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Zambia officially enters full election mode ahead of the 13 August general elections, with parliament dissolved, campaigns opening, and political parties positioning themselves for what is shaping up to be a tense and fragmented contest. The Bank of Zambia (central bank) cut its benchmark interest rate for the third consecutive time, signalling growing confidence that inflation will remain within the target range despite mounting global concerns over rising oil prices linked to the Iran conflict. Relations between Zambia and the United States (US) deteriorate sharply after outgoing US ambassador Michael Gonzales uses his farewell address on 30 April to launch a blistering attack on what he described as “institutionalised and refined corruption” within President Hakainde Hichilema’s (2021-present) administration.

Zambia drifts into election mode as campaigns kick off amid rising tensions

Zambia has officially entered full election mode ahead of the 13 August general elections, with **Parliament** dissolved, campaigns opening, and political parties positioning themselves for what is shaping into a tense and fragmented contest. The **National Assembly’s** [dissolution](#) on 15 May triggered the constitutional 90-day countdown to the polls and formally shifted the country into the campaign period. Candidate nominations for parliamentary, local government, and presidential elections are now underway across the country, with heightened political activity already exposing divisions within both the ruling and opposition camps.

President **Hakainde Hichilema** (2021-present) has [urged](#) security agencies to maintain peace and order during the election period, amid growing concerns over political violence and tensions surrounding nominations. The elections are expected to test the popularity of the ruling **United Party for National Development (UPND)**, which came to power in 2021 on promises of economic recovery, democratic reforms, and job creation. The UPND is campaigning on what it describes as economic stabilisation achievements, including debt restructuring progress, free education expansion, and increased **Constituency Development Fund** allocations.

However, the start of the campaign season has also exposed internal strains within the UPND. The party this week [expelled](#) 15 members accused of involvement in violence at **Mazabuka Civic Centre** during the filing of nomination papers by former local government minister, **Gary Nkombo**. Nkombo, once a senior UPND figure and close ally of Hichilema, filed his nomination as an independent candidate for the **Mazabuka Central** parliamentary seat after apparent fallout within the party. Violence erupted during the filing process, with reports of clashes between rival factions and accusations that party cadres attacked Nkombo and his supporters.

The incident has become one of the first major highlights of the campaign season and has [raised](#) concerns about factionalism inside the ruling party as several aspiring candidates challenge official UPND selections or opt to stand as independents. Reports indicate that a [wave](#) of withdrawals of UPND incumbents and disputes over adoptions has reshaped the landscape in several constituencies ahead of the polls.

On the opposition side, Zambia’s political field has become increasingly fragmented following the dramatic withdrawal of the former ruling **Patriotic Front (PF)** from the presidential race.

The faction led by **Miles Sampa** [announced](#) that the PF would not field a presidential candidate, arguing that the party requires more time to rebuild after years of internal divisions, defections, and legal disputes. The withdrawal marks a significant decline for the party that governed Zambia from 2011 until its defeat in 2021.

The PF's retreat has created space for other opposition figures to emerge. Veteran opposition politician **Fred M'membe** has once again entered the presidential race, while the **Tonse Alliance** party has [rallied](#) behind presidential candidate **Brian Mundubile** and his running mate **Makebi Zulu**. Mundubile and Zulu's nomination filing exercise attracted heavy police deployment amid fears of possible clashes and heightened political tensions. The alliance has emerged as one of the more visible opposition formations attempting to consolidate anti-UPND support following the PF's collapse as a unified electoral force.

The 2026 elections are likely to revolve around economic conditions, youth unemployment, cost-of-living pressures, and public perceptions of governance under Hichilema's administration. At the same time, opposition fragmentation could benefit the ruling party if challengers fail to unite behind a single strong candidate.

Central bank cuts rates again as inflation outlook improves despite oil risks

The **Bank of Zambia (BoZ)** (central bank) on 13 May reduced its benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points to 13.25%, a third consecutive cut, signalling growing confidence that inflation will remain within the target range of 6-8% despite mounting global concerns over rising oil prices linked to the **Middle East** conflict. The central bank [reduced](#) the monetary policy rate to ease domestic price pressures and improve agricultural prospects, strengthening the outlook for economic stability in the copper-producing country.

The move contrasts sharply with trends elsewhere on the continent, where some central banks have tightened policy in response to renewed inflationary risks. In neighbouring **Botswana**, authorities raised lending rates sharply by 200 basis points in April after inflation accelerated following a steep increase in fuel prices triggered by global energy market disruptions.

Inflation stood at 6.8% year on year in April, down from 7.1% the previous month, remaining within the bank's target range. The central bank said inflation was expected to remain within the official target range largely because of a favourable maize [harvest](#) during the current crop marketing season, which is expected to improve food supplies and lower pressure on consumer prices. Food costs are a major driver of inflation in Zambia, and the anticipated recovery in agricultural output follows last year's severe drought, which had damaged crop production and pushed up prices. BoZ forecast annual average inflation at 6.8% in 2026 and 6.1% in 2027 before edging slightly higher to 6.6% in the first quarter of 2028.

