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The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) opens an investigation into allegations that high-ranking officials of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) benefitted unjustly from corruption at the state-owned Cold Storage Company (CSC). The continuing recall of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance members of parliament (MPs) further reduces opposition representation within governance structures and undermines consolidation of democratic values in Zimbabwe. Vaccine deliveries are set to improve the Covid-19 vaccination roll out process but citizen hesitancy is likely to stall the programme.

ZACC investigation targets high-level ZANU-PF officials ...

A recent **Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC)** announcement of investigations into high-level corruption has elicited a cynical response. ZACC spokesperson **John Makamure** confirmed on 31 March that the commission had opened an investigation into allegations that high-level officials of the ruling **Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)** were involved in corruption at the state-owned **Cold Storage Company (CSC)**.¹ However, past experience suggests the investigations hold little promise for a crackdown on corrupt officials.

Auditor-general **Mildred Chiri** first implicated high-ranking ZANU-PF officials in her 2016 forensic audit. Chiri claimed former CSC chief executive officer **Ngoni Chinogaramombe**, former home affairs minister **Obert Mpofu**, and late vice presidents **John Nkomo** and **Joseph Msika** were involved in corruption relating to lengthy leases from the CSC, a cattle ranching and beef processing company established by the **Rhodesian** government in 1938 to promote the country's then thriving beef industry.² Chinogaramombe joined CSC in 1984 and rose through the ranks to become CEO, a position he held from 2005 to 2019.³ Chinogaramombe was relieved of his duties at CSC when cabinet approved a joint venture (JV) between CSC and **United Kingdom (UK)**-based private investor **Boustead Beef (Pvt) Ltd** in May 2019 in an attempt to rehabilitate CSC's operations.

Although CSC formerly exported its products to **Zambia, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** and the UK, corporate mismanagement and corruption have resulted in a steady decline in revenue and profit since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. In terms of the JV agreement, Boustead would pay off CSC's debts totalling \$42,530,597 and pay rent for the first five years of the agreement.⁴ Boustead's investment of \$130m guaranteed it the right to manage CSC ranches, abattoirs and distribution centres for 25 years. However, the deal fell through when Boustead expressed reservations that CSC had understated its level of indebtedness and that most facilities were too costly to bring back to life. The late minister of

¹ The Zimbabwe Independent, 1 Apr 2021

² The Zimbabwe Independent, 1 Apr 2021

³ Sunday News, 14 Apr 2019

⁴ The Herald, 15 May 2019

lands, agriculture and rural resettlement, **Perence Shiri**, facilitated the cancellation of the contract in June 2020, a month before he succumbed to **Covid-19**.⁵

The ZACC is investigating how CSC management approved 247 ranch leases, some spanning up to 40 years, to senior ZANU-PF officials without following required procedure.⁶ Most of the ZANU-PF officials were no longer paying rent on the ranches they were leasing. There are also suspicions that some of the lessees may have appropriated the ranches as personal property, due to the CSC's poor record management, lack of structure and bad governance.

The ZACC has yet to interview the suspects and it is not clear whether it plans to order the repossession of the assets. Zimbabwe analysts question whether the investigation genuinely seeks to uncover and address corruption at the state-owned company, or is mere window-dressing. Although several whistle blowers have previously cited Mpfu's involvement in corrupt activities across the mining, tourism and property sectors, there is little faith among local analysts that the ZACC's investigations will uncover any real evidence against him.

Opposition MPs expelled from parliament

Speaker of Parliament **Jacob Mudenda** announced on 17 March the expulsion of six opposition **Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance** members of parliament (MPs). The move further reduces opposition representation within governance structures. Mudenda expelled the MPs after the **People's Democratic Party (PDP)** informed him that they were no longer members of the party. The now former members of parliament include **Harare East MP Tendai Biti**, who was finance minister from 2009 to 2013 under the **Government of National Unity (GNU)**, together with **Mbizo (Midlands Province) MP Settlement Chikwinya; Kambuzuma (Harare Province) MP Willias Madzimure; Mutasa South (Manicaland Province) MP Regai Tsunga; Nkulumane (Bulawayo Province) MP Kucaca Phulu and Pumula (Bulawayo Province) MP Sichelesile Mahlangu**.⁷

United States (US) Department of State spokesperson **Ned Price** claimed that the expulsions are calculated to subvert the will of voters and deny Zimbabwean citizens their chosen representation.⁸ Replacement through by-election processes is unlikely to take place as the government last year suspended elections due to Covid-19 constraints.

