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Zambian authorities transfer opposition leader **Hakainde Hichilema** to a maximum security prison as he awaits a High Court trial over treason charges. The ruling Patriotic Front (PF) party continues its crackdown on opposition parties as 48 members of parliament (MPs) from Hichilema's United Party for National Development (UPND) are suspended and police stop UPND rallies around the country. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will decide in August whether to approve a \$1.3 billion credit facility. President Edgar Lungu (2015-present) launches the 7th national development plan (NDP), which focuses on four main sectors – agriculture, tourism, mining and manufacturing.

Hichilema transferred to a maximum security prison to await High Court trial

The trial of imprisoned opposition leader **Hakainde Hichilema** will be moved to the **High Court of Zambia** after a **Lusaka** magistrate refused on 8 June to throw out the treason charge against him.¹ The **Lusaka Magistrates Court** granted Hichilema the right to seek judicial review on 26 May because the police officer who issued the trial paper with charges of treason did not have the authority to do so (see *ARC Briefing Zambia May 2017*).² Hichilema must now wait for an allocation to a High Court judge who will then set dates for the trial.³

*"This matter, like any other, will have to be cause-listed and may not come up soon. It may take weeks ... [or] even months unless the judge in charge can move it up the cause-list given the public interest surrounding the matter... The trial itself may take some time and if past cases of this nature are to go by, this may take years which is probably what [the government] will be hoping for."*⁴

In addition to possible large delays, analysts are also concerned about the politicisation of the high court and Zambian judiciary.

*"The high court, and judiciary in general, is largely seen to be politicised and it is yet to be seen how they will behave on this particular case. A high court judge in charge was recently transferred to the [lower] industrial relations court shortly after ruling against the ruling party candidate in an election petition – a move that was seen as arising from political pressure."*⁵

Hichilema was transferred from a prison in Lusaka to **Mukobeko** maximum security prison in **Kabwe** on 9 June where he will await trial.⁶ According to Hichilema's lawyer, **Jack Mwiimbu**,

*"...there was a court order that they should be at Lusaka prison but [the authorities] have gone against [it]. [Hichilema] was forcibly removed from Lusaka prison."*⁷

¹ Zambia Reports, 8 Jun 2017.

² Zambia Reports, 8 Jun 2017.

³ Zambia Reports, 8 Jun 2017.

⁴ Source, political analyst, Lusaka

⁵ Source, political analyst, Lusaka

⁶ Mail & Guardian Africa, 12 Jun 2017.

⁷ Mail & Guardian Africa, 12 Jun 2017.

Hichilema, along with five **United Party for National Development (UPND)** members, was arrested on 11 April for reportedly failing to give way to the presidential motorcade on 8 April (see *ARC Briefing Zambia April 2017*).⁸ The Lusaka Magistrates court acquitted Hichilema of using insulting language against the president, **Edgar Lungu** (2015-present), on 15 May, and dropped its charge of disobeying orders on 11 May, leaving treason as the last remaining charge against Hichilema (see *ARC Briefing Zambia May 2017*). However, speaker of the national assembly **Patrick Matibini**, filed a complaint on 13 June to the police against Hichilema for alleged disparaging and contemptuous remarks against the speaker.⁹

Matibini's complaint comes at the same time as his 30-day suspension of 48 UPND members of parliament (MPs) for boycotting Lungu's address to parliament on 17 March.¹⁰ The MPs are banned from entering parliament and will not be paid for the duration of the suspension.¹¹ While all 58 UPND MPs boycotted Lungu's speech, the remaining ten had officially excused themselves from parliamentary business on the day of the president's speech and were thus not suspended.¹²

"[A] suspension of this magnitude is bad for democracy and worse still when the ban is [of the] one major opposition political party in a parliament where the ruling party already has majority vote. [Patriotic Front (PF)] MPs were, before the suspension, caught on a recording inciting the speaker to suspend the MPs for six or more months so they can then easily make changes to legislation."¹³

The government maintains that Lungu was not involved in the suspension of the opposition members and that it,

"... [is] commenting on this matter only as far as it goes to explain that the government is not involved at all. Parliament has taken action against the members who misconducted themselves and breached standing orders. The president has no position on the proceedings of Parliament, and the Executive has absolutely nothing to do with the suspension of the UPND MPs."¹⁴

Despite the suspension, analysts do not predict much of a change in the behavior of the parliament.

