

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



BALLOT UPDATE

Issue 5

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INTRODUCTION

The period May to June witnessed a number of political developments with a bearing on Zimbabwe election plans. The extraordinary summit for SADC the Heads of State and Government was held in Luanda Angola on the 1st of June 2012. COPAC made an official announcement that the draft constitution was ready and had been submitted to the principals. In another incident, police brutality reared its ugly head again as a civilian lost life at the hands of the police. The period also saw the launch of the Zimpapers Star FM radio station. ZESN observers have reported on a tense political environment in most constituencies and the stifling of people's fundamental freedoms.

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.

ISSUE		COMMENT
The GPA		The GPA remains a troubled coalition characterised by the usual bickering that has become a typical feature of the coalition. The parties continue to fight against each other on the constitution making process, on the role of SADC and the Mediator in Zimbabwe as well as the security sector. Internally parties also show fractures as they squabble for leadership and control of the reins of the parties. The infighting within political parties increases the instability of the GNU and makes it impossible for effective implementation of programmes. Parties are expending huge amounts of energy on the intra and inter-party squabbles without a focus on the development needs of the country.
SADC Troika		The Extraordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government was held in Luanda, Angola on 1st June 2012. Zimbabwe was a primary objective of the summit to discuss the implementation of the GPA, constitution making process and electoral reforms. The communiqué of the Summit stipulated the need for the parties to the GNU to finalise the constitution making process and subject it to a referendum thereafter. The Summit also urged the parties to develop an implementation mechanism to set out time frames for the full implementation of the Roadmap to elections. ZESN believes that these recommendations came at the opportune time given the need to fully implement provisions of the GPA in order to create an environment that engenders free and fair elections. ZESN remains concerned that the stalling of the constitution making process is a great hindrance to the achievement of progress on electoral reforms. We therefore urge the parties to the GNU to heed calls by the SADC Heads of State and Government and work together and deliver a home grown constitution.
Constitution making process		ZESN is following the constitution making process and is dissatisfied over the stalling of progress by the haggling of parties in the GNU. ZESN notes the failure of parties to the GNU to reach consensus over issues in the constitution with devolution being one of the contentious issues. While the parties have been working together throughout the process, ZESN is surprised when ZANU PF argues that they have over 100 issues they do not agree with in the draft constitution. This is an intentional attempt by the party to put spanners in the process and impede progress. ZESN believes that the constitution is not for the parties to the GNU but should be treated as a national document for citizens that curtail the powers of the rulers. The manner in which parties have hijacked the process does not provide citizens with ownership of the document as it is seen as

Media Reforms: The launch of Zimpapers Star FM Radio Station	serving partisan interests and not national interests. ZESN urges COPAC and the parties to the inclusive government to put national interests above their partisan interests for the good of the nation of Zimbabwe. ZESN notes the launch of the newly established Broadcasting Station, Star FM which came into existence on the 21st of June 2012. While this increases media plurality, ZESN remains cautious about the extent to which the radio station will bring a diversity of voices to Zimbabwe. We also hope that Star Fm will impart to citizens, objective and accurate information. ZESN believes that an open media is vital in ensuring independent and transparent electoral processes and can foster real choice for citizens increasing the country's democratic space. ZESN is however concerned about the various obstacles that the media in Zimbabwe is facing particularly AIPPA and other repressive legislation which continues to stifle the progress of meaningful media reform. Media Institute of Southern Africa cautiously welcomes this new entrant into the airwaves. The scepticism arises from the perceived favouritism in its licensing by the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ), whose legality remains unresolved.
Human rights and fundamental freedoms	Human rights are inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because he or she is a human being and as such ZESN believes that these rights ought to be guarded jealously. However in a number of areas reports from observers have shown how these rights are being infringed with citizens unable to enjoy their fundamental freedoms. Reports from Goromonzi West have noted some residents were arrested upon commenting on the prevalence of road blocks in the constituency, a clear infringement of their freedom of expression. Observers in some constituencies have reported fear instilled in citizens by people masquerading as Central Intelligence Operatives and their inability to exercise their freedoms particularly freedom of association, assembly and expression. Observers in Hatcliffe have reported that MDC members are living in fear of intimidation and harassment for their choice of party. In some constituencies, observers have reported the need to be associated with ZANU PF in order to avoid victimisation and discrimination a clear violation of the right to free association and expression. Observers in Chegutu East have reported on physical assault taking place at in some farms as farm workers are being evicted and physically assaulted by farm owners. Observers in Zvimba North have stated the continuation of propagating hate speech at rallies by ZANU PF members and war veterans. Observers in Chakari constituency have reported infighting within the ZANU PF during the DCC elections. Observers in Matabeleland constituencies have noted on

