

NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY (NCA)

Election Climate Report No.7

Week ending 4 March 2005.

The Election Climate Reports are produced by the NCA in order to provide information on the prevailing climate for citizen participation in the forthcoming Parliamentary Election. The NCA has already communicated its condemnation of the constitutional framework under which the elections are being conducted. The Report is a consolidated statement of the reports sent in by a national network of community monitors.

The community reports sample a number of electoral "atmospherics" (described below), which aim to provide a clear description of the state of affairs prevailing in any one constituency:

- *Freedom of Association;*
- *Freedom of Assembly;*
- *Freedom of Movement;*
- *Freedom of Expression;*
- *Incidence of Political Violence;*
- *Disputes over electoral procedures and electoral irregularities;*
- *Occurrence of voter education;*
- *Use of food as a political weapon.*

The reports sample 18 critical indicators and hence provide a simple score for any one constituency, which we have termed the "Electoral Irregularity" [EI] score: the higher the EI score, the worse the electoral climate in a constituency.

Overview

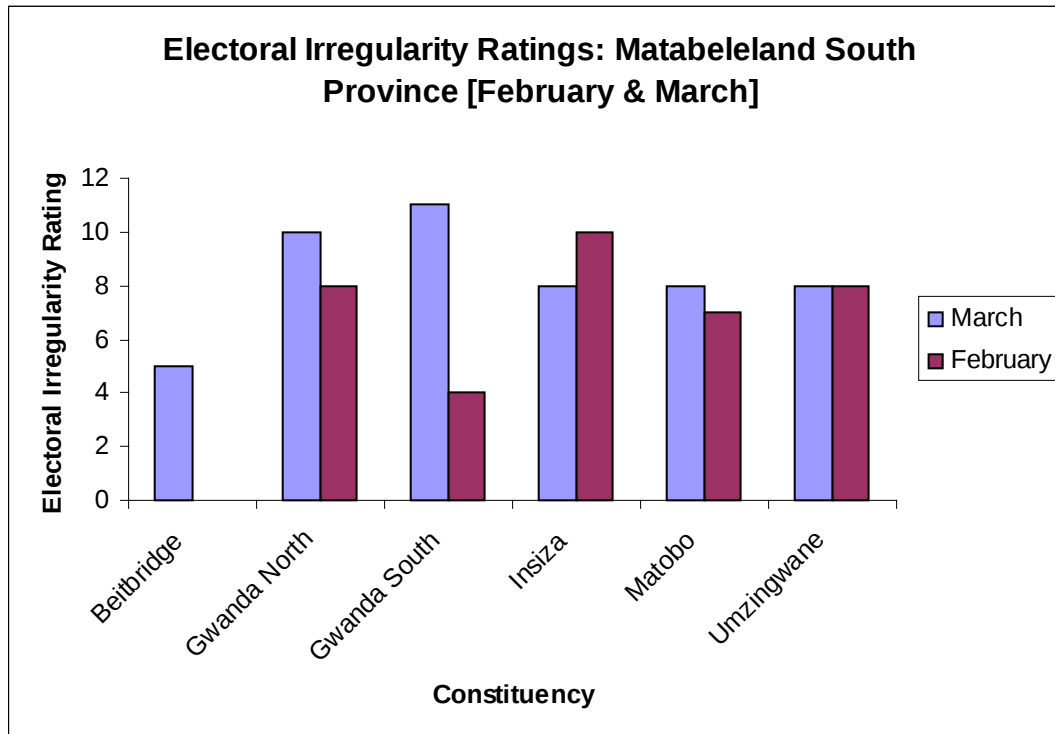
At the outset, we must apologise for the inclusion of Bubi Umguza in the data relating to Matabeleland South in the previous report: this constituency should be reported upon as part of Matabeleland North.

This is the second report on Matabeleland South, and the data is taken from the first week of March. Some of the constituencies in this second report were not included in the first report as no data had been received on these constituencies. The **EI** Ratings are not extremely high, but the average **EI** rating is 8, which is a slight increase on the previous **EI** rating of 8. The highest score was obtained from Gwanda South [11], whilst Beitbridge [5] had the lowest rating. As is seen for the figure over, the ratings worsened in Gwanda North, Gwanda South, and Matobo, stayed the same in Umzingwane, and improved in Insiza.

All constituencies reported interference with the freedom of expression, whilst a majority reported interference with the freedom of association. A small majority – Gwanda North, Gwanda South, and Matobo – reported interference with freedom of movement, and a majority reported no interference with freedom of assembly.

Political violence, mostly as hate speech, threats, and intimidation, was reported by the majority of constituencies, as was the political use of food. Once again there was virtually no formal voter education, which is becoming a serious matter with the elections now imminent.

The NCA calls upon all concerned parties – government, the political parties, and the civics concerned with peace building – to take immediate steps to investigate these allegations, and to take firm steps to correct all irregularities confirmed.



Matabeleland South

As can be seen from the figure above, there is some variability in the **EI** ratings, but 3 constituencies reported the same rating – Insiza [8], Matobo [8], and Umzingwane [8]. Both the Gwanda constituencies had higher **EI** ratings, with Gwanda South showing a very large deterioration from 2 weeks ago. The overall increase in election irregularities is a cause for concern as the campaigns around the election heat up.

Most constituencies reported interference with freedom of association, with members of the opposition reportedly unable to wear their party insignia, and prevented from putting up their posters. In Gwanda North and Beitbridge, no reports of infringement were made, but, in Matobo and Gwanda South, it was reported that ZanuPF had trouble in exercising their freedom of association.