"In terms of changing anything, I don't think their absence will make any difference given they are already in minority and the ruling party is able to pass anything they want even when they are around. What will be missed is the voice and representation."¹⁵

The apparent crackdown against UPND members has continued. Police arrested five UPND executive committee members in **Mongu (Western Province)** on 23 June for attempting to hold a press briefing demanding the release of Hichilema without obtaining the necessary prior permission of the police.¹⁶ On the same day, police in **Ndola (Copperbelt Province)**, Zambia's third largest city, stopped a UPND demonstration demanding Hichilema's release, which was deemed illegal.¹⁷

Civil society and religious leaders have condemned the arrest and detention. Church leaders, including the **Council of Churches in Zambia**, the **Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia** and the **Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops**, released a joint statement on 16 June which stated that "Zambia eminently qualifies to be branded a dictatorship"¹⁸ and that,

⁸ Mail & Guardian Africa, 12 Jun 2017.

⁹ Zambia Reports, 16 Jun 2017.

¹⁰ RFI Africa, 14 Jun 2017.

¹¹ RFI Africa, 14 Jun 2017.

¹² RFI Africa, 14 Jun 2017.

¹³ Source, political analyst, Lusaka

¹⁴ Multiple sources: Times Zambia, 16 Jun 2017; RFI Africa, 14 Jun 2017.

¹⁵ Source, political analyst, Lusaka

¹⁶ Zambia Daily Mail, 24 Jun 2017.

¹⁷ Zambia Daily Mail, 24 Jun 2017.

¹⁸ RFI Africa, 16 Jun 2017.

*"[Hichilema] is not an ordinary criminal but a political prisoner who should be treated with respect. We therefore call for the release of [Hichilema] from prison. [If that is not an option, then] if he is charged with treason, an unbailable offence, let him be under house arrest as the trial goes on instead of treating him as if he has already been found guilty."*¹⁹

Government leaders in the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** have remained silent.²⁰ Other than **South African** opposition leader **Mmusi Maimane**, who was refused entry into Zambia when he tried to attend Hichilema's trial in May, there has been no statement from other **Southern African** governments. Hichilema challenged his narrow defeat in the 11 August 2016 elections and has refused to recognise Lungu's presidency.²¹ The government's arrest of Hichilema, and crackdown on opposition parties, may be a ploy to test the response of the regional and international community. The ruling PF may be encouraged by South Africa's ruling **African National Congress (ANC)**, which has pushed party politics and patronage above the rule of law. While the international community has voiced concern over the government's actions, it has been clear that it sees Lungu as the legitimate leader, despite Hichilema's allegations of vote tampering.²²

Despite political crisis, IMF bail out likely

The **International Monetary Fund's (IMF)** mission chief in Zambia, **Tsidi Tsikata**, stated on 10 June that the IMF may grant a \$1.3 billion credit facility to help address Zambia's budget deficit, although it will only decide in August.²³ Zambia's budget deficit is currently around 7% of GDP.²⁴ The IMF had increased its projections of Zambia's GDP to roughly 4% in 2017 and also projected inflation to remain in single digits (see *ARC Briefing Zambia May 2017*), but Zambian authorities have requested a loan despite the positive economic forecast.²⁵

For the loan to be approved, Zambia must improve its fiscal performance and weak financial management, according to Tsikata:

*"The mission and the Zambian authorities met to agree on the remaining actions needed to reach staff level agreement on the program that could be supported under the IMF's extended credit facilities."*²⁶

Zambia started talks with the IMF in March 2016 regarding a potential loan package after agreeing that the budget deficit was not sustainable and would most likely rise uncontrollably due to the steep drop in the price of copper.²⁷ Zambia is Africa's second-biggest copper-producing nation, and mining accounts for 12% of Zambia's GDP and 70% of its total exports.²⁸ The three-year credit facility is projected to halve the budget deficit to around 4% of GDP by 2019.²⁹

The IMF visit, which lasted from 31 May to 10 June, ended in controversy as Lungu's special adviser, **Sukwana Lukangaba**, hinted that the Zambian government had paid bribes to IMF officials to guarantee the loan.³⁰ Lukangaba stated to friends on 20 June that,

*"... we shall definitely get the loan from the IMF because we gave team leader Tsiki Tsikata something (money) to guarantee that we get the money."*³¹

¹⁹ EWN, 16 Jun 2017.

²⁰ Sunday Standard, 11 Jun 2017.

²¹ Mail & Guardian Africa, 12 Jun 2017.

²² ENCA, 16 Aug 2016.

²³ Reuters, 10 Jun 2017.

