

SA marketer looks to return to Zim

SA marketing and communications firm Media Revolution, which has its roots in Zimbabwe, is optimistic that it will be able to reopen operations in Zimbabwe under the new dispensation.



Dharmesh Nagar, Media Revolution strategy director.

Dharmesh Nagar, strategy director of marketing and communications company Media Revolution, says he was forced to close his Harare office due to the increasingly complex and challenging business environment that prevailed in Zimbabwe in recent years.

“Despite our long and successful track record in helping Zimbabwean businesses grow across borders, the business environment became untenable in 2015 and 2016. Foreign exchange and payments became a key challenge, while politically connected business partners operated outside of the normal parameters of business, to the detriment of all businesses attempting to operate ethically,” he says.

Nagar reports that his own business fell victim to unethical business practices, losing over USD20,000 to a fraudulent business partner who successfully evaded making payment.

“In that environment, there were also reports of media corruption, whereby anyone with cash in hand could ‘buy’ skewed coverage in the media,” says Nagar. “We ourselves fell victim to this practice, with the result that we were forced to close our Zimbabwean office.”

However, with a long history of partnerships with leading Zimbabwean enterprises, Media Revolution is optimistic that Zimbabwe's new political order will pave the way for a return of the diaspora.

"Media Revolution was born out of Zimbabwe, and has partnered with numerous Zimbabwean enterprises that have immense potential for expansion across the continent. In recent years, we saw those enterprises severely challenged in communicating and trading across borders."

Nagar believes Zimbabwe's extensive natural resources and entrepreneurial spirit simply needs an enabling environment in order to thrive once more.

"We have witnessed exceptional potential across all sectors in Zimbabwe. With the right levels of transparency and business ethics, a legislative framework that supports foreign trade, and an administration that eliminates corruption, we believe Zimbabwean businesses can quickly start flourishing."

Nagar is hopeful that a new order in the country will create an environment for fresh beginnings. "The newly sworn-in President Emmerson Mnangagwa's new cabinet is already reported to be putting in extra hours at work as a new work ethic takes root in government, while there are strong signs that foreign investment and new business will be encouraged.

"We are therefore encouraged by the recent changes, and we hope to return to Zimbabwe soon – both to seek justice and restitution, but also to resume our work in helping local businesses build an international presence and help them grow," he says.

"In line with the call by war veterans head Chris Mutsvangwa, who recently urged the diaspora to help restore legitimacy and democracy in Zimbabwe, Media Revolution is committed to ensuring this happens and we will support the new dispensation in every possible way."

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