



Defending free expression and your right to know

The mass media have a critical role to play during “election periods” acting as the main sources of information for the public about the prevailing political environment, the preparations for holding the elections, and about the political contestants themselves. As the holding of harmonised elections on July 31st 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the election results are announced. The daily media updates monitor the output of the mainstream domestic print and electronic media relating to coverage of election issues. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating the information the public needs to make informed decisions when they go and vote – and whether they can vote freely. For any views and comments, you can email us at monitors@mmpz.org.zw

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe

Daily Election Report – No.17-2013

Tuesday, July 30th 2013

Electronic Media Report - Tuesday, July 30, 2013

SUMMARY

On the eve of Zimbabwe’s national elections, the focus in the electronic media switched from the political parties’ campaign activities to that of election administration. This was reflected in the time given to these issues on ZTV in its main evening bulletin; more than 35 minutes.

President Mugabe’s election eve press briefing received wide coverage in both the public national broadcaster’s radio and television bulletins, as well as on the privately owned radio stations. While ZBC’s stations reported Mugabe commending Zimbabweans for a peaceful election environment, the private media gave prominence to him saying he would accept the outcome of the election even if he loses. He was also reported denying that he planned to rig the election result.

The private radio stations also reported on the Registrar-General's failure to comply with the law compelling him to provide political parties and various stakeholders with copies of the consolidated voters' roll in time.

THE STATS...

Electronic media carried 35 election-related stories. Twenty stories were on electoral administration; 11 on party activities, while four reported political violence.

Of the 11 stories on party activities, ZBC carried three reports (ZTV two and Spot FM one), while the remaining eight were reported in the private radio stations.

ZBC's three party activity reports were all on ZANU PF. Two stories were on President Mugabe's press briefing held in Harare, while one was a follow-up on local government minister Ignatius Chombo's directive to local councils to write off all debts.

The private radio stations provided fair and balanced reports on the activities of the two main political parties in their eight stories [ZANU PF and MDC-T four each.

ZTV broadcast live Mugabe's media conference in Harare that ran for 52 minutes.

POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITIES

Mugabe's press briefing gets the limelight

President Mugabe's State House media briefing on the evening before the harmonised elections topped the bulletins in most of the electronic media today. Notably though, the local private radio stations did not cover the event.

While Studio 7 and SW Radio Africa focused on Mugabe's reassurance that he would step down if he lost tomorrow's election, ZBC's television and Spot FM radio bulletins ignored this and focused on him commending Zimbabweans for the peaceful electoral environment and expressing his confidence that he would win the presidential race.

ZTV quoted him saying ***"our chances are as good as the chances we had in 1980"***.

The public broadcaster also censored his remarks dismissing allegations of electoral irregularities that were reportedly intended to sway the election in favour of ZANU PF.

The two private overseas-based radio stations quoted Mugabe saying, ***“if you lose you must surrender to those who would have won. We will do so to comply with the rules”***.

Studio 7 also quoted Mugabe urging the military to respect the constitution and accept the presidential election results.

Only SW Radio Africa reported the MDC-T press briefing held on Tuesday in Harare. It quoted party spokesman Douglas Mwonozora expressing confidence his party would win the election despite what he described as ZANU PF’s intentions to rig it. This was one of four reports the station carried on the parties’ activities, which included Mugabe’s press briefing and follow-up stories on ZANU PF’s and the MDC-T’s rallies in Harare on Sunday and Monday.

ZiFM carried two campaign stories; one reporting ZANU PF spokesman Rugare Gumbo expressing his confidence of a sweeping ZANU PF victory, while the other was a delayed report on the MDC-T’s final rally in Harare.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

ZEC ready to hold elections?

As the nation prepared to go to the polls, all the electronic media reported on the ability of the authorities to conduct the harmonised elections.

The national public broadcaster, ZBC, and the private media expressed mixed feelings on the country’s readiness to hold a free, fair and credible election.

Both ZBC’s television and radio bulletins relied on official statements from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), the police, the SADC regional election observer team, the Chinese and the African Union’s observer teams to endorse the electoral environment ahead of tomorrow’s poll. They also quoted a comment from the Center for Peace Initiatives in Africa also endorsing the electoral environment.

ZTV carried nine reports quoting these groups expressing satisfaction with the country’s election preparations, while Spot FM reported on three of them.

ZBC downplayed concerns raised by the MDC-T and civil society groups about the commission’s refusal to make copies of the consolidated voters’ roll available to the public, and especially to the political parties, as required by the Electoral Act. Instead, ZTV and Spot FM passively reported ZEC chairperson Rita Makarau announcing that the voters’ roll was ready for inspection by political parties and various stakeholders. The media did not question whether the “stakeholders” would have adequate time to audit the roll, which other media reported her admitting was flawed.

The eight stories on the administration of the election that featured in the bulletins of Studio 7 and SW Radio Africa reported that conditions for free, fair and credible elections were ***“remote”***, citing inadequate funding, the absence

of security sector and media reforms and security chiefs' interference in the operations of ZEC.

Studio 7 quoted the MDC-T's David Mwonzora accusing the security chiefs of interfering in ZEC's operations and seriously compromising the credibility of the election.

Political Violence

The private radio stations SW Radio Africa and Studio 7 recorded an increase in political violence and human rights abuses. They reported eight incidents.

Six incidents involved ZANU PF supporters and security chiefs intimidating, threatening and forcing ordinary people to attend ZANU PF meetings.

These included:

- Retired Brigadier-General Livingstone Chineka reportedly threatening post-election 'war' if ZANU PF loses the elections. This appeared on SW Radio Africa quoting its source as *NewsDay*.
- Deputy Police Commissioner Oliver Mandipaka (who is also ZANU PF's aspiring candidate for Buhera West) reportedly forced Buhera West, ward 14 villagers to attend his rally at a local school. SW Radio Africa reported Mandipaka saying police and soldiers would beat up people if MDC- T wins the election.
- A ZEC election official identified as Auxilia Nyamusoko was reportedly threatened by a group of ZANU PF youths in Gokwe, who threatened to beat her if she allowed MDC-T supporters to vote.
- Another story reported on the arrest of three community radio station journalists for allegedly violating the Broadcasting Services Act and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act; and
- The detention and deportation of three Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum observers despite having obtained the necessary accreditation from ZEC.

Political advertising

None of the electronic media carried any political party advertisements from any contesting parties today. But they did carry voter educational advertising.

For example, Star FM carried *XIG* adverts encouraging youths to vote.

A 2-minute ZEC advert urged people to vote in peace.

ZTV, Star FM and Spot FM carried ZEC adverts informing the electorate about the requirements needed on Election Day.

ZTV carried an advert sponsored by Search for Common Ground, in conjunction with Zimbabwe heads of Christian Denominations, entitled ***Stronger Together*** calling for a peaceful and non-violent election.

ZTV flighted a new advert entitled “**Lest We Forget**”, (a ZANU PF slogan) quoting various departed liberation war heroes, such as Joshua Nkomo, Josiah Tongogara and Joseph Msika speaking about their experiences in the war.

ZiFM broadcast an advert by the Organ for National Healing, Integration and Reconciliation promoting electoral peace.

Current affairs programmes

Only ZTV carried a current affairs programme today:

Melting Pot – In this 30-minute programme ZRP national spokesperson, Senior Assistant Commissioner Charity Charamba, spoke widely on preparations by the police to ensure a successful and peaceful election.

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