

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Zimbabwe Summary 10 August 2020

Authorities thwart mass demonstrations scheduled for 31 July, deploying the army and police throughout the country and arresting civil society activists. Political tension escalates between President Emmerson Mnangagwa (2017-present) and his deputy, General Constantino Chiwenga, as Mnangagwa accuses the vice president of plotting to oust him. Chiwenga assumes the role of health minister, which is prohibited under Zimbabwe's constitution. Russia-based diamond mining company Alrosa and China-based Anjin Investments begin diamond exploration and production in Zimbabwe, providing fresh investment in the country's diamond sector. Cases of Covid-19 infection soar, claiming the lives of agriculture minister Perrance Shiri and Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) spokesman Colonel Overson Mugwisi.

Security agents thwart planned protests

Security agents from the **Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)** and **Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF)** shut down mass protests scheduled for 31 July across Zimbabwe. The heavy-handed response has attracted further criticism of the human rights record of President **Emmerson Mnangagwa's** (2017-present) administration and threatens the entry of new investment and aid to Zimbabwe.¹ The government deployed security agents from the army and police throughout Zimbabwe, imposing a strict curfew to curtail freedom of movement and assembly. Opposition activist **Jacob Ngarivume** had coordinated the planned demonstration against the worsening political and economic situation in Zimbabwe (see *ARC Briefing Zimbabwe July 2020*), which was well supported by Zimbabwe's civil society organisations and opposition political parties.²

Police arrested and abducted several opposition and civil society activists, notably Ngarivume, investigative journalist **Hopewell Chin'ono**, lawyer and opposition **Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance** spokesperson **Fadzai Mahere**, prominent author **Tsitsi Dangarembga**, and **Henry Chivanga**, an activist for people living with disabilities.³ Several journalists and opposition activists such as **Zimlive.com's Mduuzi Mathuthu** and MDC Alliance deputy national chairman **Job Sikhala** went into hiding to escape the politically motivated arrests.⁴

International human rights organisation **Amnesty International's** deputy director for **Southern Africa, Muleya Mwananyanda**, issued a statement criticising Mnangagwa's government:

"The brutal assault on political activists and human rights defenders who have had the courage to call out alleged corruption and demand accountability from their government is intensifying. The persecution of these activists is a blatant abuse of the criminal justice system and mockery of justice. The latest witch-hunt and repression of peaceful dissent is a

¹ The Zimbabwean, 1 Aug 2020.

² The Zimbabwean, 1 Aug 2020.

³ The Zimbabwean, 1 Aug 2020.

⁴ The Zimbabwean, 1 Aug 2020.

*continuation of what we have seen in the country in recent years, including the abductions and arbitrary arrest of those who are critical of the government, in an attempt to muzzle differing views. The thwarting of the protests illustrates the Zimbabwean authorities' total intolerance of criticism."*⁵

Although the government foiled the planned protests, an online campaign dubbed "**Zimbabwean Lives Matter**" took off on 1 August, resulting in global attention and response to the state-sanctioned politically motivated attacks and deterioration of social and economic conditions in Zimbabwe.⁶ The campaign, trending under the hash tag #zimbabweanlivesmatter, echoes the **Black Lives Matter** campaign in the **United States (US)** and has garnered close to a million Tweets on social media platform **Twitter**.⁷ Several local and international celebrities have amplified the campaign, including **South African** rugby player **Tendai Mtawarira** and South African actress, **Pearl Thusi**.⁸ South Africa's President **Cyril Ramaphosa** (2018-present), in his capacity as chairperson of the **African Union (AU)** dispatched envoys **Sydney Mufamadi** and **Baleka Mbete** to Zimbabwe to meet with President Mnangagwa on 9 August.⁹

The government's concerted attack on civil rights and liberties will result in continued loss of goodwill from international bilateral and multilateral partners.¹⁰ The state-sanctioned violence exacerbates a poor business environment, which will further discourage investors from exploring business opportunities in Zimbabwe.¹¹

Tensions escalate between Mnangagwa and Chiwenga...

Rumours of the power struggle between President Emmerson Mnangagwa and his deputy, General **Constantino Chiwenga**, have escalated in recent weeks, following a reportedly "*explosive*" politburo meeting on 29 July.¹² The current political instability may culminate in President Mnangagwa's ouster from office.¹³ The two leaders represent competing factions in the ruling **Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF)** regime, with Chiwenga drawing much of his support from the security sector, especially the ZDF.¹⁴ During the politburo meeting, Mnangagwa reportedly accused senior party officials of working with the opposition to remove him from power through the demonstrations planned for 31 July.¹⁵

Mnangagwa reportedly relied on a report by Zanu-PF security secretary **Lovemore Matuke**, based on intelligence that **Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO)** director **Isaac Moyo** and his deputy, **Walter Tapfumaneyi**, had provided.¹⁶ An anonymous source who attended the meeting indicated to Zimbabwe local media source **The Independent** that Mnangagwa asked Matuke to present a report in the context of the planned 31 July demonstrations:

*"[Matuke], in his report, said he was aware of some party members who were involved in the plot against the president. So after he had made his presentation, Moyo and Tapfumaneyi supported him, saying their own assessments had yielded the same results, but did not make any presentations of their own."*¹⁷

⁵ Amnesty International deputy director for southern Africa, Muleya Mwananyanda quoted by The Zimbabwean, 1 Aug 2020.

