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'A full-blown dictatorship': Zimbabwean President Mnangagwa signs draconian Patriotic Bill

«Повномасштабна диктатура»: президент Зімбабве Мнангагва підписав драконівський патріотичний закон

Рішення президента Зімбабве Еммерсона Мнангагви підписати Закон про кодифікацію та реформу кримінального законодавства 2022 року, також відомий як «Патріотичний закон», було охарактеризовано деякими як смерть демократії. Це останній з багатьох заходів, таких як заборона мітингів опозиції, політичне насильство та використання правових інструментів для дискваліфікації кандидатів на виборах напередодні цьогорічних виборів. Деякі юристи заявили, що законопроект був неоднозначно сформульований, складний та важкий для розуміння. Отже, він схильний до неправильного розуміння, і співробітники правоохоронних органів можуть широко інтерпретувати його відповідно до своїх цілей. «Amnesty International» заявила, що це був продуманий крок, спрямований на обмеження прав людей напередодні виборів 23 серпня 2023 р. Закон про поправки до Закону про приватні добровільні організації (PVO), метою якого є нагляд за діяльністю організацій громадянського суспільства, є ще одним законом, який очікує підпису президента. Законопроект про PVO спрямований на те, щоб змусити замовкнути інакодумство.

<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/a-full-blown-dictatorship-zimbabwean-president-mnangagwa-signs-draconian-patriotic-bill-20230714>

The Patriotic Bill has been dubbed the most draconian law to be approved in Zimbabwe since independence.

Civil society organisations say the law signals the death of democracy in the country.

There's up to 20 years and the death penalty for those that violate the law.

The move by President Emmerson Mnangagwa to sign the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Amendment Bill 2022, also known as the "Patriotic Bill", has been described by some as the death of democracy.

It is the latest in a raft of measures, such as the banning of opposition rallies, political violence, and the use of legal instruments to disqualify election candidates, ahead of elections this year.

The law criminalises any Zimbabwean citizen or national caught "wilfully injuring the sovereignty and national interest of Zimbabwe" and those who participate in meetings with the intention of promoting calls for economic sanctions against the country.

Some of its provisions are:

Criminalising any citizen caught "wilfully injuring Zimbabwe's sovereignty, dignity and independence as a nation";

Criminalising those who participate in meetings with the intention to promote, advance, encourage, instigate or advocate sanctions or trade boycotts against the country and;

The death penalty for those perceived to have conspired to unseat the government, including individuals acting as agents or proxies for such entities.

Some legal experts said the bill was ambiguously worded, complicated, and difficult to understand.

Therefore, it's susceptible to misunderstanding, and law enforcement officials can interpret it broadly to fit their agenda.

For months, civil society organisations have lobbied the international community to urge the Zimbabwean government not to enact the law which gives the state leverage to crack down on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Amnesty International said it was a calculated move to limit people's rights ahead of elections on 23 August.

It said:

The weaponisation of the law is a desperate and patent move to curtail the rights to freedom of expression and to public participation in elections due in August this year.

The leading opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) described it as a law signalling "a full-blown dictatorship run by a regime worse than Robert Mugabe".

But the government defended the law as a way of promoting unity and love for one's country.

Fadzayi Mahere of the CCC said, if they came to power in the general elections, such laws would be repealed.

"In the new Zimbabwe, unjust laws will be repealed. We will deliver freedom," she said.

Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) chairperson John Dlamini said it was a law to shield the government from criticism.

"It's fascist. They don't want to be scrutinised by the people. They put a law which says, don't blame Mnangagwa, don't say there are no jobs in Zimbabwe. That's wrong," he said.

The Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment (PVO) Bill, which aims to oversee civil society organisations' operations, is another law that is waiting for the president's signature.

The PVO Bill aims to silence dissident opinions.