Parliament has since March 2020 expelled at least 39 MPs and 81 local council officials who were elected on the MDC Alliance ticket in the 2018 July harmonised polls.⁹ The MDC Alliance was formed by seven parties on 6 August 2017, ahead of the 2018 polls, in an effort to form strong opposition to the ruling ZANU-PF. Three of the seven parties were splinters from the original MDC, namely **MDC-Tsvangirai (MDC-T)** headed by **Nelson Chamisa**, **Tendai Biti's PDP**, and **MDC-Ncube**, led by **Welshman Ncube**. The other four parties are **Transform Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe People First, Multi-Racial Democrats** and **ZANU-Ndonga**. The **Supreme Court of Zimbabwe** ruled on 31 March 2020 that Chamisa was not the legitimate leader of the MDC-T, and ordered the party to hold an election within three months to resolve the leadership dispute between Chamisa and **Thokozani Khupe**. On 28 December, **Douglas Mwonozora** defeated Khupe in the MDC-T extraordinary congress election.¹⁰

Factionalism over the years has eroded opposition capacity to bring much-needed democratic change to the country. It has also negatively affected the MDC-Alliance's attempts to partner with other opposition elements. A Zimbabwe source told ARC that the PDP had expelled Biti and

⁵ New Zimbabwe, 25 Jun 2020

⁶ The Zimbabwe Independent, 1 Apr 2021

⁷ New Zimbabwe, 17 Mar 2021

⁸ Times Live, 23 Mar 2021

⁹ Times Live, 23 Mar 2021

¹⁰ Voice of America, 28 Dec 2020

his colleagues because of their perceived closeness to Chamisa.

Capture of the opposition by the ruling ZANU-PF has led civil society to mistrust new parties. ZANU-PF elements reportedly infiltrate the opposition through divisive tactics and eliminate elected officials in order to suppress opposition, undermining prospects for the consolidation of democracy.

Activist **Ibho Mandaza** has urged the MDC Alliance to work towards regaining its former status of a mass movement by partnering with civil society ahead of the 2023 polls.¹¹ Mandaza urged the party to strengthen its status and structures, and develop a national rescue strategy that will appeal to the masses to unseat ZANU-PF in the next election. However, elections no longer hold hope for the average citizen who has seen past elections reinforcing ZANU-PF's dominance.¹² Calls for the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** to intervene have been largely ignored due to the regional body's stance that the Zimbabwean situation does not require a mediated solution.

Vaccine hesitancy stalls rollout

Zimbabwe's Covid-19 vaccination drive continues amid growing concern over low uptake among health workers and other members of the public. The government aims to vaccinate 60% of the population of approximately 15 million against Covid-19 by the end of 2022.¹³ President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** (2017-present) received 400,000 doses of the **Sinopharm** vaccine from **China** on 15 March¹⁴ and 75,000 vaccine doses from **India's** first shipment of **Covaxine** on 29 March.¹⁵ Zimbabwe launched the first phase of its vaccination campaign on 18 February after receiving the first batch of 200,000 donated vaccines on 15 February (see *ARC Briefing Zimbabwe March 2021*).¹⁶ Finance minister **Mthuli Ncube** plans to buy one million vaccine doses per month during the second quarter of 2021¹⁷ and has mobilised \$100m towards the purchase of Sinopharm, **Sinovac**, Covaxin and **Russia's Sputnik-V** vaccines.¹⁸

