

URGENT ACTION

ZAMBIA OPPOSITION LEADER RELEASED

Leader of the United Party for National Development (UPND), Hakainde Hichilema and five others accused with him have been released. He, together with five others had been arrested in April and charged with treason over allegations of obstructing the Presidential motorcade as it was on the way to a traditional ceremony in the Western Province.

Hakainde Hichilema, leader of the UPND, was released on 16 August. The state entered a *nolle prosequi* on the 'disobeying lawful orders' charge. The court had in May acquitted the six on the charge of 'using insulting language'. The treason case was referred to High Court and set to start on 14 August. On 16 August the State, withdrew charges against Hakainde Hichilema and five co accused.

Hakainde Hichilema had been arrested on 10 April when heavily armed police raided his home in Lusaka and was taken into custody. The authorities alleged that on 8 April, Hakainde Hichilema who was on his way to the Mongu celebration in Western Province accompanied by a convoy of over 60 vehicles, blocked President Edgar Lungu's motorcade with the vehicle he was travelling in. However, video evidence shows that each of the two convoys stuck to one side of the road with none visibly blocking the road.

Hakainde Hichilema together with five others were charged with 'treason', 'disobedience to lawful orders', 'disobeying statutory duty' and 'using insulting language' under the Penal Code on 12 April. Later, the police revised the charges and dropped the 'disobedience to statutory duty'. The state also amended the treason charge to include other incidences where Hakainde Hichilema had been charged previously in October 2016. Treason is a non-bail able offence in Zambia with a minimum jail term of 15 years and a maximum sentence of death. Hakainde Hichilema was denied food during the first few days of his detention.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the second update of UA 90/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr63/6504/2017/en/>

Further information on UA: 90/17 Index: AFR 63/7004/2017 Issue Date: 28 August 2017

