

Statement Calling for Peace in Zanu PF primary elections

Harare 17/03/2023....As the primary elections of the ruling Zanu PF party get underway on March 18, the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), calls on all stakeholders in these elections, to shun all forms of violence and commit to a peaceful process. ZPP urges all those involved in the elections be they contestants or election officials, to uphold the integrity of electoral processes which can be negatively impacted by political violence.

Following the announcement of the primary elections by the first secretary of the party, President Emmerson Mnangagwa, campaigns for the primary elections are in full swing hence the need for the processes to be conducted in a peaceful manner.

The Zanu PF primary elections in 2018 were marred by gross human rights abuses stemming from factions within the party. The culture of violence within political parties primarily impacts citizens, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and young people. All citizens are entitled to exercise their political rights and to participate in elections. The SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections state that there should be necessary measures and precautions put in place to prevent corruption, bribery, favoritism, political violence, intolerance and intimidation during elections.

The Zanu PF primary elections are happening at a time when new boundaries for constituencies and wards will be utilised following the delimitation process. The fact that some constituencies no longer exist is grounds enough to cause bickering among contestants. It is the role of the party to ensure those who are contesting are made aware of the consequences of perpetrating violence in all its forms be it hate language, intimidation, harassment, assault to name but a few forms. It is the responsibility of the party to take a stand beyond just rhetoric against political violence and adopt stiff penalties for perpetrators.

ZPP notes with concern the low levels of participation of women in elections and appeals to Zanu PF to ensure their lists of contestants in the primary elections include women, young women and women with disabilities in significant numbers. Women will only participate if the process is free of violence. Various progressive laws support the participation of women in politics including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and UN Resolution 1325. The latter provides for the prevention of violence, the protection of women and their participation while the former reiterates the deliberate removal of factors that hinder women's participation in politics which include violence in processes such as the primary elections.

ZPP appeals to those on the Zanu PF voter lists to reject, resist, and report violent people seeking leadership roles. Violent people masquerading should be stopped in their tracks before they tarnish the integrity of the scheduled harmonised elections.

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