

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Zambia Monthly Briefing July 2021

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#### Zambia Summary 13 July 2021

**United Kingdom (UK)-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) Amnesty International (AI) warns that Zambia is on the brink of a human rights crisis, ahead of the 12 August presidential vote. African leaders and diplomats join Zambia in mourning the death of founding president and liberation hero Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991). A medical witness in a case filed against UK-based multinational mining company AngloAmerican Plc claims the company was aware of the danger posed by lead poisoning at its Kabwe mine to employees and community members. A hearing to consider AngloAmerican's request for an extension to allow it to file its response is being heard in the Gauteng division of the High Court in South Africa. Covid-19 infections are decreasing in Zambia but restrictions to curb the spread of the virus remain.**

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#### Political repression mounts ahead of August election...

**United Kingdom (UK)-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) Amnesty International (AI)** has warned that **Zambia** is on the brink of a human rights crisis ahead of the 12 August presidential election.<sup>1</sup> In a report titled "*Ruling by fear and Repression*", released on 28 June, AI accuses President **Edgar Lungu** (2015-present) of using increasingly repressive tactics in the past five years, and most notably in the run-up to the August elections. The ruling **Patriotic Front (PF)**, which has held power since September 2011, faces main opposition party **United Party for National Development (UPND)** amidst threats of a third wave of **Covid-19** (see below), a deepening economic crisis and opposition accusations that Lungu is not eligible to run for a further term as president.

Although Zambia has developed a good track record of holding scheduled elections since the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in 1991 and the reputation of a stable democracy, Amnesty International warns this record is under threat. Amnesty International claims that Zambia's human rights record has deteriorated under Lungu's rule. Lungu took office in 2015, completing the term of former president **Michael Sata** (2011-2014) who died in a **London** (UK) hospital in October 2014.<sup>2</sup> Lungu won the presidential by-election to replace Sata and was re-elected as president in August 2016, beating UPND leader **Hakainde Hichilema** with 50.35% of the vote versus Hichilema's 47.63%.<sup>3</sup> Hichilema alleged fraud and irregularities in the election.

If Lungu wins the upcoming election, it will be his last term in office. Some analysts claim he will use repression to ensure victory. AI director for **East and Southern Africa, Deprose Muchena**, noted the increasingly brutal crackdown on human rights in the past five years, "*characterised by brazen attacks on any form of dissent*".<sup>4</sup> The AI report points to an increase in extrajudicial police killing, arrest of opposition leaders, a crackdown on opposition election campaigning and shutting down of media outlets amid a climate of fear and impunity.<sup>5</sup> AI noted that social media activists are not safe, citing the case of a 15-year-old boy awaiting trial on three counts of criminal libel after criticising Lungu on social media platform **Facebook**.

Lungu has denied allegations of stifling the opposition and, during a meeting with foreign diplomats earlier this year, pledged free and fair elections. However, fear mongering and political intolerance

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty.org, 28 Jun 2021

<sup>2</sup> Lusaka Times, 28 Oct 2014

<sup>3</sup> ECZ website, 15 Aug 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International: *Ruling by fear and Repression*

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International: *Ruling by fear and Repression*

have translated into violence on the street, forcing the **Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ)** to cancel political campaigning in **Mandevu, Lusaka Central** and **Mpulungu** for ten days.<sup>6</sup>

The upcoming election takes place against a backdrop of mounting debt, growing unemployment and a rising cost of living. Although Zambia benefited from the **Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)** initiative in 2005 by the **World Bank** and the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, and more recently from **Group of 20 (G20)** debt restructuring, the ruling PF has saddled the next generation with crippling levels of debt. Zambia's external debt of roughly \$12 billion accounts for about 80% of its GDP.<sup>7</sup> Zambian authorities defaulted on a \$42.5m Eurobond repayment in November (see *ARC Briefing Zambia November 2020*) and the IMF predicts that Zambia's economy will shrink by 4.8% in 2021. The kwacha has plummeted about 30% since January and inflation has surged past 15% so far this year.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these challenges, Lungu is likely to win in a close election. He is likely to negotiate a solution to the debt crisis with the IMF prior to the election, although it will take a while for the effects to trickle down to Zambia's electorate. Although Hichilema may use the Covid-19 pandemic and Zambia's economic situation to garner support, with campaigning suspended and the election less than a month away, the odds are stacked against him.<sup>9</sup>

