

## Zimbabweans to launch independent TV station

A new privately-owned television station begins broadcasting in Zimbabwe this week, hoping to provide an independent voice ahead of elections, a company spokesman said Wednesday.



Spokesman for 1st TV, Temba Hove, said the station would broadcast "impartial, factual news to the people of Zimbabwe as well as popular soap operas and comedies".

With broadcast media dominated by state-controlled outlets favourable to President Robert Mugabe, Hove said the channel would serve as a platform for "all people to express their views".

"Thirty-three years after independence it is high time that the people get what they demand and deserve in respect to their right to information."

The new television will be run by Hove, a former producer-presenter at the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and Andrew Chadwick who once worked for Mugabe's rival Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai.

Zimbabwe currently has one television station owned by the public broadcaster Zimbabwe Broadcasting Station (ZBC), which also runs four radio stations.

Two independent television stations launched in the mid-1990s went off air following funding challenges.

Following the loss of signal from South Africa's SABC, Zimbabweans have relied on the Wiztech free-to-air platform to access alternative television stations.

Political rivals have long complained that the domestic media is used to puff up Mugabe and denigrate his opponents.

Opening up the airwaves was among the reforms agreed to in the pact which gave birth to the power-sharing government between Mugabe and Tsvangirai.