

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024039430401 image copyrightAFP Zimbabwe's vice-president says she is taking legal action against state-owned media for linking her to an alleged plot to kill President Robert Mugabe. Joyce Mujuru said she had ordered her lawyers to restore her "political standing" after being falsely accused of treason and corruption. The Sunday Mail newspaper reported that a hit-man had planned to kill Mr Mugabe so that Mrs Mujuru could take power. Last month, Mr Mugabe, 90, said he did not plan to step down. He has governed Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. 'Demonic' Mr Mugabe and Mrs Mujuru were once close comrades, but have now fallen out as a succession war rages in the ruling Zanu-PF party ahead of its elective congress next month, says the BBC's Brian Hungwe in the capital, Harare. Mr Mugabe's wife Grace Mugabe has recently led a sustained public campaign against Mrs Mujuru, calling on her to resign. image copyrightAP She has accused the vice-president of being "demonic" and divisive", and extorting money from companies, the AFP news agency reports. Mrs Mujuru's statement, denying she is plotting against Mr Mugabe, is unprecedented, our reporter says. Although she does not give any indication that she plans to quit, she is under intense pressure and has few options, he adds. The Sunday Mail made the sensational claim that top government officials linked to Mrs Mujuru sought to hire a hit-man to assassinate Mr Mugabe in order to open the way for her to become president, he adds. "I deny any and all allegations of treason, corruption, incompetence and misuse of public office being routinely made against me in The Herald and The Sunday Mail newspapers," Mrs Mujuru said in a statement. She had asked her lawyers to take the "necessary steps at law to restore my good reputation, political standing and dignity", she said. 'Spill Blood' Mrs Mujuru and Justice Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa, who in the past controlled the secret police and military, are seen as the leading contenders to succeed Mr Mugabe. Mrs Mugabe's surprise entry into politics this year, and her nomination to lead Zanu-PF's women's wing, has also fuelled speculation that she could be planning to take over from her husband. Last month, Mr Mugabe said he did not plan to step aside for young politicians who did not appreciate his role in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. Mrs Mujuru took part in the 1970s guerrilla war against white-minority rule, led by Mr Mugabe. Her nom de guerre was Teurai Ropa (Spill Blood). She married Solomon Mujuru, the former army chief seen as Zimbabwe's king-maker in 1977.