

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



BALLOT UPDATE

Issue 4 April-May 2012

INTRODUCTION

The period April to May was a busy period on the political scene characterised by government efforts to re-engage with the European Union, the unfortunate political violence that broke out in Mudzi and the factionalism in ZANU PF with potential to split the party coming to a head. The split in the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions became more real with the two ZCTU factions conducting separate May Day celebrations. ZESN observers report a tense political climate in most constituencies which is characterised by hostility and intolerance of divergent views. Fundamental freedoms such as the freedom to assembly, to organise and canvass for support have been violated with only some parties able to conduct political meetings and others banned.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network remains dedicated to the promotion of democratic elections in Zimbabwe. In line with this objective, we continue to analyse the political environment in the 210 constituencies where observers are deployed. This update is informed by observations from these constituencies and broadly captures national political developments in Zimbabwe.

Elections	important than their arguments on issues that are not constructive. There is need for parties to remain cognisant of the fact that a new constitution will set the stage for elections. In addition, the problems and mistrust in COPAC has been shown through the “drafts” that have been leaked to the press. This brings confusion to citizens over the security of the process and the extent to which the process is fool proof to manipulation by parties. COPAC continues to deny responsibility over the leaked “drafts” appearing in the local newspapers. Of note during this period was the visit by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Navi Pillay Zimbabwe. She met stakeholders in government, academia and civil society to discuss topical issues affecting Zimbabwe. This was the first ever visit to Zimbabwe by a High Commissioner for Human Rights. Of her importance was her statement that Zimbabwe was not ready for elections due to extreme polarization that continue to mar the country’s political landscape. She also castigated the role of the military in politics and condemned the lack of press freedom. She strongly condemned the various pieces of legislation that infringe on journalists’ right to freedom of expression, such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Broadcasting Services Act and the Public Order and Security Act. ZESN observes reported that the ZANU PF party is grappling with factionalism which has potential to destabilise the country. Factionalism has trickled down from the macro to the micro levels of the party and intra-party violence has accompanied these battles for dominance. The ZANU PF’s District Coordinating Committees (DCC) elections held in most constituencies were characterised by intra-party conflicts with some results being nullified and elections rescheduled. The succession issue lies at the centre of factionalism and the media has reported the presence of contenders within ZANU PF vying for political power. The lack of a clear succession plan in political parties in Zimbabwe is a key weakness in their internal makeup. Succession planning brings clarity, stability and order as people are groomed and prepared for
Factionalism and intra-party democracy	

May day Celebrations in Zimbabwe		key leadership positions and the jostling for power is removed. Inability to have a succession plans result in crisis, one which is facing ZANU PF. Political parties in Zimbabwe need to take succession planning as a strategic planning process if they are to remain strong and stable. ZESN also believes that these struggles reflect negatively on the state of intra party democracy portraying the party as being plagued by avarice and thirst for power. Adequate mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes are requisite for fostering transparency and stability from within. On the first of May, ZESN joined the Nation and the World at large in Commemorating Workers' Day. ZESN is concerned with the divisions in the labour movement given that they had separate workers day commemorations. The split of the ZCTU to two splinter groups has serious ramifications for workers representations, respect for workers' rights and have got adverse impacts and effects on collective action. Bargaining and negotiating strategies for the worker are jeopardised and compromised as unions fight to outdo each other and energy is sapped in non productive activities which do not benefit the worker. This year's Workers Day saw continuities in the problems faced by workers in Zimbabwe. Prices of basic commodities continue to increase against stagnant incomes. The rate of unemployment remains high at over 80 per cent while the majority of those employed earn below the poverty datum line. On the 3rd of May, ZESN joined the world in commemorating the world Press Freedom Day. It is an opportunity to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom and also an occasion to evaluate press freedom, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty. The celebration of world freedom day is in line with the Universal Declaration of Rights which states that <i>"Everyone has</i>
World Press Freedom Day and Media Controversies in Zimbabwe		