⁶ Business Live, 4 Aug 2020.

⁷ Business Live, 4 Aug 2020.

⁸ Business Live, 4 Aug 2020.

⁹ Business Live, 4 Aug 2020.

¹⁰ Source analyst, London

¹¹ Source analyst, London

¹² The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

¹³ The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

¹⁴ The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

¹⁵ The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

¹⁶ The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

¹⁷ Anonymous source quoted in The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

The report also singled out former politburo member **Cleveria Chizema** of working with the opposition and civil society groups to oust Mnangagwa, because she was found to have posters criticising Mnangagwa in her possession.¹⁸ The report accused Chizema of coordinating the planned protests with the opposition, claiming she recruited other senior members of the party to undermine President Mnangagwa.¹⁹ The politburo resolved to suspend Chizema from the party, where she was serving as secretary for health and childcare.²⁰

Chiwenga refuted claims that he was plotting Mnangagwa's removal.²¹ He narrated a long history of collaboration with Mnangagwa dating back to the liberation struggle, and said that if he did not support Mnangagwa, he would not have brought him in as Zimbabwe's president after the 2017 coup.²² Chiwenga accused unnamed political leaders within the party of using his name to mask their factionalist agenda and create a rift between himself and Mnangagwa.²³

Political tension and distrust between the two leaders and their supporters have created two distinct factions within the ruling party.²⁴ Chiwenga harbours presidential ambitions and commands a power base in the security sector, which has been the mainstay of presidential power since independence in Zimbabwe.

... as Mnangagwa appoints Chiwenga as health minister

President Mnangagwa named Chiwenga as Zimbabwe's new health minister on 4 August, replacing **Obadiah Moyo** whom he fired in July over corruption allegations.²⁵ The appointment attracted immediate criticism, since Chiwenga does not have a professional background in medicine or public health, and section 103 of the country's constitution disallows his appointment.²⁶ Mnangagwa fired Moyo on 8 July after revelations that he illegally oversaw the awarding of a \$20m contract to supply medical equipment to a shadowy company with links to Mnangagwa's family (see *ARC Briefing Zimbabwe June and July 2020*).²⁷

Mnangagwa's office justified the appointment as "*necessary and urgent*" in light of the **Covid-19** pandemic.²⁸ Zimbabwe had reported 4,748 Covid-19 infections, 1,524 recoveries and 104 deaths from the virus as of 10 August.²⁹ The virus has claimed the lives of two prominent leaders in the government: agriculture minister and former Zimbabwe air force commander **Perrance Shiri** succumbed to Covid-19 on 29 July,³⁰ while ZDF spokesman Colonel **Overson Mugwisi** died on 31 July of Covid-19 at the army's **One Commando Barracks Hospital** in Harare.³¹

The opposition criticised Chiwenga's appointment as evidence of the Mnangagwa administration's gross incompetence and nepotism.³² However, it has emerged that Chiwenga's appointment is a result of his disagreements with Mnangagwa over candidates for the health minister's position.³³ Chiwenga reportedly preferred that his personal doctor and deputy health

¹⁸ The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

¹⁹ Business Live, 6 Aug 2020.

²⁰ Business Live, 6 Aug 2020.

²¹ Business Live, 6 Aug 2020.

²² The Independent, 2 Aug 2020.

²³ Business Live, 6 Aug 2020.

²⁴ Source, analyst, London

²⁵ Al Jazeera, 5 Aug 2020.

²⁶ Al Jazeera, 5 Aug 2020.

²⁷ Al Jazeera, 5 Aug 2020.

²⁸ Al Jazeera, 5 Aug 2020.

²⁹ World Health Organisation

³⁰ News24, 30 July 2020.

³¹ NewZimbabwe, 31 Jul 2020.

³² Al Jazeera, 5 Aug 2020.

