
Africa Report

Jailing of Jacob Zuma During COVID Pandemic May Be a Death Sentence

Former South African President Jacob Zuma accepted arrest July 8, after he was sentenced to 15 months in prison by South Africa's Constitutional Court on June 29. The arrest is the latest development in a two-year, highly selective investigation into corruption by the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, known as the Zondo Commission. The surprise verdict is technically for Contempt of Court, after Zuma walked out of the Zondo hearing several weeks ago, refusing to be part of his own destruction.

The Zondo Commission—named after Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo—was, ironically, initiated by Jacob Zuma himself, as one of the final acts of his Presidency, with intent to discover the truth behind the looting and bankrupting of state-owned enterprises, with emphasis on Eskom, which was looted of billions in the last 10 years. As the Zondo investigation unfolded, the Commission became increasingly politicized—with strong encouragement from the media—resulting in a “Get Zuma” orientation.

The verdict by the Constitutional Court—the highest court in the nation—has sharpened factional differences, which have been simmering since Zuma was forced to step down as President in early 2018. On July 2, Zuma addressed the crowd of supporters that had remained gathered at his home for three days. He also addressed the national and international

press. In his statement, he expressed his fear that South Africa was sliding back into apartheid conditions, with—as his “conviction” evidenced—detentions without trial, including pandemic lockdown and curfews—which he had fought against under apartheid, even spending 10 years in prison.

In that light, the former president said he saw it as his duty to fight these moves by the state. He said he did not fear going to jail, but noted that sending a 79-year-old man to jail in the middle of a pandemic was the equivalent of a death sentence, while the death penalty itself is now outlawed in South Africa. He said he was determined that his case not become a precedent, or that “Zuma laws” not be allowed to flourish in South Africa.

Several appeals of this verdict are in progress.

Gabon Mortgages Its Future in \$150 Million ‘Climate’ Deal

The under-developed nation of Gabon made history, June 24, as the first African country to “get paid” to preserve its rainforest—thereby putting a cap on its development potential—as the Norwegian government issued a \$17 million payment, allocated under the UN-initiated Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI). Gabon depends heavily on its oil exports; a third of its population lives under the poverty line.

In June 2017, under the CAFI program, the government of Gabon signed a Letter of Intent with Norway

and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund of the United Nations Development Program, under which it agreed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% below the 2005 level. This led to Gabon creating 13 national parks, effectively locking up the vast majority of its land area, prohibiting logging and access to other resources. Gabon is supposed to receive \$150 million over the next 10 years, assuming continued compliance—a pittance in exchange for development, the pearl without price. The June 24 tranche of \$17 million was the first.

First established in 2015, CAFI brought together European governments—specifically Norway, France, Germany, and the UK—and six Central African rainforest countries—Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, the Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, D.R. Congo, and the Republic of Congo.

COVID Third Wave Hits Africa as Its Vaccine Production Begins

Africa is now suffering its third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in less than 18 months, with little relief in sight, and new, more virulent variants to deal with. “The speed and scale of Africa’s third wave is like nothing we’ve seen before,” said Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO’s regional director for Africa, in a statement July 1. “The rampant spread of more contagious variants pushes the threat to Africa up to a whole new level.” The highly contagious Delta variant has been reported in 16 countries, accounting for 97% of samples sequenced in Uganda and 79% in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo. A meager 1% of the African population has been vaccinated, due to massive logistics barriers, lack of access to and financing for vaccines, and vaccine resistance.

It was announced on June 30—after critical months of delay—that South Africa will begin producing the first vaccines to be manufactured in Sub-Saharan Africa at the Aspen Pharmacare plant in Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha), a plant which last year underwent a multi-million upgrade for this purpose. At that critical point, an error at a Johnson & Johnson feeder facility in the U.S. caused production to be further delayed until this June. The plant will be capable of producing about 250 million doses by the end of the year, 30 million of which are earmarked for South Africa.

Egypt has meanwhile begun to produce vaccines under a contract with Sinovac of China, which was certified by the World Health Organization on June 1. In a statement quoted in Xinhua, WHO Egyptian representative Dr. Naema Al-Gasseer said, “The cooperation between Egypt and China is a successful model for international cooperation and transfer of global expertise, which contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.”

Australian Finance Now at Center of DR Congo’s Grand Inga III Hydro Build

According to a June 15 report by Reuters, the Democratic Republic of Congo has decided that Fortescue Metals Group, led by its Australian chairman, Andrew Forrest, will lead the development of the Grand Inga III hydro project, a 4,800 megawatt hydroelectric dam, which “had already been committed to Chinese and Span-

ish developers.”

The Inga project dates from the 1960s and DR Congo’s independence. The first two dams of seven envisioned were completed in 1972 and 1984. When fully developed, the Grand Inga complex will be capable of generating an astounding 44,000 MW of power, almost twice that of the world’s largest current dam, the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River.

In 2018 the China Three Gorges Corp. had gotten a solid hold on the development of Inga III, when suddenly Spanish company ACS Group was added to the consortium, only to then pull out in 2020, causing the entire consortium to collapse. This latest announcement by Fortescue includes fantastically wasteful visions of producing “green hydrogen” from the hydro-electric power.

Reliable reports, recently confirmed to *EIR* by a DR Congo source, have put Tony Blair right in the middle of this, through his Institute for Global Change. Reuters reports only the outward appearance, that the new arrangement was a handshake deal, worked out quietly between DR Congo President Félix Tshisekedi and Forrest. Last week, Tshisekedi suddenly announced his intention to “re-examine” all of Congo’s extractive mining contracts—most of which are held by Chinese companies—under suspicion of “hidden corruption.”

Thousands of NATO Troops Invade Africa for AFRICOM Maneuvers

The largest peacetime military exercise ever on African soil ran from June 7 to 18, when troops from nine nations and NATO executed AFRICOM’s African Lion 2021 in Morocco, with extensions in Tunisia and Senegal. Activities in Morocco were concentrated around Kenitra Air Base

not far from Rabat, with naval gunfire exercises offshore that included the Moroccan navy. This is the 17th year of these exercises. Planning—including the choice of countries for the maneuvers—began months earlier, and were originally set for six days in March.

In its official release, AFRICOM refers to the political situation in Morocco, which has seen a flare-up of the decades-old Polisario separatist movement, at war with Morocco over the contiguous former Spanish colony of Western Sahara, which Polisario calls the Sahrawi Republic. Morocco occupies 80% of it and Polisario 20%.

The Sahrawi Republic is recognized by the UN and African Union, and the separatists have support from Algeria and Spain. But the U.S. currently supports Morocco’s claim. The underlying conflict is on the global geopolitical level.

AFRICOM has repeatedly declined to deny, but will not affirm, that its maneuvers extended to Western Sahara. They did include Mahbes near the Algerian border, less than 100 km from Polisario headquarters in Algeria. Significantly, Spain withdrew from the exercises.

On June 13, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that France’s military “anti-terror” Operation Barkhane—under cover of which the former colonial power has had over 5,000 troops and air support in five Sahel countries including Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger—would come to an end. But French forces would remain in the region, he said, as part of a broader international mission. After seven years of failed engagement against jihadist terror, popular sentiment has begun to turn toward Russia, which has been engaged in effectively training troops in the Central African Republic for years.