

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024033087277 HARARE - Former Zimbabwe finance minister Ignatius Chombo, who was among those detained by the military when they seized power before Robert Mugabe resigned, was charged with three counts of corruption in offences that took place more than a decade ago. This was Chombo's first public appearance since he was detained almost two weeks ago after the military launched "Operation Restore Legacy" which it said was meant to remove "criminals" around ousted president Mugabe. Several members of a group allied to Mugabe and his wife Grace were detained and expelled from the ruling party, including Chombo, the ousted head of the influential Zanu-PF youth league Kudzanai Chipanga and a deposed leader in the party's youth wing Innocent Hamandishe. Some supporters of new President Emmerson Mnangagwa have been calling for unspecified action against the so-called G40 group that backed Mugabe and his wife. Chombo, Chipanga and Hamandishe were allied to the G40 group. Before his inauguration, Mnangagwa on Thursday urged the country's citizens not to undertake any form of "vengeful retribution". Chombo was charged with attempting to defraud the Zimbabwean central bank, among other offenses committed in 2004, the state prosecutor said. Chombo was local government minister at the time. He was not asked to enter a plea at this first court appearance and the state asked the court to remand him in custody of until his trial on 8 December. Chombo showed no emotion while the charges were read out. Chombo's lawyer, Lovemore Madhuku said on Friday Chombo was admitted to hospital with injuries sustained from beatings he received in military custody. Chombo had no visible injuries and appeared calm, chatting with the police guarding him when the court took a break. He was dressed in dark blue suit. The police have said they had no information on Chombo when asked to comment. A former University lecturer and Mugabe's ally, Chombo was promoted in an October cabinet reshuffle from the interior ministry to the finance portfolio, against the backdrop of a severe hard currency shortage that has dealt a fresh blow to the southern African economy, which uses the US dollar. Chipanga appeared at the court to face charges of making statements aimed at undermining public confidence in the defence forces. Hamandishe faced six counts of kidnapping and one of publishing falsehoods and was detained in custody until 8 December. Mugabe's fall after 37 years in power was triggered by a battle to succeed him that pitted Mnangagwa against Mugabe's much younger wife Grace, who is 52. Mnangagwa, 75, the former vice president sacked by Mugabe earlier this month, was sworn in as president on Friday after the 93-year-old former president who had led Zimbabwe from independence in 1980, stepped down on Tuesday after the army seized power and the ruling party turned against him.