³³ The Standard, 9 Aug 2020.

minister **John Mangwiro** become health minister, but Mnangagwa disagreed, resulting in Chiwenga deciding to take on the portfolio himself.³⁴ The vice president and his faction within the ruling Zanu-PF party were reportedly angered by the scandals that affected the health ministry, especially since they involved Mnangagwa's wife and children.³⁵ Chiwenga was reportedly also concerned that rampant corruption in the health ministry would cost Zanu-PF the 2023 election.³⁶

High-level corruption in the government has also resulted in the imposition of sanctions on 5 August by the **United States (US) Treasury** against President **Mnangagwa's** adviser and controversial businessman, **Kudakwashe Tagwireyi**, and his Zimbabwe-based business, **Sakunda Holdings**.³⁷ The US treasury accuses Tagwireyi of "*opaque business dealings and his ongoing relationship with President Mnangagwa to grow his business empire dramatically and rake in millions of US dollars*".³⁸ Tagwireyi became the subject of allegations of state capture shortly after Mnangagwa assumed office in 2017, and has figured in several corruption scandals since then.³⁹ These primarily involve obtaining government contracts because of his ties to senior leadership, including contracts for fuel supply and procurement of buses and expensive cars for top government officials.⁴⁰

Russian and Chinese companies begin diamond exploration in Zimbabwe

Russia-based Alrosa Diamonds PJSC, the world's largest diamond producer by volume, and **China-based Anjin Investments**, have begun diamond exploration in Zimbabwe, promising a fresh injection of revenue into the economy from future diamond exports.⁴¹ The development forms part of the government's policy of allowing foreign companies to explore and produce minerals in partnership with its **Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC)**.⁴² Alrosa established an office in Zimbabwe in 2018 and formalised its joint venture agreement with the ZCDC in December 2019.⁴³

Alrosa's deputy chief executive, **Vladimir Marchenko**, said the company is making steady progress with plans for full-scale prospecting operations later this year in **Masvingo** and **Matabeleland South** and **North** regions.⁴⁴ The company has pledged to invest \$12m in Zimbabwe's diamond fields, mostly located in the **Chiadzwa** area in the eastern region, from 2020 to 2022.⁴⁵

Anjin launched its diamond mining operations on 8 August in **Chiadzwa**, where it has invested \$38m.⁴⁶ Anjin had operated in Zimbabwe until 2016, but suspended its diamond mining when the government established a monopoly over diamond mining through the ZCDC.⁴⁷ Senior government officials, including President Mnangagwa, vice president Chiwenga, finance minister **Mthuli Ncube** and defence minister **Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri** attended the event.⁴⁸

Diamond mining has the potential to provide a much-needed economic boost to Zimbabwe's

³⁴ The Standard, 9 Aug 2020.

³⁵ The Standard, 9 Aug 2020.

³⁶ The Standard, 9 Aug 2020.

³⁷ Financial Times, 5 Aug 2020.

³⁸ Financial Times, 5 Aug 2020.

³⁹ Financial Times, 5 Aug 2020.

⁴⁰ Financial Times, 5 Aug 2020.

⁴¹ Mining.com, 21 Jul 2020.

⁴² Mining.com, 21 Jul 2020.

⁴³ Mining.com, 21 Jul 2020.

⁴⁴ Mining.com, 21 Jul 2020.

⁴⁵ Mining.com, 21 Jul 2020.

⁴⁶ Sunday Mail, 9 Aug 2020.

⁴⁷ Sunday Mail, 9 Aug 2020.

⁴⁸ Sunday Mail, 9 Aug 2020.

economy and support broad-based programmes to improve living conditions for Zimbabwe's population.⁴⁹ However, large-scale corruption in Mnangagwa's government makes this an unlikely outcome.⁵⁰ A glut of diamonds, particularly jewel-grade diamonds, has also resulted in limited profitability in the global diamond market in recent years while competition from synthetic diamonds has stifled prices.⁵¹

Planner

June 2023 (Zimbabwe) General elections

Chronology

10 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Business Day*. President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** during a **Heroes Day** speech in capital **Harare** says allegations of human rights abuses by his government are "*divisive falsehoods*" and were "*unjustified attacks by our perennial detractors, both inside and outside our border*";

9 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Sunday Mail*. **China-based Anjin Investments** commissions a diamond mining operation in the **Chiadzwa** area, investing \$38m in exploration and production;

9 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Standard*. Vice president General **Constantino Chiwenga** succeeds **Obadiah Moyo** as health minister;

9 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *NewZimbabwe*. **Zimbabwe-based legal watchdog Veritas** claims vice president **Constantino Chiwenga's** appointment as health minister is illegal under section 103 of Zimbabwe's constitution;

5 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** makes a special address to the nation at **State House**, blaming the state of the country on "*divisive politics of some opposition elements, the illegal economic sanctions, cyclones, droughts and more recently, the deadly covid-19 pandemic*";

5 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. **Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe** (central bank) announces the introduction of a second weekly Thursday auction for small and medium businesses needing to buy \$2,500 to \$20,000;

5 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters*. **United States (US)** imposes sanctions on President **Emmerson Mnangagwa's** adviser, **Kudakwashe Tagwirei**, and his Zimbabwe-based business, **Sakunda Holdings**, accusing Tagwirei of using "*opaque business dealings and his ongoing relationship with President Mnangagwa to grow his business empire dramatically and rake in millions of US dollars*";

5 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Human Rights Watch*. Global advocacy group **Human Rights Watch** calls on the **Southern African Development Community** and the **African Union** to urgently and publicly speak out against the **Zimbabwe** government's crackdown on peaceful anti-corruption protests on 31 July.