The central bank also pointed to the relative [stability](#) of the kwacha against major international currencies as another key factor helping to anchor inflation expectations. The currency has remained more resilient in recent months, supported by improving investor sentiment, stronger copper export earnings and tighter fiscal management.

The latest rate cut underscores growing optimism over Zambia's broader economic recovery after years of financial stress, debt restructuring negotiations and climate-related shocks. BoZ governor **Denny Kalyalya** disclosed that gross international reserves reached a historic high of \$6.5 billion in February, mainly supported by foreign exchange purchases. He said reserves later closed the first quarter at \$6.2 billion, equivalent to 5.2 months of import cover, compared to \$5.5 billion or 4.8 months of import cover recorded at the end of December 2025.

The country has recently recorded a series of positive economic indicators, including stronger mining output, improving foreign exchange reserves and increased investor confidence following progress on debt restructuring agreements with international creditors.

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** forecast economic growth to accelerate this year to 5.8% from 5.2% in 2025 as the recovery in electricity generation, growth in mining output and agriculture supports industrial activity. Zambia has been grappling with power shortages caused by reduced hydroelectric output after the prolonged drought, but improved rainfall this season has raised expectations for better electricity supply.

The easing inflation outlook gives policymakers more room to support growth ahead of the general election. The improving economic environment is likely to become a key political issue as the government seeks to convince voters that its reform agenda is delivering tangible benefits after several difficult years marked by rising living costs, debt distress and energy shortages.

US-Zambia ties deteriorate after envoy's corruption attack

Relations between Zambia and the **United States (US)** have deteriorated sharply after outgoing US ambassador **Michael Gonzales** used his farewell address on 30 April to launch a blistering attack on what he [described](#) as "*institutionalised and refined corruption*" within Hichilema's administration. In his remarks, Gonzales [accused](#) senior government officials of exploiting foreign diplomats and international investors for personal enrichment while ignoring opportunities that could improve healthcare delivery for ordinary citizens. The unusually direct criticism from the US ambassador has exposed growing tensions between the two countries over governance, corruption, and the increasingly strategic battle for access to Africa's critical minerals.

The ambassador said the US had attempted to structure a major health support arrangement aimed at strengthening Zambia's public health sector, but claimed negotiations were frustrated by corruption and rent-seeking behaviour within state institutions. According to Gonzales, some officials were more interested in extracting personal benefits and leveraging political influence than implementing reforms that would benefit citizens.

The diplomatic fallout has escalated into a wider dispute over the true intentions behind the US' engagement with Zambia.

Zambian officials and government-aligned individuals have [pushed](#) back strongly against the US position, accusing the US of attempting to use healthcare assistance as leverage to secure preferential access to Zambia's vast reserves of copper, cobalt and other critical minerals essential for the global energy transition. Critics within Zambia argue that the proposed health cooperation framework came with intrusive conditions, including requests for access to sensitive health data and strategic concessions linked to mineral supply chains.

The dispute reflects a growing dilemma facing many African governments as global powers intensify competition for critical resources needed for electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies and advanced manufacturing. Zambia, Africa's second-largest copper producer, has [become](#) increasingly important in Western efforts to diversify mineral supply chains away from **Chinese** dominance. The country also sits within the resource-rich **Copperbelt**, which contains some of the world's largest deposits of copper and cobalt.

Since taking office, Hichilema has cultivated strong ties with Western governments and international financial institutions, securing support from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and other lenders as Zambia restructured its massive external debt burden. While the US presents its involvement as support for development, governance and economic transformation, some African governments and civil society groups remain [sceptical](#) of arrangements they believe prioritise foreign interests over local sovereignty.

Planner

16 Sep 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bank of Zambia** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** Decision

13 Aug 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** General election

Chronology

20 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. Government says it has intensified efforts to expand energy infrastructure in **Luapula Province**, with renewed progress on the long-awaited 244MW **Kalungwishi Hydropower Project**.

