



Protest

17

MAY

13:02 UTC

Malawi Tactical: Multiple demonstrations slated to take place in Lilongwe on May 18; maintain heightened vigilance

Please be advised

- Reports indicate that the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) is slated to hold a protest march from the Lilongwe Community Centre to the Parliament in Lilongwe on May 18. The exact route and timing of the protest march remain unspecified at the time of writing.
- The protestors will hand over a petition to the Parliament demanding the Public Appointments Committee (PAC) rescind its rejection of President Lazarus Chakwera-nominated Martha Chizuma as the new director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB).
- Separately, the Joint Civil Society Platform on Good Governance (JCSPGG) is also slated to hold a protest denouncing the ruling Tonse Alliance's failed electoral promises on May 18. The exact location and timing of this protest remain unknown at the time of writing.
- Both the HRDC and the JCSPGG claim to have received permission to hold the demonstrations from the Lilongwe City Council.



Assessments & Forecast

1. The HRDC's protest march is notably the first protest since the June 2020 elections. The latest protests are likely intended to demonstrate the HRDC's continued activism against government corruption. Meanwhile, the JCSPGG's protest demonstrates continued civilian resentment against the government for its perceived inability to fulfill its electoral promises, particularly the creation of a million jobs. However, its decision to hold a protest at the same time as the HRDC was likely to benefit from the HRDC's relative popularity. Moreover, the JCSPGG may also be potentially attempting to contrast its own anti-government stance with the HRDC's perceived pro-government stance given its support for Chakwera's appointee, in order to gain additional support from parties and organizations opposed to the President.
2. – Given the precedent of HRDC protests, this march is likely to observe participation in the mid-to-high hundreds while the JCSPGG protest is likely to see participation in the mid-to-high dozens. A bolstered security presence can be expected in the vicinity of the protest locations. While both the HRDC and JCSPGG claim to have received authorization for their respective demonstrations, security forces are liable to use forcible methods of dispersal, including tear gas, batons, and arbitrary arrests, if the protestors are deemed to behave in an unruly manner or not following COVID-19 social distancing regulations. Traffic disruptions can be expected in the vicinity of the Lilongwe Community Center and the Parliament.

Recommendations

Those operating or residing in Lilongwe on May 18 are advised to maintain heightened vigilance in the vicinity of the Lilongwe Community Centre and the Parliament due to the slated protest and associated potential for unrest.

