

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024031635667 South Africa has issued an arrest warrant for Zimbabwe's former first lady Grace Mugabe in relation to an alleged assault on a woman in a hotel in Johannesburg last year. Gabriella Engels accused Mugabe of beating the "hell out" of her with an electrical extension cord in a room at the Capital 20 West hotel in Johannesburg's Sandton district. After the alleged assault came to light in August 2017, the South African government granted Mugabe diplomatic immunity. That immunity was overturned by a court this year after Engels, a model, challenged the decision. "I can confirm that a warrant for the arrest of Grace Mugabe was issued last Thursday," said Vishnu Naidoo, a spokesman for South Africa's police service. He said police were seeking Interpol's help to enforce the warrant. There was no immediate comment from Grace Mugabe. The two countries have an extradition agreement, but Zimbabwe's deputy minister for information, Energy Mutodi, told Reuters that Harare would not extradite Mugabe. "I believe the government of Zimbabwe will not tolerate any harassment or degrading treatment on the former president Mugabe and his immediate family members," Mutodi said, adding that he would need to consult with President Emmerson Mnangagwa on a final decision. Grace Mugabe, 53, was seen as a potential successor to her 94-year-old husband, Robert Mugabe, who ruled Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was ousted in a coup late last year. She has denied assaulting Engels with an extension cord, saying an "intoxicated and unhinged" Engels attacked her with a knife after going to see the Mugabe's sons at the hotel. The South African advocacy group AfriForum, which represented Engels, has accused Mugabe of lying. Mugabe has retreated from the limelight in Zimbabwe since her husband was ousted. Elections in August were won by Mnangagwa, his former righthand man in the ruling Zanu-PF party. The warrant comes days after a long-awaited report into the killing of six people by soldiers during a post-elections protest in Harare. On Thursday, opposition figures dismissed the inquiry's findings as "an effort to whitewash the killing of innocent lives". Set up by Mnangagwa, the inquiry found that the military and police were responsible for the deaths, but that the deployment of troops had been lawful after the police had been overwhelmed by protesters. The protests were "pre-planned and orchestrated" and leaders from the main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), had incited violence, the report added. It recommended that soldiers should face "internal" disciplinary measures if found to have broken their codes of conduct. Jacob Mafume, a spokesperson for the MDC, described the inquiry's conclusions as "bizarre", telling the Guardian: "They say it's the MDC that incited violence yet blame the military for shooting the people." Opposition leaders have denied the charge of incitement. The violence followed relatively peaceful elections and caused significant political difficulties for Mnangagwa's government, which has made strenuous attempts to convince the international community that Zanu-PF has forgone the repression and brutality it was accused of during its 38 years in power under Mugabe. The inquiry spent three months investigating the circumstances surrounding the shootings, interviewing dozens of witnesses. Despite widely published photographs and video footage that showed members of the Zimbabwean army firing on people, generals said under oath they did not believe troops had shot at people. Brig Gen Anselem Sanyatwe, the commander of the elite presidential guard, told a hearing investigating the killings that "if any gunshot wounds were sustained by the victims, it was not from my men". Mnangagwa said his government would study the report before deciding on its next steps.