of Rhodesia.<sup>[2]</sup> This was because of the conflicting ideologies which existed between the minority Rhodesian Front and the above mentioned nationalist movements. These problems catapulted into a full scale war between the two opposing parties.

The front-line states such as Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, backed by the International powers such as Britain and the USA forged for a political truce through a negotiated settlement.<sup>[2]</sup> This resulted in

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the calling for a peace conference. The warring parties met between September and December in 1979 for deliberations on the way forward.

## Countries in Attendance

1. Britain (Host)
2. United States of America
3. Tanzania
4. Mozambique
5. Zambia
6. Rhodesia.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Political Movements and Representatives

1. The Rhodesian Front- [Ian Smith](#)
2. Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)- [Robert Mugabe](#)
3. Zimbabwe African Patriotic Front (ZAPU)- [Joshua Nkomo](#)
4. The United African National Congress (UANC)- Bishop [Abel Muzorewa](#)<sup>[4]</sup>

## The Agreement

The Conference opened on 10 September 1979 under the chairmanship of Lord Carrington, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The Conference concluded on 15 December, after 47 plenary sessions. The final peace agreement was signed on 21 December 1979. The major signatories were as follows; [Ian Smith](#)- Rhodesian Front, [Robert Mugabe](#) and [Joshua Nkomo](#)- Patriotic Front, and [Abel Muzorewa](#). At the Lancaster House Agreement in 1979, [Josiah Tongogara](#) was a crucial "moderating" force, according to Lord Carrington, the then British Foreign Secretary, who chaired the talks.

## Critical issues

### Land reform

Land reform emerged as a critical issue during the Lancaster House Talks. Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo insisted on the redistribution of land—by compulsory seizure, without compensation—as a precondition to a negotiated peace settlement. This was reflective of prevailing attitudes in their guerrilla armies, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) respectively, and rural support bases, which had high expectations of the redistribution of land. The British government, which mediated the talks, proposed a constitutional clause underscoring property ownership as an inalienable right to prevent a mass exodus of white farmers and the economic collapse of the country. This was enshrined in Section 16 of the Zimbabwean Constitution, 1980. To secure Mugabe and Nkomo's support for the constitutional agreement, Lord Carrington announced that the United Kingdom would be prepared to assist land resettlement with technical

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assistance and financial aid. The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations, Sir Shridath Ramphal, also received assurances from the American ambassador in London, Kingman Brewster, that the United States would likewise contribute capital for "a substantial amount for a process of land redistribution and they would undertake to encourage the British government to give similar assurances

## Terms of the Agreement

1. The Independence of [Zimbabwe](#) was to be achieved through suffrage and all qualified citizens were to vote.
2. The independent state was to form the [Zimbabwe National Army](#)
3. Land was to be redistributed on Willing Buyer Willing Seller basis for the first 10 years awaiting policy review.
4. A new democratic constitution crafted at Lancaster was to be deployed soon after elections.
5. All concerned parties were to be disarmed and stop the war.
6. Elections were to be held by March 1980.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Parties Consensus

In concluding the Agreement, all parties present pledged to;

1. to accept the authority of the Governor;
2. to abide by the Independence Constitution;
3. to comply with the pre-independence arrangements;
4. to abide by the cease-fire agreement;
5. to campaign peacefully and without intimidation;
6. to renounce the use of force for political ends;
7. to accept the outcome of the elections and instruct any forces under their authority to do the same.<sup>[4]</sup>

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## References

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