

Harare, Zimbabwe, November 18 (Infosplusgabon) - Tens of thousands of Zimbabweans are attending a rally in the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, to demand the resignation of President Robert Mugabe who has led the country since independence in 1980.

The rally is another huge boost for the military who took over the country last Wednesday after sending armoured vehicles into the capital on Tuesday evening.

The rally has been organised by war veterans, who for decades were the backbone of President Mugabe and his government.

Today, however, they have called Zimbabweans out to the Zimbabwe Grounds in Highfield, Harare, to protest against him and demand his resignation. Indeed, ordinary Zimbabweans, many of who were born after President Mugabe came to power, want him to leave the scene because of the hardships in the country.

With the popularity of President Mugabe at its lowest ever, Zimbabweans from all walks of life, including the youths, political parties, war veterans and civil society organisations are out in force to support the military take over.

Excited participants are carrying placards, some of which read "Mugabe must Go".

"It is time for Mugabe to go," said one man while a woman said she finds it difficult to feed her baby.

President Mugabe who has been under house arrest was on Friday allowed to attend the graduation ceremony of the Zimbabwe Open University in Harare.

The leadership of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) and a delegation of the regional grouping Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been negotiating the exit of President Mugabe. Unconfirmed media reports say he has been resisting calls to exit. There have been no details of the negotiations.

Prominent among those attending the rally is the Secretary General of the War Veterans, Victor Matemadanda. Their leader, Christopher Mutsvangwa, on Friday said they were giving President Mugabe 24 hours to leave office.

The state broadcaster, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), reports that the guest of honour for the Solidarity Rally is Professor Simbi Mubako, a politician and lawyer.

ZBC said that several groups are expected to have their representatives to speak on their behalf. These include traditional leaders, churches, civil society, business community, political parties, students, workers, war veterans and the youth and women.

ZDF on Friday approved the solidarity rally in support of their action to "stabilise the economy, defuse political instability" and ask for the resignation of President Mugabe.

It said in a statement on Friday that resonating with one of its operational thrusts relating to freedom of expression and movement, they have been approached by several private volunteer organisations seeking to freely move and express their desires. One of such requests is Saturday's solidarity march planned for Harare grounds in Highfield.

"The ZDF is therefore advising the nation that for as long as the planned march remains orderly, peaceful and in tandem with the fundamental bill of rights and within the confines of the country's constitution and without hate speech and incitement to cause violence, it fully supports the march.

"The ZDF is also encouraging the march participants to be disciplined and to return to their respective provinces with dignity after the march processions and moreover people have been warned against looting."

But time appears to be up for President Mugabe to leave office. Eight out of 10 Provincial Coordinating Committees (PCC) of Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF party have called on him to step down as president of the country and President and First Secretary of the party, the state broadcaster reported on Friday.

They said in separate resolutions that President Mugabe, 93, has lost control of the party and government business due to "incapacitation stemming from his advanced age".

The resolutions also said President Mugabe had allowed the formation of cabals and called for the convening of a special central committee meeting within 48 hours to discuss the current political situation.

They called for the renunciation of the "G40 cabal", and resolved that there be a revocation and annulment of the suspensions and expulsions that took place after the party's 2014 congress. G40, or "Generation 40", is a group within the party that is made up of the youth who did not fight the liberation war. Zimbabwe became independent in 1980.

The resolution also proposed that Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa, nicknamed 'Crocodile', who was fired last week from his post and the party, be allowed to retain his post in the party.

The Zimbabwean situation follows a bitter power struggle within the ruling ZANU-PF which culminated in the dismissal last week of vice president Emmerson Mnangagwa from his post and the party, putting President Mugabe's wife, Grace, in pole position to assume the post and therefore succeed the 93-year-old president. There has been no word of the whereabouts of the First Lady.

Many countries and organisations have not condemned the military action outright. They have stressed that there should be no change of government outside the ballot box. Significantly, the military have said it is not a coup, they have not suspended the constitution and have continued to refer to Mugabe as president and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

They are therefore using the laid down procedure - get the ruling party to recall President Mugabe and form an interim government of national unity that would hold elections.

Rex Tillerson, US Secretary of State, in a statement said there was the need to work together for a quick return to civilian rule in the country in accordance with their constitution.

"Zimbabwe has an opportunity to set itself on a new path – one that must include democratic elections and respect for human rights," he said.

"Ultimately, the people of Zimbabwe must choose their government. In our conversations today, we have an opportunity to discuss concrete ways that we could help them through this transition," he added.

All said, President Mugabe is visibly hobbling to the end of his rule.

FIN/INFOSPLUSGABON/UJK/ GABON 2017

© Copyright Infosplusgabon