

Harare Zimbabwe's presidential spokesman is ruling out a state of emergency after an explosion at the president's campaign rally that state media has called an assassination attempt.

George Charamba told the state-run Sunday Mail newspaper that the historic July 30 election will go ahead as planned despite the blast that occurred shortly after President Emmerson Mnangagwa addressed a stadium crowd in Bulawayo, an opposition stronghold, yesterday.



Injured people are attended to as they lay on the ground following an explosion at a Zanu pf rally in Bulawayo, Saturday, June 23, 2018. An explosion rocked a stadium where Zimbabwe's president was addressing a campaign rally on Saturday, with state media calling it an assassination attempt but saying he was not hurt and was evacuated from the scene. Witnesses said several people were injured, including a vice president. (AP Photo)

At least 41 people, including both of Zimbabwe's vice presidents, were injured in the explosion that Mnangagwa said occurred just "inches" from him.

Dramatic footage showed him walking off the stage and into a crowded tent where the blast occurred seconds later, sending up smoke as people screamed and ran for cover.

Mnangagwa was unscathed and later pointed out he'd had numerous attempts on his life in the past, saying he was used to them by now.

No arrests have been reported.

The president "will not be driven by vengefulness or a spirit of retribution," Charamba told The Sunday Mail. "Until the investigators pronounce themselves and present the evidence for arrest and prosecution, no one should ascribe motive or blame."

Mnangagwa shortly after the attack told the state broadcaster, without elaborating, that those responsible must have come from "outside Bulawayo." He added: "I can assure you these are my normal enemies." Zimbabwe's main opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, condemned the attack.

The president has vowed to hold a free and fair election, the first since longtime leader Robert Mugabe stepped down in November under military pressure. Allegations of violence and fraud marked past votes.

Mnangagwa, a longtime ally whose firing as Mugabe's deputy after a ruling party feud led to the transfer of power, is under pressure to deliver a credible election that western countries see as key to lifting international sanctions.

He has invited election observers from the United States, the European Union and elsewhere for the first time in 16 years. Mugabe rejected Western observers, accusing them of bias.

AFP

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