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Election Watch | Zimbabwe

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MEASURING THE ZIMBABWEAN ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT ACCORDING TO THE SADC GUIDELINES GOVERNING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

On the 17th of August 2004, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) leaders adopted the "[SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections](#)." As a member of SADC, Zimbabwe was a signatory to these benchmark principles, and therefore it is entirely fitting that Zimbabwe's performance in relation to the future elections be measured against these principles and guidelines.

The Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa presents a brief [overview](#) of Zimbabwe's electoral system on their website.

SADC principles for conducting democratic elections:

	Divergence/Obstructive Legislation	Compliant
2.1.1 Full participation of citizens in the political process	• Zimbabwean students sponsored under President Robert Mugabe's scholarship fund to attend universities in neighbouring South Africa have been banned from engaging in political activism; • Stanley Ncube, Zapu's organising secretary for Umguza constituency in Matebeleland North, was arrested for campaigning for "devolution of power" to be included in the new constitution; • Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2003; • Guardianship of Minors Act, 1961; • Broadcasting Services Act, 2001.	☐ Yes ☒ No

2.1.2 Freedom of association	• Zimbabwean police arrested 15 activists from MDC-N in Tsholotsho South district of Matabeleland North province, claiming they had conducted an 'illegal' meeting; • Public Order and Security Act, 2002, amended 2007.	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.3 Political tolerance	• Nomathemba Ndlovu, the MDC-T Matabeleland South Women's Assembly chairperson, was yesterday arrested in Gwanda while distributing the Prime Minister's newsletter.	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.4 Regular intervals for elections as provided by the respective National Constitutions	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No
2.1.5 Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media	• The Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) has demanded that, new independent radio and television stations be opened in Zimbabwe with immediate effect; • The Zimbabwe Media Commission is proposing to establish a statutory body to address complaints against the media; • Broadcasting Services Act, 2001.	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.6 Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for	• In a report, the Election Resource Centre found that some registration centres closed without reason, others had inconsistent hours of service, some requested varying forms, while others violated registration rights barring people based on perceived political affiliation; • Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2003; • Guardianship of Minors Act, 1961.	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.7 Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions	• The Electoral Amendment Bill mandates the Registrar-General's office to oversee the production of the voters' roll which undermines the independence of the ZEC.	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.8 Voter education	• The language used in the Electoral Amendment Bill gives the Electoral Commission the discretion to decide on the inclusion of other players in the provision of voter education. This may make the partisan electoral commission exclude other stakeholders in providing voter education.	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.9 Acceptance and respect of the election results by political parties proclaimed to have been free and fair by the competent National Electoral Authorities in accordance with the law of the land	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No
2.1.10 Challenge of the election results as provided for in the law of the land	• Where there is a tie in the run-off election, the EAB requires that the election of the President can be decided by an electoral college of MPs in Parliament. This provision usurps people's power to determine who is to occupy the highest office in the country and gives this power to a few MPs.	☐ Yes ☒ No

Assessment of electoral processes

	Divergence/Obstructive Legislation	Compliant
Voter registration	• Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2003; • Guardianship of Minors Act, 1961.	☐ Yes ☒ No
Freedom of choice	• Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), 2002.	☐ Yes ☒ No
Impediments to standing	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No
Boundary delimitations	• A national census count has been set for August 18 to 28 2012. • Election Resource Center Director, Tawanda Chimhini, said language in the Electoral Amendment Bill that requires voters to cast ballots only where they are registered - and not at any polling station in a ward as currently - would leave rural voters vulnerable to intimidation.	☐ Yes ☒ No
Use of public resources and political party financing	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No
Code of conduct	• Parliament has neither implemented the "Code of Conduct", nor registered the financial interests of its Members.	☐ Yes ☒ No

Assessment of electoral environment

	Divergence/Obstructive Legislation	Compliant
Freedom from intimidation, fear and violence	• In Sanyati, Midlands Province, several people were seriously injured when violence broke out between Madzivaenzou villagers and Zanu PF activists; • Villagers in Buhera blamed Zanu PF officials and war veterans for exposing them to hunger after they chased away two NGOs providing them with food; • Cephas Ganyaka force marched Zaka villagers to a meeting at Chimunjanja Primary school and warned that they will experience worse violence after the next election if they vote for the MDC-T; • The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) confirmed a surge in cases of politically motivated human rights violations. In its latest report, ZPP said 89 cases were recorded in Manicaland, down from 94 in January, with one death registered after Zanu PF supporters assaulted one of their own; • Four MDC members were yesterday arrested in Kariba for convening a meeting to discuss travel arrangements for the late Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructural Development, Senator Tichaona Mudzingwa's funeral.	☐ Yes ☒ No

Media freedom and access to information	• Radio Dialogue advocacy officer, Nothando Mpofu, said that the Radio Dialogue Road Show, organised in conjunction with churches and civil society, operated for four hours at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair when riot police ordered the show off the air; • The weekly Zimbabwean Newspaper has applied for registration with the Zimbabwe Media Commission; • Member of Parliament for Chakari, Zachariah Ziyambi, stated that he advised his constituency not to listen to Voice of America's Studio 7 or read newspapers hostile to Zanu PF.	☐ Yes ☒ No
Role of civil society	• Civic group Restoration of Human Rights Zimbabwe has received complaints from villagers from Muzarabani, Mashonaland Central province on politicization of humanitarian grain scheme administered by Grain Marketing Board.	☐ Yes ☒ No
Role of Security Sector	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No