

Mnangagwa pushes for further changes to Zimbabwe's electoral laws

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*Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa attends the inauguration ceremony of South Africa's president-elect Cyril Ramaphosa, at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa, June 19, 2024.
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Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa is pushing for further changes to the country's electoral laws, months after *amendments extended his* current term by two years.

Addressing parliament, Mnangagwa called for changes to the Electoral Act and Constitutional Court Act. The amendments have moved Zimbabwe's next election to 2030 but also triggered legal challenges over the extension of the current term and changes to how future presidents will be elected.

"Following successful enactment of constitutional amendment act number three, there is need to undertake consequential amendments to ensure that various pieces of legislation are aligned with the constitution. In particular, the ministers of justice, legal and fundamental affairs will facilitate the following: amendment of the Electoral Act, amendment of the Constitutional Court Act, and enactment of a new Delimitation Commission Act," says Mnangagwa.

Earlier this month, Mnangagwa fuelled fresh speculation about his political future when he publicly suggested he would still be in power in 2035, five years beyond the newly extended electoral timetable. The remarks have added momentum to a growing debate over whether further constitutional changes could be pursued to extend his tenure.

Tendai Biti of Defend the Constitution Forum says they will resist any such move, setting the stage for another potentially fierce political and legal battle over the country's constitutional order.

"The ink on cab three (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 3 Act, 2026) is still wet. Cab three became law on the 7th of July 2026. But we are concerned that the regime is already on autopilot to amend this constitution, not just to amend it, to destroy this constitution through the introduction of a monarchy and the destruction of a republic. Zimbabwe is a republic. People died to establish this republic," adds Biti.

'Constitution violated'

Zimbabwean war veteran Godfrey Gurira says the principles of the country's constitution have been violated.

"What's the point? What did we fight for? This is what we are asking and the people are no longer given the opportunity to directly elect their president. In fact, it has to be done by some 350 or so people instead of 17 million people. So, we are very clear in terms of the fact that the principles that we fought for, the socialism that we used to talk about."

The opposition says both the executive and legislature have failed to uphold the constitution, leaving the judiciary as its last line of challenge.

It is now pinning its hopes on the courts to overturn the amendments.

Constitutional lawyer Lovemore Madhuku says, "The executive derives its authority from the people. Then when we establish the judiciary, we do so in section 162 of our constitution. Again, it says that the judiciary derives its authority from the people. The judiciary does not derive its authority from the executive or from the legislature, it derives its authority from the people, that's what section 162 says. So, when they sit and they're faced there with the war veterans, they are deriving their power straight from the people. Now this government under President Mnangagwa is making a very serious error. They actually think that the judiciary derives its power from the executive."

Mnangagwa's latest call for changes to the Electoral Act and Constitutional Court Act have reignited another constitutional and political battle bringing the spotlight back onto the country's courts and parliament.

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