

NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY (NCA)

Election Climate Report No.9

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.

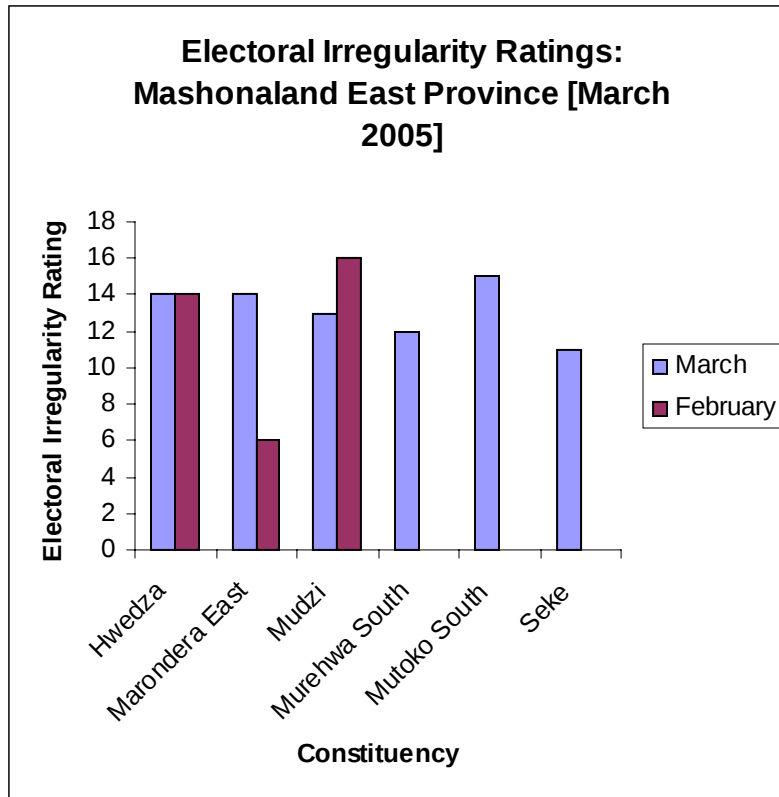
Overview

Mashonaland East is being revisited in this report, and this report covers the first week in March 2005. The situation there has taken a turn for the worse in the last week, as reflected in the **EI** ratings that are higher and the mean **EI** rating one point higher than in the previous report. As regards the constituencies, Mutoko South had the highest **EI** [15], and Seke the lowest with [12]. Hence, Mashonaland East Province shows no improvement in the election climate.

As indicated above, there was little variability in the constituency **EI** ratings, and this is illustrated in the figure overleaf. Hwedza had a rating of [14], Marondera East [14], Mudzi [13], and Murehwa South [12]. The electoral climate in Hwedza has thus remained relatively the same, whereas, in Marondera East, it has changed dramatically for the worse, with the **EI** rating moving from 6 to 14. In Mudzi, it decreased from slightly from 16 to 13.

Interference with the freedoms of association was reported in all constituencies, and with only Murehwa South reporting no interference with freedom of assembly. Interference with the freedoms of expression and movement was also reported in all constituencies. All constituencies reported political violence, mainly in the form of hate speech and intimidation, but overt physical violence has remains low. Only 2 constituencies reported that there were no election procedure disagreements, and only Mudzi reported that voter education was being conducted. The use of food as a political weapon was recorded in all constituencies apart from Marondera East.

Thus, the overall picture in Mashonaland East Province remains unchanged. This is a Province in which there were substantial numbers of reports alleging severe organized violence and torture in 2000 and 2002, and hence an election climate indicating "freeness" should not only reflect an absence of actual physical violence, but a diminution of all factors associated with previous violence, such as intimidation, hate speech and interference with basic freedoms. This is not currently the case in Mashonaland East Province.



Mashonaland East

Infringements on freedom of association were reported in all constituencies, with party supporters and candidates unable wear their regalia or to put up posters of their choice. This freedom affected only the opposition MDC, as there were no reports of ZanuPF being unable to put up their posters. The only reports of citizens forced to attend political were of meetings organised by ZanuPF, showing interference with the residents' freedom of assembly. Political parties were able to hold political meetings: the MDC held on average one meeting to every 4 of ZanuPF's. Reports indicated that MDC meetings are often disputed by the police, using POSA, which may explain the differences in the number of meetings held between the 2 political parties.

Residents of Mashonaland East are reportedly not free to move around within their constituencies, as it was reported that they are prevented from doing so mainly by the police and youth militia. In Marondera East, the CIO and ZanuPF supporters were also said to be involved. In Seke, it is reported that the police have imposed a curfew and this limits people's movements. The police and the CIO are the two groups reported as interfering with movement outside the constituencies: to a lesser extent, the militia and Zanu supporters are also taking part in the interference. Only reports from Murehwa South and Mudzi stated that there were new residents that have moved in, and these were reported to be youth militia. It is alleged that the militia have set up camps in these constituencies.

All constituencies reported interference with the freedom of expression, and all reports indicated that people are afraid to express their views openly. This lack of freedom affects mostly members of the opposition and civic organisations, as well as ordinary citizens. In Seke, most groups were reported to be afraid to show support to the opposition, and AIPPA and POSA were cited as reasons for people being arrested for voicing their opinions. It was widely reported that people are not free to read the newspapers of their choice, and it was also reported that ZanuPF

supporters were forcing residents to chant their party slogans. It was alleged that people comply because they are scared.

Political violence has decreased slightly in terms of physical attacks, but, in Hwedza, there was a death threat issued to an MDC member by a ZanuPF supporter. In Mudzi, it was reported that MDC supporters were caught wearing MDC T-shirts, and forced to sit in mud by the police, together with the youth militia. Gender-based violence was reported in the form of forced attendance at party bases, with the victims being MDC members and the perpetrators ZanuPF supporters and youth militia. This was reported in Murehwa South, Seke, Mutoko South, and Mudzi.

There was hate speech and intimidation reported in all constituencies, except Hwedza. All allegations concerned ZanuPF vilifying the MDC and others, with no incidents reported where the MDC was guilty of this irregularity. It was reported that there are militia bases set up in all constituencies. Disturbingly, there were reports that a number of bases have been set in Seke where torture is conducted. Inter-party violence was reported between ZanuPF and the MDC, with reports indicating that ZanuPF was the instigator. Intra-party violence was reported in Mudzi, where both ZanuPF and the MDC are fighting within themselves. In Hwedza, the intra-party violence was alleged only to be within ZanuPF, whilst, in Marondera East, it reported to be amongst MDC supporters.

Electoral disagreements were said to be occurring in Hwedza, Marondera East, Mutoko South, and Mudzi. There was one report of voter education being done by the ESC in Seke, where they are putting up posters to educate and encourage voters, but no formal voter education was taking place in the other constituencies. ZanuPF was reported to be conducting vote education at its rallies, and there was one report of ZESN conducting voter education in Mudzi. The use of food as a political tool is reported in all constituencies except Marondera East. The general allegation is that party cards are insisted upon before any food is distributed.

Recommendations

It is necessary to have all the claims made in this report investigated by all the relevant parties to this election. The many reports that food is being used as a campaign tool is very disturbing, as are the reports that the ESC, which is supposed to be the responsible body for elections and voter education, is only doing so in one constituency.

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.

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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Mashonland East 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
Hwedza	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Marondera East	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Mudzi	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Murehwa South	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes
Mutoko South	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Seke	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes