

Zimbabwean MDC party remains adamant on demands

Written by reporter

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Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party reaffirmed Saturday that it would not rush to join a government of national unity unless its demands have been met.

Addressing an MDC rally in Bindura, 80 kilometres north of Harare, party vice president Thokozani Khupe said: "We'll not go into a deal that does not bring food to Zimbabweans though we are committed to the deal. We want to give you a Christmas present." Khupe was speaking on Saturday - a day after her party had agreed to a constitutional amendment bill in South Africa that lays the groundwork for creation of posts called for in the September 15 power sharing deal between MDC and President Robert Mugabe's Zanu PF.

Khupe said unless the issue of equitable distribution of cabinet ministries had been addressed, the MDC would not form a government with Mugabe.

"We want an agreement which is underpinned by law," Khupe said.

She added that ZANU PF is living in denial by politicising issues.

Khupe referred to a raging cholera outbreak that has killed more than 400 people in Zimbabwe.

"Cholera is a result of ZANU PF mismanagement that has resulted in the total collapse of the health sector," she said.

Zimbabwe is experiencing its worst economic and humanitarian crisis since independence from Britain 28 years ago.

Late Friday, MDC spokesman Nelson Chamisa said that Zimbabwe's political parties agreed on a draft constitutional amendment leading to the formation of a power-sharing government, but that obstacles still remained.

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"We have differed with Zanu-PF for a long time while the citizens suffer, but fortunately we have agreed on something," Chamisa said. "I need to hasten to mention that we still have some outstanding issues such the cabinet, appointment of diplomats." The draft constitutional bill that recognizes the posts and institutions created by the September 15 deal is now awaiting the approval of the MDC and Zanu-PF leadership, but that is likely to be academic given that they had been consulted before.

Former South African leader Thabo Mbeki - who is the mediator - has been meeting with the Zimbabwe rivals in Pretoria since Tuesday to discuss the amendment bill.

"It is something that we have always admired - meeting of minds of Zimbabweans when there is something to discuss," said Ephraim Masawi, the Zanu-PF deputy spokesman. "We are happy that as a nation we have moved a step forward. We need to quickly start working to address the problems facing the nation." The opposition has refused to form the government of national unity accusing Mugabe of grabbing all the key ministries such as foreign affairs, local government, finance, home affairs and defence.

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