19 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. The former ruling **Patriotic Front** says it has withdrawn from the August 2026 presidential election following months of internal wrangles and legal battles centred on disputes over the party's leadership;

19 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Mining.com**. **China's Sinomine Resource Group Co.** is seeking as much as \$764m to fund projects in Africa, including a copper mine in Zambia and a lithium sulphate plant in **Zimbabwe**;

18 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Reuters**. State investment firm, **ZCCM Investment Holdings (ZCCM-IH)**, announces it has formed a joint venture with **Democratic Republic of Congo**-headquartered **Mining Mineral Resources** to explore for and mine gold, as Zambia seeks to diversify its mining sector;

18 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bloomberg**. **Millers Association of Zambia (MAZ)** says the staple corn harvest will exceed 4.1 million tonnes this year, a second straight record that could help cool inflation but also poses fiscal risks;

18 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Lusaka Times**. President **Hakainde Hichilema** calls for peaceful, issues-based campaigns as the **Electoral Commission** opens a critical five-day presidential nomination window for roughly 30 expected candidates ahead of the 13 August general election;

16 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. The **Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ)** says the increase in polling stations from 12,152 to 13,529 ahead of the 2026 general election does not mean new voting centres have been created through delimitation;

15 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. Zambia signs an agreement with **Israel** to restructure its \$460m debt owed to that country, which was expected to be repaid by 2043;

15 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Reuters**. State investment firm, **ZCCM Investment Holdings (ZCCM-IH)** CEO **Kakenenwa Muyangwa** says ZCCM-IH is keen to raise its minority stakes in mining assets, but any such increases would be on commercial terms and not through forced sales;

14 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. Mines and minerals development minister, **Paul Kabuswe**, says the recovery team has found it difficult to rescue the five miners trapped at **Matala Gold Mine** in **Mumbwa** because the tunnels are not conventional and do not follow a mine plan;

14 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. **Access Bank Group** says the kwacha has appreciated by more than 17% against the **United States** dollar since the start of 2026, making it Africa's best-performing currency;

14 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Reuters*. Zambia clears two copper producers to resume sulphuric acid exports to the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, as the country eases curbs on the mining input;

14 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. President **Hakainde Hichilema** meets with outgoing **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** ambassador **Jassim Al Qasimi** to praise the growing trade and investment partnership between the two nations, even proposing the establishment of a resident UAE embassy in Zambia;

13 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Diggers*. The **National Assembly** passes the **Public Gatherings Bill** amid complaints from various citizens who have described the bill as being worse than the repealed **Public Order Act**;

13 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Mines minister, **Paul Kabuswe**, reports that copper production from large-scale mines rose to nearly 199,000 metric tonnes in the first quarter of 2026, driven by increased investor confidence and policy reforms;

12 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Presidential candidate **Brian Mundubile** accuses the government of using state institutions and false rumours of a running mate deal with President **Hakainde Hichilema** to sabotage his campaign for the 13 August general election;

11 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. **Bank of Zambia's** (central bank) April 2026 financial stability report raises concern over rising loan delinquencies among public sector workers, despite most borrowing being backed by salaries;

11 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Diggers*. **National Assembly** speaker, **Nelly Mutti**, rules that the six **Patriotic Front (PF)** legislators who were alleged to have defected to the **United Party for National Development (UPND)** have not joined the ruling party but simply expressed interest in joining;

9 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. Lusaka high court dismisses an application for judicial review seeking to block the government's decision to table and process 77 Bills ahead of the dissolution of **Parliament**, ruling that the matter falls outside its jurisdiction;

8 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Diggers*. Government invites stakeholders to submit proposals and recommendations for consideration in the preparation of the 2027 national budget and the medium-term budget framework covering the 2027–2029 period;

5 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. **Angola** calls for enhanced joint sensitisation efforts along the common border with Zambia to address misunderstandings and strengthen bilateral cooperation;

4 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. **Bank of Zambia** (central bank) reports that the nation's financial system is stabilising due to reduced inflation, stronger international reserves and a sound banking sector with declining non-performing loans;

4 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Zambia is facing a significant political standoff as opposition leaders and legal experts condemn proposed electoral reforms, warning they could unfairly tilt the playing field ahead of the 13 August general election;

1 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Reuters*. **United States-based** advocacy group **Access Now** claims the 2026 edition of **RightsCon** - a long-running conference devoted to digital rights, which was due to be held in Lusaka - was cancelled after **Chinese** diplomats pressured Zambia's government over the presence of **Taiwanese** civil society figures due to attend the conference;

30 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. South African high court orders that any person seeking access to the body of former president **Edgar Lungu** must first obtain a court order, with notice to the Lungu family;

27 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. Constitutional court rules that children born in the country to refugee parents are eligible for citizenship, in a landmark decision on nationality rights;

27 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Former president **Levy Mwanawasa**'s former advisor, **Jack Kalala**, urges Zambians to maintain peace and professionalism as the country prepares for the upcoming 13 August general elections;

23 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Mining*. Mines ministry says **Australia**-headquartered **BHP** is seeking to return to large-scale copper exploration in Zambia;

20 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Constitutional lawyer **Jonas Zimba** calls for the rejection of the proposed **Electoral Process Amendment Bill, 2026**, warning that its provisions could weaken Zambia's democracy by excluding political competitors and independent candidates;

20 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. Lenders in Zambia will now be required to fully disclose all interest rates and charges, remove hidden fees, and comply with fair debt collection standards under the **Banking and Financial Services Act of 2026**;

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