The first phase of the vaccination programme targeted frontline workers, journalists, prison officers and immigration officials, but vaccine hesitancy has stalled rollout processes. **Westview Clinic (Harare)** medical doctor **Johannes Marisa** said health workers were sceptical of the Sinopharm vaccine because it is still in the final stages of testing.¹⁹ A **College of Public Health Physicians** survey indicated that 49% of Zimbabweans do not trust the government's ability to provide them with a safe and effective vaccine.²⁰ Sceptics noted that the president had not been vaccinated, leading to President Mnangagwa's public vaccination in **Victoria Falls** at the launch of the second phase on 24 March.²¹

The second phase targets teachers, members of the security services, the judiciary and the elderly.²² However, since mid-March all Zimbabweans can register for Covid-19 vaccination at any authorised vaccine centre in the country.²³ As of 8 April, 166,543 people had received a first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, while 27,134 had received a second dose.²⁴ Zimbabwe has recorded a

¹¹ Daily Maverick, 5 Apr 2021

¹² Daily Maverick, 5 Apr 2021

¹³ Department of Presidential Communications, 21 Mar 2021

¹⁴ China Africa Project, 15 Mar 2021

¹⁵ Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC), 29 Mar 2021

¹⁶ CNN, 15 Feb 2021

¹⁷ Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 4 Apr 2021

¹⁸ Bloomberg, 6 Apr 2021

¹⁹ Voice of America, 11 Mar 2021

²⁰ ARC source, Zimbabwean medical doctor

²¹ SABC News, 25 Mar 2021

²² SABC News, 25 Mar 2021

²³ ARC source, Zimbabwean citizen

²⁴ Ministry of Health and Child Care, 7 Apr 2021

total of 37,052 cases of Covid-19, including 34,814 recoveries and 1,532 Covid-19-related deaths.²⁵ The national recovery rate is 94%.²⁶

Low vaccination buy-in is likely due to Zimbabweans' mistrust of the government and negative perception of Chinese products. Government's emphasis on the health and economic benefits of the vaccine programme is not compelling given that there is no proof that inoculation leads to immunity and the economic interests of ordinary Zimbabweans have never been a major concern for the government.²⁷

Vice president **Constantino Chiwenga**, who doubles as Zimbabwe's health minister, has called on Zimbabweans to be vaccinated as a "*necessary harmless act*" that is part of global trends. Chiwenga noted that Covid-19 certificates are likely to become "*passports*" that enable access to services:

"If you watch the news globally, you will see that there are deliberations in all capitals on vaccination passports... You won't be forced to be vaccinated but there will come a time when if you are not vaccinated, you will not be able to get a job. If you are not vaccinated you will not be able to board a [Zimbabwe United Passenger Company] ZUPCO²⁸ bus. Eventually, you have to decide for yourself."²⁹

The launch of the second vaccination phase at Victoria Falls, a major tourist destination, aimed to encourage all residents of the city to be vaccinated in order to pave the way for the resumption of unrestricted tourism activities.³⁰ Mnangagwa noted that tourism can only reopen if the people of Zimbabwe are protected. In 2019, Zimbabwe recorded 2,294,259 tourist arrivals at Victoria Falls³¹ but it saw a 90% decline in visitors in 2020 as a result of national and global restrictions on travel to curb the spread of Covid-19.³²

Deeply ingrained scepticism of the government and its programmes will not be easy to reverse. Should vaccine certificates become compulsory for cross-border and international travel, as well as job entry requirements, vaccine compliance may increase, but it may also create a black market for false inoculation certificates. Thriving informal practices and corrupt health sector officials who produce fake documentation could create the opportunity to provide false certificates given the country's weak public sector database management processes. During the peak of Zimbabwe's infections from December to January, many citizens acquired fake test results to facilitate travel. There are already reports in Zimbabwe that some residents are paying nurses to give them vaccine cards without getting the Covid-19 inoculation.³³ The government, in liaison with state-owned security printing and gold refining company **Fidelity Printers** and the Registrar's office, has pledged to strengthen security measures by designing a watertight vaccination certificate card with features such as an invisible coat of arms that shines under ultra-violet (UV) light, fluorescent numbering, water-marked security paper, micro text underground and guilloche pattern.³⁴

²⁵ Ministry of Health and Child Care, 7 Apr 2021

²⁶ Ministry of Health and Child Care, 7 Apr 2021

²⁷ ARC source, Zimbabwean citizen

²⁸ ZUPCO is the parastatal Zimbabwe United Passenger Company which was the only authorised public transport service provider during hard lock down periods.

