

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

POLITICAL VIOLENCE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE LUANGWA COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON BY-ELECTION

Madam Speaker, let me thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a ministerial statement on the matter of urgent public importance raised by the hon. Member of Parliament for Chama South, Mr Davison Mung'andu, regarding the political violence allegedly perpetrated by political party cadres before, during and after the Luangwa Council Chairperson by-election.

Madam Speaker, let me begin by reiterating that the position of the New Dawn Administration on violence has remained the same, and will not change. The New Dawn Administration, under the leadership of His Excellency, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, abhors violence. Regardless of the sources and form, violence is a vice which should be condemned by all peace-loving Zambians. Through violence, properties are destroyed, innocent lives are lost, and citizens are robbed of an opportunity to enjoy freedoms and liberties.

Madam Speaker, the Government has noted, with great concern, that during the just-ended by-elections in Luangwa, cases of violence allegedly instigated by political party cadres were recorded in some parts of the district. Let me address the specific incidents of violence recorded in Luangwa District during the recently held local government by-elections.

Madam Speaker, on Wednesday, 14th September, 2022, the night before the day of the council by-elections, Luangwa Police Station received a report of malicious damage to property from the United Party for National Development (UPND) District Youth Chairperson, in which suspected Socialist Party cadres maliciously damaged a Ford Ranger, motor vehicle Registration Number BAA 2217. The damage was estimated at K55,000. The incident occurred on Wednesday, 14th September, 2022, at around 2100 hours in Mphwazi Ward, in Luangwa District.

The brief facts of the matter are that suspected Socialist Party cadres; who were using a Land Cruiser, Registration Number ALT 3929, and a Toyota Prado; Registration Number AJD 8777, maliciously damaged a Ford Ranger motor vehicle, Registration Number BAA 2217. The police instituted investigations and have since arrested six suspects and impounded the two motor

vehicles allegedly used by the suspects. The suspects have all been charged for the offence of causing malicious damage to property and placed on police bond. They will appear in court soon.

Madam Speaker, on Thursday, 15th September, 2002, Luangwa Police Station received reports of assault occasioning actual bodily harm and malicious damage to property from Hon. Emmanuel Tembo, Member of Parliament for Feira Constituency, who reported that suspected UPND cadres had assaulted him using fists and iron bars, causing him to sustain a painful neck and develop a headache and general body pains.

Madam, Hon. E. Tembo also reported that the same suspected UPND cadres maliciously damaged two windows of his motor vehicle valued at K20,000. The incidents occurred on Thursday, 15th September, 2022 around 1400 hours at Limbikani Village in Katondwe, Luangwa District. The Zambia Police Service has since instituted investigations into the matter, but no arrests have been made so far.

Madam Speaker, in another incident, on Friday, 16th September, 2022, Luangwa Police Station received a report of endangering life of a person travelling on a motor vehicle, in which a female victim aged nineteen years of Soweto Compound in Luangwa, reported that she sustained a cut on the head after she was hit by a stone whilst on board a moving vehicle. The incident occurred on Friday, 16th September, 2022 around 1830 hours on Great East Road. The brief facts are that the victim, who is a Patriotic Front (PF) sympathiser, was on a moving lorry celebrating the election victory with other PF members when suspected UPND cadres, who were in a Toyota Minibus, started throwing stones at them at Luangwa Secondary School. One stone hit the victim on the head, causing her to sustain a cut. The Zambia Police Service has since instituted investigations into the matter, but no arrests have been made.

Madam Speaker, we all know that since Independence, Zambia has enjoyed peace and tranquillity. Our country has never had a civil war and is viewed as a beacon of peace on the continent of Africa. Zambia has avoided the kind of political violence that has inundated many countries in Africa. The safety and security of all citizens across the country is a priority for the New Dawn Administration, and all forms of violence cannot be condoned. We shall ensure that

we continue exploring all avenues to ensure that there is good governance. Without peace and order being a precondition for national development, our social, economic and political ambitions would become illusive and impossible to accomplish. The peace that Zambia is enjoying cannot be taken for granted.

Madam Speaker, to prevent political violence, especially before, during, and after elections, the Zambia Police Service is implementing the following measures:

- (a) encouraging interest groups and political parties to participate in Electoral Conflict Management Committee meetings;
- (b) enhancing co-operation and understanding among members of the public, leaders of political parties, as well as their party cadres;
- (c) enhancing crowd management control, particularly during by-elections;
- (d) discouraging political parties from ferrying cadres to areas where there are by-elections;
- (e) engaging and encouraging stakeholders on the importance of unity regardless of political, religious, and ethnic grouping to avoid loss of life and damage to property; and
- (f) sensitising the general public on the importance of upholding law and order.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, let me remind all political party players that the democracy Zambia is enjoying today comes with a high sense of responsibility prescribed in our statutes. It is, therefore, important that individuals, various interest groups, and political parties are peaceful and tolerant to different opinions and above all, respect the rule of law. The bedrock of democracy is the competition of different ideologies, but not physical confrontations. I urge all

political players to compete on ideas to contribute towards the development of our beloved country.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.