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NO TO TERM LIMITS EXTENSION FOR LOOTERS!

By Michael Sibangilizwe Nkomo, ZAPU President

Fellow Zimbabweans, diplomats, civil society, friends of Zimbabwe, and esteemed members of the Fourth Estate, all protocols observed. It is my singular honor to address you all gathered here and by extension the nation at large. The urgency of our national crisis cannot afford us much time in the way of pleasantries, so kindly allow me to cut to the chase.

As the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), we stand opposed to the ED2030 agenda being clamored for by Mr Mnangagwa's loyalists and their proxies in captured opposition parties. ZAPU remains the only genuine opposition party free from any ties to ZANU PF. Ours is a government in waiting, the only viable alternative ready to rescue Zimbabwe from the rogue ZANU PF regime and its military-backed leader Mr Mnangagwa. He sneaked into power on the back of a military coup in 2017 and now seeks to extend his rule by staging another coup against the constitution of Zimbabwe. It is a treasonous ambition that no patriotic Zimbabwean should entertain.

What Mr Mnangagwa is trying to achieve is the grandfather of all illegalities. Our considered view is that the continuing chicanery dates back to 1980, when ZANU stole the people's votes after we attained our independence from colonial rule. ZANU PF morphed into a rabid carnivore and chose to replace the colonial regime. Inspired and instructed by the Rhodesian era, ZANU PF continues to take the citizens of Zimbabwe for granted, and the people along with ZAPU and even the ancestors are fed up. During their national conference held in Bulawayo in October 2024, the ZANU PF delegates resolved first and foremost to extend Mr Mnangagwa's presidential term from 2028 to 2030. This was done ostensibly to allow President Mnangagwa more time to oversee the fulfillment of 'Vision 2030', which he supposedly conceived but we all know this is not the case.

As we entered the New Year, calls for the ED2030 agenda only grew louder from Mr Mnangagwa's foot soldiers and praise singers. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Jenfan Muswere, issued a press statement claiming that his Principal's term extension agenda reflects the will of the people and should not be criminalized. The minister in typical ZANU style, tried to intimidate Church leaders opposed to the ED2030 agenda by labelling them Western puppets, much the same way as Mugabe labelled Catholic bishops a band of Jeremiahs for exposing the Gukurahundi massacres in the early '80s. Echoing the same sentiments, ZANU PF Mashonaland East provincial chairperson, Daniel Garwe, recently said that the push for Mr Mnangagwa to remain in office is unstoppable, claiming it is the will of the people. While these wild claims are being made, Mr Mnangagwa's silence is deafening.

Today we join the growing list of organizations and patriotic Zimbabweans refuting these claims by ZANU PF representatives. The list now includes genuine war veterans tired of watching in silence as the country is driven deeper into the woods by the clueless Mr Mnangagwa. We categorically reject the claims that the people of Zimbabwe wish to endure more suffering beyond 2028. Extending Mr Mnangagwa's draconian rule beyond the constitutional limit set for 2028, amounts to the extension of industrial-scale looting, unemployment, poverty, crime and low life expectancy for Zimbabweans. Only the merchants of death and suffering can agitate for the extension of Mr Mnangagwa's presidential term even by a week. His first term powered by a military coup and the second one secured from a stolen mandate in August 2023 have been disastrous enough for the people.

There is no vision that Mr Mnangagwa is presiding on. There is no iota of evidence to suggest that in 2030 Zimbabwe will provide upper-middle income for ordinary Zimbabweans. In reality, Zimbabweans will actually be poorer and more hopeless than ever before. In the 2 years between 2028 and 2030, Mr Mnangagwa and his Gold Mafia oligarchs are seeking to extend their looting spree. Apparently, 2028 which is 3 years from now is not enough for their primitive accumulation of wealth. Their insatiable avarice knows no constitutional limits. Their ultimate goal is to be the richest people on earth so that their ill-gotten wealth can shield them from prosecution when they are eventually booted out of power. It is a law of the universe that nothing lasts forever. As Mahatma Gandhi aptly said it, "Change is the only constant in the world."

As ZAPU, we hereby declare that any attempt by Mr Mnangagwa to extend his rule beyond 2028 will be met by the resistance it deserves. His administration will see a side of us they have never witnessed before. We will take the lead in making this country ungovernable as long as there is no electoral mandate from the people. We will only respect the will of the people derived from free and fair elections in 2028, as prescribed by the constitution. We also call on the people of Zimbabwe to withdraw their consent and refuse to be governed by Mr Mnangagwa's government beyond 2028. Civil disobedience will be encouraged while further steps to undermine Mr Mnangagwa's rule will be considered should his rogue regime foolishly choose to dig in.

At this juncture, we call upon opposition Members of Parliament elected by the people in 2023, to resist the temptation to support the ZANU PF ED2030 agenda. We are aware of the monies and flashy cars being thrown at politicians and social influencers by ZANU PF agents in a bid to secure unanimous support for their godfather. We implore you to stand on the right side of history, even if your resistance falls short of the numbers needed to stop this ZANU PF nefarious agenda in parliament. In the event of a referendum to remove the presidential term limit, we shall launch a spirited campaign for the people of Zimbabwe to resoundingly vote NO. This time we shall ensure that the rejection will be far greater than the massive snub Mr Mugabe received for his self-serving constitution in the year 2000. One thing is for sure, when Zimbabweans are united, they need little encouragement to reject nonsense.

To you Mr Mnangagwa, whether you are genuinely on leave or working with your proxies behind the scenes, we urge you to abandon this mindless journey to nowhere. You have caused enough damage and will be remembered as a greater failure than even your predecessor Robert Mugabe. Should you extend your misrule beyond 2028 a new definition for failure will have to be devised. There is nothing divine about you, to warrant granting you a free pass to rule Zimbabwe indefinitely. We shall stop you in your tracks and your military backing will be of no use. The people who liberated this country and their ZPRA and ZANLA freedom fighters no longer want you as President of Zimbabwe. Even the Church is now praying for your peaceful departure in 2028. The SADC region is burdened by the economic refugee crisis your government has created through your ruinous

policies and financial mismanagement. Formal businesses are collapsing under the weight of your policy bankruptcy.

To all Zimbabweans, let us stand firm in the defense of our constitution. Without the rule book we are back to the jungle and survival of the fittest. Our vulnerable will perish and all the gains of our hard-won independence will be reversed. This is by no means a call to arms but an invitation for patriotic duty. As it has been said before, “When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty.” Nonetheless, we remain alive to the reality that in our totalitarian environment, many will be cowed into submission by ZANU PF’s well-known terror tactics. Yet another wise adage from history comes to mind: “When the people fear their government, there is tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is liberty.”

However, it would be naïve for us to regard the ED2030 agenda as a bag of hot air without any support. There are some elite Zimbabweans and shadowy investors with vested interests in the extension of Mr Mnangagwa’s term of office. At the expense of the vast majority, a small group of minority elites have managed to amass staggering amounts of wealth which they are not ashamed to show off. The stark disparities between the haves and have-nots have polarized Zimbabwe into a divided country with not even a single common goal to mention. Elections though susceptible to rigging, offer a glimmer of hope for change. Postponing or holding off elections indefinitely might close the door on dissenting voices for a while but the people’s power will always find other outlets. History is awash with many examples of regimes that were toppled through protests and other forms of popular uprising. The demise of many despotic rulers has often been bloody and pitiful. ZANU PF is setting up Mr Mnangagwa for this inevitable fate.

In conclusion, let us return to the basics of political organization to ensure that our fledgling democracy is not snuffed out by imposters masquerading as democrats. We invite you to join a ZAPU branch near you so that together we can unshackle ourselves from poor governance, stagnation and mass-migration of our skilled workforce, and for us to achieve our final and total freedom. The sad reality is that our country now lags behind even countries at war like Russia and Ukraine. Whatever development ZANU talks about is actually superficial window-dressing which is lopsided and discriminatory. The big lie that Zimbabwe is open for business has fallen flat on its back as scores of formal businesses close down.

Let us come together as a strong and rejuvenated ZAPU to take back the people's power through the general elections scheduled for 2028. Given the people's mandate, we shall establish a people-driven government and return Zimbabwe back to the rule of law as guided by our constitution. ZAPU will genuinely open the political space for multi-party democracy so that our political culture becomes contestation of ideas as opposed to the current gladiator battles bordering on the brink of civil war. This ill-advised ED2030 agenda has polarizing effects even for ZANU PF members themselves. Zimbabweans will never find each other under Mr Mnangagwa's Rhodesian-inspired, divisive rule. Let us reclaim our country and make it work for all Zimbabweans. I thank you.