		the arbitrary arrest and intimidation of upcoming political parties. ZESN also observes the respect for human rights in some areas, an aspect we hope could trickle down to more places in Zimbabwe. Observers in Bindura North and Bulawayo constituencies have reported that citizens and members of all political parties are free to wear their regalia without fear. NGOs in the area are able to get police clearance to conduct their workshops without any hindrances. Observers in Zvishavane, Runde, Chivi North, Mutare Central, Dangamvura and Chikanga have cited that there is political coexistence in the constituencies as the ZANU PF and MDC parties are working together. Observers in Kwekwe have stated that JOMIC is arranging soccer tournaments involving members of all political parties. ZESN acknowledges the efforts of various civic organisations in trying to foster democratic principles and promote respect for human rights. ZESN feels that an independent open and accessible media is vital in promoting democratic free and fair elections. Reports from observers have however indicated that print media is outdated and inaccessible. Observers in Mt Darwin East and Chegutu East have cited that residents tend to receive outdated newspapers hence as a result are unaware of events happening in the country. Observers in Mhondoro Mubaira have noted that there is limited access to newspapers and other forms of media in the constituency. Observers in Hurungwe North have cited that there is no network coverage in most areas of the constituency hence access to information is hampered. ZESN maintains the stance that all political parties should be granted equal and free political space in order for them to organise and canvass for support. Reports from observers however, show that some political parties are able to organise and mobilise more than others due to restrictions in their areas. Observers in Hurungwe, Zvimba North, Shamva North, Mazowe South and Mutoko North have cited that ZANU PF is the only party that has been able to hold meetings and rallies in these constituencies. Observers in Hurungwe East have brought to attention incidences of coercion by the ZANU PF party as the National Chairman of the War Veterans Association Jabulani Sibanda ordered the local chiefs to assemble residents at a meeting held at Kasimusa business centre. The war veterans chairman also issued instructions that shops be closed as this was also a strategy to ensure that all residents attended the meeting. Observers in Shamva South, Mazowe Central, Bindura North
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	Hatcliffe Mutoko North, Masvingo South, Zhombe, Mberengwa West, Makoni North, Silobela, Harare South and Hurungwe North have stated that the ZANU PF party usually forces residents to attend its meetings. Observers in Bindura North have cited that all political parties are able to conduct their meetings without any problems. ZESN condemns political harassment and intimidation. Observers have identified incidences of violations in a number of constituencies. Observers in Hurungwe Magunje and Hurungwe East have noted intimidation of residents by village heads as they are forced to support the ZANU PF. Observers in Hurungwe East have stated that at a meeting conducted by Jabulani Sibanda the National Chairman of War Veterans, his speech was full of hate speech as he openly declared the desire to kill anyone supporting the MDC party. Disrespect for the freedom of association has extended to disregard for the dignity of the dead as observers in Warren Park cited harassment of mourners who were gathered at the funeral of an MDC T youth by some alleged ZANU PF youths such that some mourners had to desert the funeral and flee for their lives. Observers in Hatfield constituency have cited that ZANU PF youths are forcibly recruiting other youths to join their activities. Observers have also noted that residents in Hatcliffe are being forced to vote for the ZANU PF party in the oncoming election so they are able to secure their stands as well as to purchase ZANU PF membership cards and carry them around with them. Observers in the constituency have also noted the violent actions of a ZANU PF member (name withheld) who vandalised Zambuko Secondary School which was being refurbished by teachers whom he accused of being active supporters of the MDC party. Observers in Mutoko North and Zvimba North have stated that there is harassment of residents who do not possess ZANU PF cards. Observers in Mazowe South have cited that MDC supporters are being threatened with eviction and are told that they will go and reside at Harvest House, the Headquarters of their party. Observers in Chitungwiza Zengeza have noted that MDC supporters are being threatened for their continual support for their party. Observers in Shamva North have reported that villagers are being forced to contribute US\$100 towards the Youth Games that are going to be held. ZESN notes the continued misuse of state resources in constituencies under observation as documented by observers. In some constituencies, observers have reported the use of schools, buses and clinics for political party purposes. In some constituencies reports have shown that soldiers, youth officers and other government personnel are campaigning for ZANU PF.
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Conclusion	ZESN feels that rights to livelihoods of individuals are crucial and pertinent to the survival of citizens and as such much emphasis ought to be put on them. Observers in Hurungwe Magunje and Hurungwe East have stated that inputs are being politicised by the ZANU PF party as the party is using them to lure votes for the forthcoming election. Observers in Hurungwe East have stated that distribution of grain which is meant for the elderly and vulnerable members in society is being done along partisan lines to ZANU PF members. Observers in Mutoko Central, Chimanimani, Chipinge West, Chipinge Central, Musikavanhu, Gutu East, Gutu Central, Gutu North, Zaka West, Zaka East, Bikita South, Bikita West, Chivi North, Chivi Central, Masvingo North, Masvingo West, Chirumanzu South, Mberengwa East, Mberengwa West, Isobel, GokweKabuyuni, Gokwe Central, Gokwe Kana, GokweGumunyu, Gokwe Mapfungautsi North have stated that the presidential maize scheme is only benefitting ZANU PF supporters. ZESN believes that land and farm invasions are unlawful and hence there is a need to have these secured by the government. However observer's reports from Gokwe Mapfungautsi have revealed that a local chief (name withheld) gave permission to people in several wards to occupy Gangata farm. 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> • <i>ZESN advocates that ZEC should be independent of executive influence and report to Parliament, be well resourced and be given its full mandate in the management of elections.</i> <i>ZESN believes that for elections to be free and fair there is need for transparency in all processes of the elections which include among</i>
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		<i>others results management, transparency in the processing of postal</i>
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