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Zimbabwe halts rent-a-corpse scam

Two mortuary workers in Zimbabwe have been arrested for allegedly renting out corpses to motorists to enable them to buy fuel.

Most service stations in Zimbabwe give preference in fuel queues to people with burial orders or those taking dead relatives for burial.



Petrol queues can stretch for a mile or more

The state-owned Herald newspaper reported that the two men were also accused of selling fake burial orders to motorists who then took the corpses to service stations.

Police spokeswoman Cecilia Churu told the Associated Press the two workers were arrested on Thursday after security guards at the hospital in the town of Chitungwiza, 24 kilometres (15 miles) south of Harare, noticed a coffin being returned to the morgue.

The two men are expected to appear in court on charges of violating dead bodies.

The fuel situation is a symptom of the country's economic crisis. Fuel prices have gone up 600% since February.

Mile-long queues are the result, and a further burden on hard-pressed businesses already under pressure by the combination of rampant inflation, an unrealistic exchange rate and government price controls which have worsened shortages instead of easing them.

Zimbabwe has been suffering a serious fuel shortage since November when a barter deal with Libya collapsed.

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