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIm1D9vNiCM&t=433s>

³⁰ Department of Presidential Communications, 21 Mar 2021

³¹ Trading Economics, 8 Apr 2021

³² President of Zimbabwe Twitter page, 25 Mar 2021

³³ ARC source, Zimbabwean citizen

³⁴ ZBC News, 7 Apr 2021

Planner

18 Apr 2021 **(Zimbabwe)** Independence Day celebrations

Jul 2023 **(Zimbabwe)** Harmonised elections

Chronology

8 Apr 2021 **Maputo (Mozambique)** *The Herald*. President **Emmerson Mnangagwa** attends the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** Troika Heads of State meeting to discuss plans to deploy a technical mission in response to the insurgency in Mozambique;

8 Apr 2021 **(Southern Africa)** *eNCA*. **Southern Africa's** regional bloc **SADC** vows a "proportionate" response to jihadists who last month raided a key town in northern **Mozambique** in a sharp escalation of a three-year-old insurgency;

8 Apr 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Daily News*. Government suspends **Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC)** June 2021 Ordinary and Advanced Level examinations due to delays in marking papers written between December 2020 and February 2021;

7 Apr 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *News24*. Zimbabwe expecting tobacco output to grow by 9%, from 184,000 tons in 2020 to 200,000 tons in 2021.

6 Apr 2021 **(Southern Africa)** *AFP*. Leaders of the 16-country **Southern African Development Community** are set to hold emergency talks on 8 April over an **Islamic Sate**-linked militant insurgency in northern **Mozambique**;

6 Apr 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (MoFAIT)*. MoFAIT spokesperson **Constance Chemwayi** says Zimbabwe on course to rejoin the **Commonwealth**;

6 Apr 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Sunday Times*. Police jail pro-democracy activist **Makomborero Haruzivishe** for 14 months, a week after he was convicted for inciting public violence and resisting arrest;

31 Mar 2021 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Reuters*. Shareholders in state-owned mining investment firm **ZCCM-IH** overwhelmingly support its acquisition of a 90% stake in **Mopani Copper Mines** from **Switzerland**-based commodity company **Glencore**;

31 Mar 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The East African*. **United States** government report raises the red flag over alleged human rights violations in **Zimbabwe** under President **Emmerson Mnangagwa**, which include torture of government critics by security forces;

31 Mar 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Creamer Media's Engineering News*. **South Africa**-based energy start-up **Sun Exchange** raises \$1.4m in a crowd sale of solar cells of a 1.9 MW solar and battery storage facility at **Nhimbe Fresh** farm in **Zimbabwe**;

18 Mar 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Zimbabwe Daily*. **Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)** says investigations suggest there was no break-in at the **Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC)** offices;

17 Mar 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Business Day*. Parliament expels six legislators, including former finance minister **Tendai Biti**, after being recalled by a faction of their party as the fight to control the largest opposition party, **Movement for Democratic Change**, escalates;

16 Mar 2021 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *The Herald*. Police probe an alleged break-in at **Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC)** offices;

12 Mar 2021 **(Africa)** *AfDB*. Multinational financial institution **African Development Bank**

Group forecasts **African** economies to rebound by 3.4% on an average in 2021, following an average contraction of 2.1% last year;

11 Mar 2021 **(Africa) Times**. A group of 40 charities in **Africa**, including **Amnesty International** and **Christian Aid**, slams a move by richer members of the **World Trade Organisation** to block a push by some 80 developing countries – led by **India** and **South Africa** – to waive its **Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property** agreement rules on patents;

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