Mugabe party drafts resolution to fire him

BY AGENCIES.

A senior leader in the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has indicated that the political process to remove President Robert Mugabe is underway.

"Let him become stubborn if he wants, we are arranging for him to be fired on Sunday if he does not resign," the source said.

"When that is done, it's impeachment on Tuesday," he said.

The party has also organised mass protests in Harare tomorrow to send a clear message that President Mugabe should resign.

Afrobarometer, a research company, said 75% of the respondents support the coup.



Mugabe (second right) with Chiwenga (right) and a South African envoy at State House in Harare on Thursday

DEFIANT

President Robert Mugabe remained defiant and attended a university graduation ceremony on Friday, making his first public appearance since military generals took control of Zimbabwe.

The 93-year-old leader was still resisting pressure from the army to quit, giving conditions that were unacceptable to the lead negotiators.

The generals took over late on Tuesday after vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa was sacked and Mugabe's wife, Grace, emerged in prime position to succeed her husband.

Zimbabwe was left stunned by the military intervention sparked by the bitter succession battle between Grace and Mnangagwa, 75.

Leaders of the ruling Zanu-PF party were meeting on Friday to draft a resolution to dismiss him at the weekend and lay the ground for his impeachment if he refuses to stand down.

Analysts say the military leadership was strongly opposed to Grace's rise, while Mnangagwa has close ties to the defence establishment.

Mugabe and the army chiefs held talks on Friday to negotiate his resignation, but sources close to the talks say the president refused one of the demands.

The army wants Mugabe to reappoint Mnangagwa as vice-president before stepping down. But he does not think Mnangagwa will protect his family's interests.

Mnangagwa, who is a leading candidate to succeed Mugabe, flew back to Harare on Thursday after fleeing the country.

The 93-year-old president has refused to resign, sources said, after soldiers put him under house arrest in a stunning turnaround for the veteran leader, who has ruled Zimbabwe with an iron-fist since 1980.

Mugabe's motorcade on Thursday took him from his private residence to the State House for the talks, which were also attended by envoys from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional bloc.

"I think he is trying to buy time," said a source close to the army leadership, who declined to be named.

Government TV showed Mugabe, the world's oldest head-of-state, dressed in a navy blue blazer and grey trousers standing alongside army chief General Constantino Chiwenga.

POWER STRUGGLE

Mnangagwa, 75, was previously one of Mugabe's most loyal lieutenants, having worked alongside him for decades.

But he fled to South Africa following his dismissal and published a scathing rebuke of Mugabe's leadership and Grace's presidential ambitions.

The military said Friday they had detained some "criminals" in Mugabe's government in reference to supporters of Grace's presidential ambitions.

Grace has not been seen since the military takeover.

State TV said a graduation ceremony at a university where Mugabe is the chancellor would proceed as planned on Friday.

DELICATE TIME

Morgan Tsvangirai, a former prime minister and long-time opponent of Mugabe, told journalists in Harare on Thursday that Mugabe must resign "in the interest of the people". He added that "a transitional mechanism" would be needed to ensure stability.

Tendai Biti, who served as finance minister during the coalition government after the 2008 elections, called it "a very delicate time for Zimbabwa. A way has to be worked out to maintain stability," he said.

Harare's residents have largely ignored the few soldiers still on the streets with shops, businesses and offices operating as usual.

Eldred Masunungure, a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, said the formation of a "pre-election coalition" could be a viable response to the crisis in the country.

The international community has been watching the crisis closely.

In Paris, the head of the African Union, Guinea's president Alpha Conde, warned that the continent "will never accept military coup d'etat" in Zimbabwe — and called for a return to the "constitutional order".

"Problems need to be resolved politically by the ZANU-PF party and not with an intervention by the army," Conde added.

Meeting in Botswana, the Southern African Development Community called for an emergency summit to help resolve the crisis, urging Zimbabwe to "settle the political challenges through peaceful means".

Britain, Zimbabwe's former colonial rule, also called for elections, scheduled for 2018 to go ahead.

South Sudan President has ordered the release from house arrest of Gen Paul Malong Awan, the former