Freedom of assembly was interfered with in several constituencies, where people were forced to attend ZanuPF meetings: it was alleged that they are told that if they fail to attend they will not get maize from the GMB. People in Gwanda South, Matobo, Gwanda North, and Umzingwane were not forced to go to any meetings, but, in Beitbridge, the MDC had forced attendance to their political meetings. Both parties were able to hold their meetings in most areas, although ZanuPF held a larger number than the MDC. In Insiza, for example, ZanuPF held 5 meetings whilst the MDC held none.

Interference with freedom of movement was reported in Gwanda South (Ntepe Business Centre), Gwanda, Umzingwane, and Matobo. Reports indicated that Zanu PF supporters, youths, and the police harass and interrogate people travelling at night, and that, in some of the areas, there are curfews. It was reported that local residents are threatened with displacement if they are non-ZanuPF: this was reported in Gwezha 3 in Matobo.

Freedom of expression was reported as being interfered with in all constituencies. It is still reported that residents of Matabeleland South are not at liberty to express themselves freely or read the newspapers of their choice. In Gwanda South, residents have been threatened by the chiefs, and it is reported that they keep their opinions to themselves. ZanuPF is reported to be forcing people to chant their party slogans, especially at food distribution centres. In Umzingwane, people were forced to chant when getting funds in the food for work programmes, in Insiza, members of ZIMCET were forced to chant slogans during a meeting at Filabusi. Chiefs and war veterans were reported to force people to chant ZanuPF slogans in Gwanda South.

Although generally physical violence remains low, three reports of violence were made: an MDC youth was assaulted by ZanuPF militia in Gwanda North, apparently because he was wearing a MDC T-shirt. In Matobo, there was a reported case of assault by ZanuPF supporters by fellow ZanuPF supporters, and, in Gwanda South, there was a report of sexual assault of one ZanuPF supporter, but it is not stated who the perpetrator was. Reports of gender based violence were also low, the only reports came from Matobo, and they mainly referred to forced attendance at a party base involving ZanuPF, MDC, and members of civic organisations.

Reports of hate speech and intimidation were common, and the reports reflected that this was being done by Zanu PF against the MDC and other parties. These reports came from Insiza, Beitbridge, Matobo, Umzingwane, Gwanda North, and Gwanda South. It was also reported that there are militia bases in Gwanda North, with at least two militias having been placed in each village. In Gwanda North, the militia base is reported as being at Guyu Vocational Centre, whilst, in Gwanda South, the militia base is reported to be at Enyu.

Both inter- and intra-party violence was reported in Matabeleland South. Intra party violence involving the MDC was only reported in Matobo, whilst intra-party violence amongst ZanuPF was reported in more than 3 constituencies. Inter-party violence was reported to be usually instigated by ZanuPF against the MDC and others.

There were few electoral disagreements, with reports only from Beitbridge and Gwanda South. Only three reports of the ESC conducting voter education were available, and this was in a single constituency, Gwanda South. In the other constituencies, voter education is being conducted by the political parties at their rallies. ZESN was reported to be doing some voter education in Gwanda South, but, in all other constituencies, it was reported that civic organisations have been banned from voter education.

The political use of food was reported in a majority of the constituencies. It was reported that ZanuPF is using food as a campaign tool in a lot of the constituencies, giving food to those carrying party cards only, and also that those who do not attend Zanu meetings are not given maize. It was reported that war veterans are used to check everyone to see if they are carrying genuine cards.

Recommendations

The election climate in Matabeleland South has worsened slightly in the past 2 weeks, and this is a matter for serious concern with the election approaching rapidly. All constituencies reported interference with the freedom of expression, whilst a majority reported interference with the freedom of association. A small majority – Gwanda North, Gwanda South, and Matobo – reported interference with freedom of movement, and a majority reported no interference with freedom of assembly.

Political violence, mostly as hate speech, threats, and intimidation, was reported by the majority of constituencies, as was the political use of food. Once again there was virtually no formal voter education, which is becoming a serious matter with the elections now imminent.

There is a pressing need to build a climate of peace and tolerance, and the NCA calls upon all organizations concerned with peace building to investigate these allegations, and to take immediate steps to rectify all problems identified.

The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) is a network of civic organizations and activists as a grouping of individual Zimbabwean citizens and civic organisations including, labour movements, student and youth groups, womens groups, churches, business groups and human rights organisations. It also includes political parties formed in 1997. These individuals and groups formed the NCA to campaign for constitutional reform after realising that the political, social and economic problems affecting Zimbabwe are mainly a result of the defective Lancaster House Constitution and can only be resolved through a new and democratic constitution.

A democratic Constitution is the basis of good governance and leads to social and economic development. Thus a democratic constitution leads to:

- *Free and fair elections*
- *Observance of and respect for fundamental human rights*
- *Respect of human rights*
- *Respect for rule of law and an accountable and responsive government.*

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Matabeleland South Province [March 2005]

Constituency	Interference with Freedom of Association	Interference of Freedom of Assembly	Interference with Freedom of Movement	Interference with Freedom of Expression	Political Violence	Electoral Disagreements	Voter Education	Political use of food	Electoral Irregularity Rating
Beitbridge	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	5
Gwanda									
North	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	10
Gwanda									
South	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	11
Insiza	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	8
Matobo	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	8
Umzingwane	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	8