

## Britain To Offer Help To Citizens In Zimbabwe To Return Home

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Britain will offer help to elderly and vulnerable citizens in Zimbabwe to resettle here, the Foreign Office said Wednesday.

The assistance will be offered to an estimated 3,000 Britons in the southern African country who are either over the age of 70, suffer from medical conditions or have various care requirements over the next 18 months.

"The government is offering assistance to a small proportion of older and vulnerable British people to help them resettle in the UK if they choose to but are unable to make arrangements on their own," a ministry spokeswoman said.

She added, however, that the British embassy in Harare "is not advising British people to leave Zimbabwe and continues to provide a full range of consular services to those who remain."

The spokeswoman added that while Britain recognised a power-sharing accord had been struck between rival political factions in Zimbabwe, "some British people have been badly affected by the collapse of Zimbabwean infrastructure and we cannot expect this to be put right overnight."

Britain estimates that up to 750 households will want to take up the offer in the next 18 months.

Zimbabwe, which was a British colony until 1980, was once seen as a post-colonial success story, but has since been brought to its knees by the collapse of its economy since the turn of the decade and the inflation rate is now the highest in the world.

The economic crisis has crippled Zimbabwe's health infrastructure, with the World Health Organisation saying Tuesday that a cholera outbreak in the country has killed 3,688 people and infected 77,650 since August.

The charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has said that Zimbabwe's health system was in a state of collapse and resembled that of a country at war.

Source : Sapa-AFP /po/gj

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