

WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH, 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, MR KAMPYONGO, MP

ON

**ILLEGAL DEMONSTRATION BY ALLEGED PATRIOTIC FRONT CADRES AT
THE LAW ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA IN LUSAKA**

Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to render a ministerial statement on the Illegal Demonstration by Alleged Patriotic Front (PF) Cadres at the Law Association of Zambia (LAZ) offices.

Sir, however, with your indulgence, permit me to seize this opportunity to join the rest of the soccer-loving Zambians in congratulating the Under-20 Football Team for their historic success. I also thank you for your presence, Sir. We witnessed you going into prayer during the unusual activities on the pitch.

Mr Speaker, in the same light, allow me to thank and commend the Inspector General of Police, his deputies and all the commanders of all the units; Paramilitary, Mobile, Protective Unit (PU) and Traffic Management Section, for the exemplary service they rendered to the nation at its time of need.

Sir, you may wish to know that one of the coaches who mentored our goal-keepers is a Chief Inspector, Yona Phiri, of the Zambia Police, who we have since honoured.

Mr Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity, once again, to issue a ministerial statement on the point of order raised by hon. Jack Mwiimbu, Member of Parliament for Monze Central Constituency on the illegal demonstration carried out by alleged PF cadres at the LAZ offices in Lusaka on 3rd March, 2017.

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Sir, while Part III of the Constitution of the Republic of Zambia and Article 2(b), to be specific, provide for the freedom of conscience, expression, assembly, movement and association, the said article ought to be read together with the Public Order Act Cap. 113 of the Laws of Zambia.

Mr Speaker, the Public Order Act provides the procedures that ought to be followed to hold public meetings, processions and demonstrations legally in this country. Any public meeting, procession and/or demonstration that do not meet the provisions of the Public Order Act are, therefore, a breach of the law and an act of illegality.

Sir, I must also underline that all organisations, associations and persons operating in Zambia are bound by the provisions of the Public Order Act. The Government is, therefore, extremely concerned by the apparent increase in the number of public demonstrations that have been carried out by some political parties, students, public service drivers and members of the community.

Mr Speaker, we have observed that illegal demonstrations by political parties tend to occur particularly, during election years. Opposition political parties, in fact, account for a bulk of the illegal demonstrations that took place in the election years of 2011, 2015 and 2016. Sadly, even the political parties in Government have equally contributed to the breaches of the law with regard to the Public Order Act.

Sir, my ministry, being responsible for the enforcement of the law and ensuring public order, does not condone illegal demonstrations. We, therefore, expect all political parties, whether in the Government or in the Opposition, to observe the law as there is no place for lawlessness in a democratic country like ours.

Mr Speaker, illegal demonstrations do not only contravene the provisions of the law, but often breach public order and peace in the country. The provisions of the Public Order Act are very clear. It requires any person intending to assemble or convene a public meeting, procession or demonstration to notify the Zambia Police Service of such intent at least seven days before holding such a meeting, procession or demonstration.

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Sir, with regard to the demonstration that took place on 3rd March, 2017, at the LAZ offices in Lusaka by alleged PF cadres, I must state, categorically, that the said demonstration was illegal. The organisers did not fulfil the provisions of the Public Order Act. The Zambia Police Service, however, responded swiftly to the said illegal demonstration and ended it quickly.

Mr Speaker, the demonstrators obeyed the directive of the police to disperse. The dispersion of the demonstrators was peaceful and public order at the LAZ offices and the surrounding areas was quickly restored.

Sir, it should also be noted that no loss of life or damage to property was reported. Accordingly, the Zambia Police Service did not effect any arrests.

Mr Speaker, my ministry has since directed the Zambia Police Service to institute an early warning system for illegal public meetings, processions and demonstrations to ensure that any potential breaches of public order are prevented in good time.

Sir, furthermore, I have directed the Zambia Police Service to work closely with the Chief Registrar of Societies to put measures in place to ensure that all organisations, associations and individuals observe the provisions of the Public Order Act whenever they wish to hold public meetings, processions or demonstrations.

Mr Speaker, some of the measures that will be put in place to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Public Order Act are as follows:

- (a) sensitisation of leaders of organisations at all levels and members of the public on the provisions of the Public Order Act through radio and television programmes;
- (b) provision of advice to leaders or organisations and associations on ensuring public order during meetings, processions and demonstrations;

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- (c) enhancement of foot and motorised patrols by the Zambia Police Service to ensure that any illegal public meetings, processions and demonstrations are quelled before causing any significant public disorder.

Mr Speaker, allow me to underline that the Public Order Act is an essential piece of legislation for the preservation of public order, especially in a plural society such as Zambia. It is also essential to the preservation of our democratic dispensation and protection of fundamental liberties. My Government shall, therefore, continue to vigorously uphold and enforce the law governing the holding of public meetings, processions and demonstrations.

Mr Speaker, I must, therefore, send a timely warning to the political parties and, particularly, the Patriotic Front (PF) party, which I belong to and the United Party for National Development (UPND).

Mr Speaker, the two political parties account for a number of legal meetings, processions as well as demonstrations.

Mr Speaker, law-abiding citizens expect the party in Government, such as ours to lead by example with regard to observance of the law. Similarly, any political party that aspires to take the mantle of leadership of our country has to be exemplary in as far as observance of the law of the land is concerned. This is essential because we are a Government and a country of laws.

Mr Speaker, before I conclude, let me commend the spokesperson for UPND, Mr Charles Kakoma, who, this afternoon issued a statement restraining their supporters from disturbing court processions. That is the leadership we want to see in this country.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.