Human rights and fundamental freedoms		<i>the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers."</i> ZESN recognises that press freedom is vital for providing citizens diverse voices and it is critical in any election. In addition, press freedom is critical for open and transparent electoral processes which give the electorate information about all candidates and allows citizens to make informed choices. This day was commemorated amid restrictions that continue to muzzle the media in particular the inability by the responsible authorities to open the air waves to communities and the monopoly on TV and radio by the state. Furthermore, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) still looms large on the neck of press freedom. Independent press is the cornerstone to any democracy which can thus guarantee free and fair elections. Even as the world celebrated world press freedom day, reports from Hurungwe West and Zvimba West show the stifling of freedom of speech as residents are not at liberty to discuss political matters in public. ZESN notes with concern the continuous violation and infringement of human rights as shown by observer reports in the 210 constituencies. Observers in Rushinga reported high levels of political intolerance and victimisation of MDC supporters as they are liable to evictions from residential areas due to political affiliation. Observers in Harare South and Mutoko North have reported that not all parties are free to wear their party regalia. Observers in some constituencies have reported the partisan role of traditional leaders in fuelling intolerance as they openly support ZANU PF and aid the victimisation of supporters of MDC. Observers in Bindura North have stated that on the 5th of May 2012 at Benridge Farm, a ZANU PF official (name withheld) was seen influencing residents to vote against the draft constitution so as to revert to the Lancaster House Constitution. Evidence from Guruve North, Hurungwe North, Umzumba and Maramba-Pungwe show national reconciliation and peaceful co-existence has not taken route due to the chanting of slogan loaded with hate and messages of intolerance.
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	Observers in Marondera East have cited that money collected from residents for the independence Day Celebrations was misappropriated and converted for personal use by a ZANU PF official (name withheld). Observers in Insiza North and Matobo North also cited that the Independence Day Celebrations were politicised and dominated by the ZANU PF party to the exclusion of other parties even as they implement the GNU. Observers in areas under observation such as Chikomba East, Murehwa North, Glenview South, Vungu, and Hwange West, Mbizo and Bindura North have cited that human rights are being respected as people are free to attend political meetings and free to wear party regalia. Citizens are also free to read newspapers of their own choice. Observers in Bindura North have noted that civic organisations are now free to conduct workshops in communities. Observers report that citizens are in much anticipation of the constitutional referendum. Discussions on elections are also taking place in constituencies but they are coloured with fear of violence and intimidation. Rushinga residents have expressed concern at the mixed messages given by JOMIC of peace and the threats by some members of ZANU PF to deal with those who support MDC. Observers in Rushinga noted that residents were dismayed by a Chamauda ZANU PF representative that JOMIC's statements of a violent free and fair election were not to be listened to. He told the residents that the upcoming election will be full of violence. This is a clear disregard for peace and tolerance. More so, observers in some constituencies (names withheld) have reported that some the District Administrators were advocating for the unleashing of violence towards residents who failed to contribute towards the Independence Day Celebrations. Reports from Hurungwe Central have shown that farm workers at a farm (name withheld) were harassed and intimidated by war veterans. Observers in Marondera East Constituency have also
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		cited that those found in possession of other newspapers outside of the Herald and other state owned papers have been threatened with the loss of agricultural land. Observers in Harare South have brought to attention incidences of MDC supporters who are being given eviction notices by chiefs (names withheld). Reports from Chegutu East have shown that whenever ZANU PF wants to hold a political meeting it ensures that all shops including bars, bottle stores and beer halls are closed. Observers in Harare South have brought to light incidences of coercion as residents are being forced to attend ZANU PF meetings and failure to do so results in residential stands being taken away. Reports from Marondera Central, Zimbabwe West and Mutoko North have shown that residents are being forced to buy ZANU PF membership cards and being told to vote for the party in the upcoming elections. Observers from Bulawayo province reported that during the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF), conducted from the 24th to the 28th of April 2012, COPAC encouraged citizens to vote for the draft