4 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Business Day*. **South Africa's** president **Cyril Ramaphosa** dispatches envoys to meet with Zimbabwe's government and opposition as the **Zimbabwean Lives Matter** movement garners nearly a million tweets on **Twitter**;

2 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Zimbabwe Independent*. President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** and his deputy, **General Constantino Chiwenga**, clash during politburo meeting over allegations that Chiwenga is plotting Mnangagwa's ouster;

⁴⁹ Source, analyst, London

⁵⁰ Source, analyst, London

⁵¹ Source, analyst, London

- 1 Aug 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Zimbabwean*. Authorities deploy security agents throughout the country, imposing a dawn to dusk curfew, arresting activists and thwarting planned demonstrations;
- 31 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters*. Heavy security presence prevents highly anticipated anti-government protests, with many critics either arrested or forced into hiding and businesses temporarily closed in capital **Harare** and major city **Bulawayo**;
- 30 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *News24*. Agriculture minister and former Zimbabwe air force commander **Perrance Shiri** dies of **Covid-19** aged 65, becoming the first senior government official to die from the disease;
- 29 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Bloomberg*. Government signs a \$3.5 billion deal to compensate white commercial farmers who were evicted from their land two decades ago, which government says it plans to fund through the sale of a 30-year bond on international markets;
- 29 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Daily Maverick*. **British** MP and former anti-apartheid campaigner **Lord Peter Hain** urges the British government to extend sanctions to cover more Zimbabwe ministers and security chiefs because of escalating human rights violations.
- 28 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Business Day*. Finance minister **Mthuli Ncube** says the **Zimbabwe Stock Exchange** will resume trading next week after a state financial intelligence body concludes its investigation, but three stocks also listed on other exchanges, including the local unit of **Old Mutual**, will remain suspended;
- 28 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *AA*. Opposition **MDC Alliance** party posts **Tweet** saying three of its members were “abducted” from their houses on 27 July by “suspected state agents” and “dumped” at a police station in the capital, **Harare**, the following morning;
- 28 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. **National Patriotic Front** MP for **Kwekwe Central, Masango Matambanadzo**, dies from undeclared causes;
- 27 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Bloomberg*. Sources say **South Africa**-based insurance firm **Old Mutual** agrees with **Zimbabwean** authorities to move its listing on the **Zimbabwe Stock Exchange** to a new bourse in the country that will only deal in foreign currency;
- 27 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Reuters*. Ruling **Zanu-PF** party spokesperson **Patrick Chinamasa** accuses **United States** ambassador to Harare, **Brian Nichols**, of being involved in subversive activities to topple President **Emmerson Mnangagwa**'s government;
- 27 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *New Zimbabwe*. Parliament clerk **Kennedy Chokuda** announces the adjourning of **National Assembly** to a “future date” as two members of parliament test positive for **coronavirus**.
- 25 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Bulawayo24*. Information minister **Monica Mutsvangwa** says police arrested journalist **Hopewell Chin'ono** on 20 July for “using his social media accounts to incite Zimbabweans to violently overthrow the government”, not for exposing government corruption, and accuses the **United States** government of interfering in its internal affairs;
- 25 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Chronicle*. Government announces new regulations to compel businesses to use a single exchange rate for pricing goods and services or face fines, as it seeks to control surging costs;
- 24 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *CNN*. **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Liz Throssell** calls for an end to the “pattern of intimidation” in **Zimbabwe** and warns that authorities may be using the **coronavirus** pandemic as a pretext to “clamp down” on freedom of expression, after high court denies bail to journalist **Hopewell Chin'ono**;

23 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Bloomberg*. The Zimbabwe government's restriction of mobile-money transactions sets President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** up in rivalry with **South Africa**-based diversified telecommunications **Econet's** founder **Strive Masiyiwa**, the country's most successful businessman;

22 Jul 2020 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zim Morning Post*. **Anti-Corruption Commission** takes **Harare** major **Herbert Gomba** into custody in connection with a massive land scam that has led to the arrest of several public officials over recent weeks.

21 Jul 2020. **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Mining.com*. **Russia's Alrosa Diamonds PJSC** invests \$12m in diamond prospecting and production in **Zimbabwe** between 2020 and 2022, which promises to provide a boost to the country's economy;

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