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'Protect our hard-won independence,' Mnangagwa says as Zimbabwe turns 43 Accreditation

«Захистіть нашу важко завойовану незалежність», — каже Мнангагва з нагоди 43-х роковин незалежності Зімбабве

З нагоди 43-х роковин незалежності Зімбабве президент Еммерсон Мнангагва закликав громадян «зберігати пильність» щодо недобррозичливців, оскільки країна наближається до виборів. «У міру наближення узгоджених загальних виборів я закликаю націю зберігати пильність і захищати нашу важко завойовану незалежність. Ніякі голоси, іноземні чи місцеві, включаючи шахрайські НУО (неурядові організації), не повинні сіяти насіння поділу та дисгармонії серед нас», - сказав він. Лідер Громадянської коаліції за зміни Н. Чаміса у своєму посланні про незалежність заявив, що країна ще не стала вільною через політичні переслідування та корупцію. Заступник директора Amnesty International зі Східної та Південної Африки Ф. Мвангов'я повідомила, що «у міру того, як Зімбабве наближається до виборів, свобода вираження думок, асоціації та мирних зборів піддається зростаючим нападкам. Незгодні голоси зазнають кримінального переслідування, а деякі активісти опозиції зазнають тривалого попереднього ув'язнення».
<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/protect-our-hard-won-independence-mnangagwa-says-as-zimbabwe-turns-43-20230418>

The United States says Zimbabwe has a chance to chart a good path ahead.

On the occasion of Zimbabwe's 43rd year of independence, President Emmerson Mnangagwa has called on citizens to "remain vigilant" from detractors, as the country heads for elections later this year.

He was addressing a crowd in Mount Darwin on Tuesday, a farming and rural area in Mashonaland Central, 160km north of Harare.

"As the harmonised general elections draw nearer, I call on the nation to remain vigilant and protect our hard-won independence. No voices, foreign or local - inclusive of rogue NGOs (non-governmental organisations) - should sow seeds of division and disharmony among us," he said. Zimbabweans mark independence day as tense general election looms Earlier this month, Mnangagwa threatened that he would not invite foreign election observers from what he called "hostile" countries.

He is also expected to sign into law the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Bill, which would set out stringent working conditions for NGOs, especially those suspected to be operating in political spaces.

Citizen's Coalition for Change leader Nelson Chamisa, in his independence message, said the country was not yet free because of political persecution and corruption.

He said:

We salute the gallant citizens who fought for our independence. That independence is yet to come. It's not yet Uhuru. True independence and a happy and prosperous Zimbabwe for everyone is definitely coming! Get ready. All citizens and political prisoners must be free.

Democratic Union of Zimbabwe (DUZ) president Robert Chapman said that, while remembering the country's past, "we also have to think about building our future", especially while being faced with challenges such as "injustice, corruption and misgovernance".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Zimbabwe had a "chance to set itself on a path to promote citizen engagement and to respect human rights", and that the US would "continue to support the people of Zimbabwe to live longer more prosperous, and healthier lives".

Flavia Mwangovya, Amnesty International's deputy director for East and Southern Africa, said the country was marking independence day in an election season marred by rapidly shrinking civic space, including the criminalisation of dissent and the targeting of political activists and human rights defenders.

"Forty-three years after independence, authorities are yet to guarantee in practice the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly which are increasingly being threatened despite being guaranteed under the constitution and international law," she said.

'Dissenting voices are being criminalised'

"The right to freedom of peaceful assembly has continuously been violated and undermined, with the authorities refusing to give clearance for some of the main opposition party's rallies, arresting and convicting peaceful protesters and using unnecessary and excessive force to stop protests.

"As Zimbabwe approaches elections later this year, freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly have come under increasing attack. Dissenting voices are being criminalised, with some opposition activists put in lengthy pre-trial detentions."

Mnangagwa is the last man standing, as the only member from the inaugural cabinet which was ushered in by majority vote in 1980.

Since coming into power in a coup in November 2017, dislodging the late Robert Mugabe, the independence day speech has lost its spark, newspaper vendor Themba Ncube told News24.

"During Mugabe's time, despite being a bad leader, we looked forward to his speeches on independence day. It was a speciality and he would hint at his next move, cruel or not, and attack the opposition. It was a show," he said.

Mugabe would spend hours giving the nation a history lesson about the liberation battle, filled with anti-Western rhetoric, much like the late Fidel Castro of Cuba.

He would then switch to criticising opposition lawmakers, namely the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC T), yelling: "They are agents of regime change!"

But Mnangagwa, monikered "the crocodile", is not a man of many words, and even his political opponents note this.