constitution as it encapsulated the people's views. ZESN feels that civic groups continue to play a fundamental role in fostering democracy as they enlighten citizens and communities on their rights through progressive civic education, as such the state should play a lead role in creating a conducive political environment for civic organisations to carry out their operations. Observers have cited the following civic organisations as operating in areas under observation. Observers have reported that the following organisations; NCA, CIVNET, ZIMCET, ROHR, RAU, ZLHR, ZCTU, ZimRights, ACPD, ZINASU, CAMFED, FOST, Christian Alliance and World Vision were engaged in various activities with communities. These civic organisations are conscientizing citizens on their rights as well as advocating for peace before, during and after election. Some organisations are providing humanitarian support and others are encouraging the youths to register as voters. Other civic groups are spreading the message of peace and political tolerance.
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		ZESN reiterates that state resources are not for personal, political or private use but are meant for the wholesome benefit of all citizens. Observers in constituencies under observation have highlighted on how these resources are being abused for purposes. Observers in Muzarabani have cited the use of a state vehicle (ID withheld) on the 10th of May 2012 to transport food for ZANU PF staff at a meeting held at Muzarabani Council Offices. Reports from Rushinga have cited the use of a ZRP vehicle as having been used to ferry ZANU PF members to political meetings and rallies. Also two headmasters (names withheld) were seen campaigning for the ZANU PF party during working hours. Observers from Chegutu East, Zaka Central, Gokwe Nembudziya and Chireya, Makoni North, Mutare South, Chivi North, Hurungwe North, Zaka District, Mutoko North and Chitungwiza have cited that youth officers who are supposed to be apolitical and civil servants are participating in ZANU PF meetings as mobilizers and canvassing for party support. Observers in Sanyati have cited that soldiers in Magata community are being tasked to mobilise support for the ZANU PF party. Observers in Bulawayo South have stated that on the 28th of April 2012, a JOMIC vehicle with the number plates (ID withheld) was used to transport MDC (N) supporters to a rally held at Sizinda Hall. Observers in Rushinga Constituency, Gokwe Mapfungautsi, Gokwe Chireya, Mberengwa East, Makoni North, Chimanimani East and West, Musikavanhu, Buhera North, Chivi South, Chivi North, Masvingo Central and West, Zaka Central and East, Muzarabani South, Chegutu East, Hurungwe East, Nkayi North, Goromonzi South and Marondera East have noted the partisan distribution of maize as only ZANU PF supporters have access to this maize. Reports from Bindura North have shown that on the 28th of April 2012, the war veterans, youths were partisanly distributing food aid and politicised the whole event. Observers from Murehwa North have brought to attention that ZANU PF usually has first preference to food aid. Reports from Mutoko North have shown that the Member of Parliament Hon. Mabel Chinomona donated
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Conclusion		chicks on a partisan basis as ZANU PF supporters were only entitled to them. Once elected as Member of parliament for a constituency it is important to represent all residents of the constituency and not just perceived supporters. Reports from Chinhoyi and surrounding constituencies have shown that people evicted from farms are facing dire straits as they have no permanent shelter and are living in tents and surviving on handouts. Reports from Bindura North have brought evidence of the eviction of former farm labourers of Matemba farm has increased their vulnerabilities. Observers from Insiza North have reported farm invasions in the constituency. Observers in Matobo North have stated that Chief Masuku and Clever Dube invaded Connolly Farm on the 15th of April 2012. ZESN urges the Human Rights Commission to investigate these incidents and to ensure that the government of Zimbabwe respects, protects and upholds human rights in the country. ZESN remains committed to monitoring Zimbabwe's political environment and analysing their implications for the conduct of elections in Zimbabwe. While some areas in Zimbabwe are experiencing human rights violations in various ways, observers have also noted areas where people's rights are respected. ZESN envisages a Zimbabwe where people's rights are respected and protected. In pursuance of our mandate of promoting a democratic Zimbabwe where free and fair elections are conducted, ZESN advocates for these minimum conditions: • <i>The creation of a violent-free environment where freedom of assembly, association and speech among others are upheld.</i> • <i>Election observation forms a critical element in any election, ZESN calls for the opening up of election observation to all interested stakeholders and for the invitation to be given by ZEC and not an executive arm of government.</i> • <i>Furthermore, ZESN remains concerned about the state of the voters' roll and calls for the production of a fresh voters' roll.</i>
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