### ... as African leaders mourn death of Zambia's founding president

Zambia's founding president and liberation hero **Kenneth Kaunda** (1964-1991) died aged 97 in a military hospital in Lusaka on 17 June, following a bout of pneumonia.<sup>10</sup> Kaunda, or "**KK**" as he was known, became president in 1964, when Zambia gained independence from the UK. African leaders and diplomats on 2 July joined Zambia in mourning his death, including **South Africa's** President **Cyril Ramaphosa** (2018-present), the presidents of **Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia** and **Zimbabwe**, as well as the prime minister of **Lesotho** and the UK's minister of African affairs and **Commonwealth** secretary-general **Patricia Scotland**.

Kaunda left a mixed legacy. While Zambia's copper-based economy suffered under his rule, Kaunda is remembered as a staunch African nationalist who stood up against white minority rule in South Africa. At Kaunda's funeral, Ramaphosa noted the debt South Africa owed the former statesman, "*We will never be able to pay back the debt that we owe you.*"<sup>11</sup> In a message to the people of Zambia, **Queen Elizabeth II** (1952-present) noted that "*maintaining Zambia as a bastion against apartheid has earned [Kaunda] a place in history.*"<sup>12</sup>

### Witness claims AngloAmerican aware of lead danger at Kabwe mine...

A witness at the inquiry into the conduct of UK-based multinational mining giant **AngloAmerican Plc** claims the company was aware of the danger that lead poisoning posed to its employees and community members. South Africa-based **Mbuyisa Moleele Attorneys** and UK-based law firm **Leigh Day** lodged a class action suit on behalf of **Kabwe** region families against AngloAmerican in October over an alleged toxic lead legacy during mining between 1924 and 1975 (see *ARC Briefing Zambia October 2020*). Dr. **Ian Lawrence**, who worked at Kabwe mine in 1969 and 1970, submitted an affidavit in April 2021, claiming that AngloAmerican had commissioned a study into the impact of contaminated dust blown onto the township:

*"The mine management were certainly aware of the risk of lead poisoning to its employees, the blood levels of all staff were checked regularly ...I became deeply concerned at the number of*

<sup>6</sup> African News, 24 Jun 2021

<sup>7</sup> BoZ, accessed 13 Jul 2021

<sup>8</sup> Africa Report, 1 Jan 2021

<sup>9</sup> Source, political analyst, Zambia

<sup>10</sup> BBC, 17 Jun 2021

<sup>11</sup> Reuters, 2 Jul 2021

<sup>12</sup> Reuters, 2 Jul 2021

*deaths amongst children under the age of five in the residential township where local employees lived.”<sup>13</sup>*

Lawrence’s affidavit bolsters the lawsuit in which a group of Zambian women and children allege that AngloAmerican caused widespread lead poisoning from its **Broken Hill** mine. AngloAmerican held an interest in the Kabwe mine, at one time the world’s largest lead operation, from 1925 to 1974, when the Zambian government nationalised it.<sup>14</sup> While the operation was eventually shut in 1994, the plaintiffs allege that output during Anglo’s ownership accounted for about two-thirds of the lead that now contaminates the area. In a 2019 report, **United States**-based NGO **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** said that a third of the population of Kabwe, or more than 76,000 people, live in lead-contaminated areas.<sup>15</sup> The plaintiffs are demanding compensation and a clean-up operation of the affected area.

A hearing to consider AngloAmerican’s request for an extension to allow it to file its response is being heard in the **Gauteng** division of the **High Court** in South Africa. AngloAmerican claims not to have any documentation *“of relevance pertaining to the operation of the Kabwe Mine”*, stating that all documents were handed over when the mining company was nationalised.<sup>16</sup> The plaintiffs’ attorneys describe AngloAmerican’s response as *“hard to believe”*. AngloAmerican also says that while it is interested in the well-being of the miners and their community, it was not the owner or operator, without offering further details:

*“We have every sympathy for the people of Kabwe and their plight, but we do intend to defend ourselves because we do not believe we are responsible for the current situation.”<sup>17</sup>*

### **Zambia fights third wave of Covid-19**

New Covid-19 infections appear to be on a decreasing trajectory in Zambia, with a seven-day daily average of 1,635 new infections. The highest daily average of new cases was reported on 27 June.<sup>18</sup> As of 13 July, Zambia has recorded a total of 176,742 Covid-19 cases in its population of roughly 18.9 million, with 2,867 Covid-19-related deaths and 162,239 recoveries.<sup>19</sup>

As part of its Covid-19 vaccination programme, Zambia is administering the **Oxford-AstraZeneca** vaccine through the **World Health Organization (WHO)**-led **COVAX** facility and **Sinopharm** donated by the **Chinese** government.<sup>20</sup> Zambia has administered at least 181,219 doses of Covid vaccines to date, roughly 0.5% of the population based on two doses per person.

Zambia’s borders are open, but under tight restrictions. Tourist and business visitors’ visas are available in advance and on arrival in Zambia. All visitors to Zambia must have proof that they have tested negative for Covid-19 in the 72 hours prior to their arrival. Visitors are responsible for monitoring their condition for 14 days after arrival and are required to report any Covid-19 symptoms they experience to medical authorities. Although all airports are open to flights, the availability of international flights remains limited.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Reuters, 6 Jul 2021

<sup>14</sup> Bloomberg, 5 Jul 2021

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch, accessed 12 Jul 2021

<sup>16</sup> Bloomberg, 5 Jul 2021

<sup>17</sup> Bloomberg, 5 Jul 2021

<sup>18</sup> Africa CDC, 12 Jul 2021

<sup>19</sup> Africa CDC, 12 Jul 2021

<sup>20</sup> AFP, 21 May 2021

<sup>21</sup> Africa CDC, 12 Jul 2021

## Planner

12 Aug 2021 **(Zambia)** Presidential and legislative elections;  
 16-17 Aug 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bank of Zambia** MPC meets;  
 18 Aug 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bank of Zambia** MPC media briefing;  
 15-16 Nov 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bank of Zambia** MPC meets;  
 17 Nov 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bank of Zambia** MPC media briefing;

## Chronology

11 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. The health ministry says it is confident it can bring **Covid-19** under control with “*collective adherence to the public health guidelines*”;

10 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. **Zambia Tax Platform** coordinator **Ibrahim Kamara** notes that tax evasion remains a challenge for the **Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA)**;

10 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. The **Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD)** expresses concern that some politicians “*peddling hate speech*” have not been charged with cyber-crime in line with the **Cyber Security Act of 2021**.

9 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. The **Electoral Commission of Zambia** lifts the ban on ruling party **Patriotic Front (PF)** member **Chishimba Kambwili** from participating in the election campaign;

9 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. President **Edgar Lungu** assures traders in Lusaka that he will not close the markets to curb the spread of **Covid-19**, as doing so will threaten people’s livelihoods;

8 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Printing of ballot papers for the 12 August presidential elections has commenced in **Dubai** and will take a week to complete, following verification and endorsement by the ruling **Patriotic Front (PF)** and opposition **United Party for National Development (UPND)**;

8 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. **Zambian Police Service** spokesperson **Esther Mwata Katongo** says “*political campaign rallies still remain banned*”;

7 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *BBC*. Founding president **Kenneth Kaunda** is laid to rest at a memorial site for former presidents after the **High Court** rejected an application from one of his sons contesting where he should be buried;

6 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. **Bank of Zambia (BoZ)** (central bank) governor **Christopher Mvunga** remains in his position despite rumours on social media that he resigned;

5 Jul 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *iol*. A **Kabwe** medical doctor files an affidavit in the **Zambian High Court** claiming that **United Kingdom**-headquartered mining giant **Anglo American** was aware of lead poisoning at its mine;

17 Jun 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. **President Edgar Lungu** declares 21 days of national mourning in honour of former President **Kenneth Kaunda**;

17 Jun 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *BBC*. **African** and world leaders pay tribute to founding president **Kenneth Kaunda**;

17 Jun 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *BBC*. Zambia’s founding president, **Kenneth Kaunda**, dies in hospital from pneumonia aged 97;

16 Jun 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *BBC*. **Zambian** authorities suspend political rallies ahead of the 12 August election in a measure to deal with the surge in **coronavirus** infections.

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Please contact us by email [info@africariskconsulting.com](mailto:info@africariskconsulting.com) or call + 44 (0) 20 7078 4080

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