²⁴ Lusaka Times, 11 Jun 2017.

²⁵ Lusaka Times, 11 Jun 2017.

²⁶ World Bulletin, 11 Jun 2017.

²⁷ Reuters, 10 Jun 2017.

²⁸ World Bank, 18 Jul 2016.

²⁹ Vanguard, 10 Jun 2017.

³⁰ Zambia Watchdog, 21 Jun 2017.

³¹ Zambia Watchdog, 21 Jun 2017.

Lukangaba stated that the second meeting between Lungu and Tsikata was a private meeting in which offers were made to Tsikata.

*"[Tsikata] is an African from **Ghana**, so we had no problem convincing him to ignore the politicking in Zambia and surprisingly he told us that being an African, he knows the problem and that he does not even believe in this human rights thing but he is just doing his job."*³²

Additionally, finance minister **Felix Mutati** incorrectly stated in parliament on 21 June that Zambia's external debt was \$17.2 billion, an \$11 billion increase since December 2016.³³ Critics jumped on this report, citing mismanagement of funds and a lack of transparency. The IMF denied both these allegations on 22 June, clarifying that Zambia's actual external debt is \$7.2 billion, and stating that the bribery allegations are outrageous and false.³⁴

If the loan is approved, it is likely to embolden the Lungu government to continue to intimidate its opponents. As the government is in desperate need of an economic bailout, Hichilema supporters and opposition leaders had hoped that the IMF may place restoring political freedom as a condition for the release of the funds, but this has not happened. IMF officials point out that they are not supposed to take political conditions into account and that their aim is to create a stronger economy, and political crises should not be a barrier to international economic assistance.³⁵ However, any agreement reached will be seen as approval of the Lungu government and its suppression of opposition, further strengthening the ruling PF's increasingly dictatorial position. However, the political maneuvering may also be a smokescreen to distract from further economic pain which Zambians may face in the future, particularly regarding IMF imposed conditions that are inherent with any funding package.

Zambia unveils its 7th National Development Plan blueprint

Lungu launched Zambia's 7th national development plan (NDP), which will run from 2017 to 2021, on 21 June in Lusaka.³⁶ According to development planning minister **Lucky Mulusa**, the NDP,

*"...like the national development plans that preceded it, is aimed at attaining the long-term objectives as outlined in the **Vision 2030** of becoming a 'prosperous middle income country by the year 2030'."*³⁷

The NDP is titled 'Accelerating development efforts towards Vision 2030 without leaving anyone behind', and focuses on reducing levels of poverty, which stand at 76% in rural areas, and inequality, where 10% of the population accounts for 56% of national income; and increasing employment, as unemployment currently stands at 7.4%.³⁸ The government plans to spend 342.3 billion kwacha (K) (\$36.7 billion) on projects in four key sectors – agriculture, tourism, mining and manufacturing – by the end of 2021.³⁹ Zambia will look to international partners for assistance in financing the plan, while the government will aim to coordinate the national budget with the NDP.⁴⁰ In regards to financing the NDP, Lungu stated that,

*"...financing the plan over the period will be premised on the principle of restoring fiscal fitness as guided by the pillars of the 2016 **Economic Stabilisation and Growth Programme** dubbed 'Zambia Plus'."*⁴¹

³² Zambia Watchdog, 21 Jun 2017.

³³ Zambia Watchdog, 21 Jun 2017.

³⁴ Lusaka Times, 23 Jun 2017.

³⁵ African Arguments, 19 Jun 2017.

³⁶ UK Zambians, 21 Jun 2017.

³⁷ Zambia Daily Mail, 21 Jun 2017.

³⁸ Zambia Daily Mail, 22 Jun 2017.

³⁹ ZNBC, 20 Jun 2017.

⁴⁰ Xinhua Net, 21 Jun 2017

⁴¹ Zambia Daily Mail, 22 Jun 2017.

The 7th NDP will also focus on reforming the informal economy. According to the NDP, more than 89% of employed Zambians are in the informal sector, which is,

“...characterised by low levels of productivity, capital investments and technology, thereby offering limited prospects to contribute to national development and ultimately improving the standard of living of the majority of people.”⁴²

Analysts have advised that the government will now need to look at converting the national development plan into practical strategies and action plans that will enable private sector trade, investment and growth, which is ultimately the most effective way to generate jobs and economic growth for Zambia.⁴³

⁴² Zambia Daily Mail, 24 Jun 2017.

⁴³ Lusaka Times, 23 Jun 2017.

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