

Mugabe Makes First Public Appearance, Military Pushes Exit

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Being cheered by a crowd at a graduation ceremony, Mugabe made his first public appearance since the military mobilized in Harare.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe made his first public appearance at a graduation ceremony in the capital city of Harare.

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This was the first time Mugabe had been seen since his military-imposed house arrest that began on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe Defence Force announces "breakthroughs" for Mugabe's exit from power.

"The Army applauds the nation for remaining patient and peaceful while it carries out its operations," the Zimbabwe Defense Forces, ZDF, said in a statement. The ZDF announced that it has reached "significant progress" to facilitate the exit

of the government of President Mugabe, who has remained in power since the nation's independence in 1980, and purging "criminals" from the African nation's political structure.

Negotiations described as "on the way forward" are still under way, the Zimbabwe Defense Forces reported in a statement, which was delivered through state media.

"Significant progress has been made in its operation to identify the criminals around President Mugabe," said the military, while confirming the continuity of the search and capture of these "criminals", without giving any specific details or names.

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The army insisted in its statement that these people "committed crimes that caused social and economic suffering" to the country.

The statement continued, "we are working with the President and Commander in Chief Robert Mugabe on the way forward."

"We will periodically publish press releases to keep the public informed of events in the country, and the Army applauds the nation for remaining patient and peaceful while it carries out its operations," the statement said.

Opposition leaders told CNN that a plan to remove Mugabe was discussed "a long time ago" by members of the president's party and members of the opposition.

State media has said that Mugabe does not intend to leave his position and instead wants to continue until 2018, when the 93-year old's term expires.

The military mobilized to secure power, which they have said is not a coup, after a dispute over the president's successor.