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WHILE WE WAIT: ZPP FORTNIGHT REPORT



INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) is publishing this report that provides details of violations documented between 1 and 14 July. The report gives details of violations of social, political, electoral, economic, and civil rights documented from all 10 provinces in Zimbabwe. This report is part of efforts to create awareness and contribute to creating a conducive environment ahead of the 2023 elections. Stakeholders are urged to take swift and bold actions to give the elections a chance.



THE ENVIRONMENT



The political playing field is not even ahead of the 2023 harmonized elections. The ruling Zanu PF party continued with campaign activities freely as expected at this time after proclamation of the date for the election. Regrettably other opposition political parties continue to be denied political freedom to hold campaign rallies by the police. The opposition Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC) had six of its scheduled campaign rallies barred by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to date, while Zanu PF was given the greenlight to hold campaign rallies in Mbare, Chitungwiza, Gokwe, Masvingo, Harare South, Makoni West, Chinhoyi and Magunje areas. CCC rallies scheduled for Masvingo (Chivi, Chiredzi and Chikombedzi), Mashonaland Central (Mazowe Central and Bindura) and Midlands (Gokwe) were barred in unclear circumstances by the police. In Mashonaland Central province Officer Commanding Police Mazowe District, Chief Superintendent E. Masimba prohibited the CCC Mazowe Central rally citing that the venue had already been booked by another political party. In Masvingo West, Officer Commanding Police, Chief Superintendent D. Maringire barred the CCC Chivi rally citing a similar reason that Zanu PF had booked the venue first. In Midlands province, Officer Commanding Gokwe District Chief Superintendent A. Zimbili highlighted that there were many political activities by other parties which would strain their human resources. In Masvingo Chiredzi South, Officer Commanding Police, Chief Superintendent R. Chihwereva barred two CCC rallies in Chikombedzi and Chiredzi Central at Tshovani stadium saying that there were official openings of two clinics (Gwasera Clinic and Rusununguko clinic) by the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution Affairs Masvingo.

ZPP notes with concern that the banning of CCC rallies by the police is a clear step backwards which violates principles for multiparty democracy as ascribed by the constitution. Section 67 of the constitution sets out the political rights of Zimbabwean citizens. Citizens have the right to free, fair and regular elections and referendums and adults have the right to vote in elections and referendums. They may also stand for public office and, if elected, to hold public office. Section 133C of the Electoral Act provides that a person who, through intimidation, prevents or obstructs or attempts to prevent or obstruct a political party or candidate from campaigning in any election shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level ten or to imprisonment. In terms of Section 67(2) (a) of the Constitution, Zimbabweans have the right to form political parties or to belong to political parties of their choice. Political parties and candidates for election have the right to campaign peacefully and to have access to the media to disseminate information to the electorate about their manifestos.

ZEC finally gave in to the demands of CCC for an electronic voters' roll on July 11, 2023, but the CCC candidates have not received the constituency-based voters' roll, which is against the Electoral Act that states that, "The Commission shall within a reasonable period of time provide any person who requests it, and who pays the prescribed fee, with a copy of any voters' roll, including a consolidated roll referred to in section 20(4a), either in printed or in electronic form as the person may request." The Electoral Act (EA) further condemns preventing political parties or candidate from campaigning.

Political and/or Electoral Violence

Incidents of violence targeting political opponents are on the rise country-wide ahead of the 2023 general elections. On 5 July, human rights lawyers Obey Shava and Chamunorwa Chingwe were brutally assaulted by at least four men driving a green Mercedes Benz sedan and a Toyota GD6 in Harare. The incident took place outside Selborne Routledge Primary School in Belvedere. Advocate Thabani Mpfu, who was briefed on the attack narrated that Shava received a phone call from a man who claimed to have an urgent legal matter and asked to meet him in the Belvedere area. Shava agreed to meet the individual as he intended to drop off a lawyer colleague in the same area. The assailants attacked Shava and Chingwe as soon as they came out of the car and confiscated Shava's phone. Amid the brutal assaults, Chingwe was able to break away from the assailants and sought assistance. This is when Shava was found fighting for his life with broken legs and the assailants had already left. Zanu PF supporters have been implicated in several cases of violence perpetrated against CCC activists in many parts of the country where electoral campaigns are taking place. In Zengeza East, Chitungwiza CCC activists James Nkonde, Calvin Mutizira and Albert Masamba were assaulted by Zanu PF youths during a door-to-door voter mobilization campaign. The victims were ambushed by the youths who assaulted them with chains, clenched fists and booted feet. Nkonde sustained an eye injury, Mutizira sustained injuries to the mouth while Masamba had his phone confiscated by the perpetrators. In Bikita South, former Deputy Minister of Information and Publicity, Energy Mutodi allegedly fired a gun at Citizen Coalition for Change supporters who were waiting for the CCC President Nelson Chamisa cluster rally at Baradzanwa Township.



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It is reported that Mutodi came to the venue in the company of his supporters in two trucks. They started throwing missiles at CCC members. Mutodi then pulled a pistol and fired two shots targeting the CCC members. He was said to be in the company of a member of Forever Associates Zimbabwe (FAZ) identified as Kumbirai Ziki. It is believed he wanted to intimidate and disperse supporters of the Citizens' Coalition for Change ahead of the rally. Mr. John Mupanduki of the CCC successfully opened a case against Mutodi the Zanu PF Bikita South candidate. The case, RRB 5583028, was reported on July 9th, 2023, at Bikita Police Station. Constable Chiweshe is handling the case. A case of assault was recorded during an organized Zanu PF soccer tournament at Mtangemchena Primary School ground in Gwanda Tshithaudze Constituency ward 5. It is reported that 6 ruling party activists assaulted Patrick Mlaudzi. It is alleged that Mlaudzi was targeted after the assailants discovered that he is an opposition party supporter who had gate-crashed the event. The level of intolerance continues to be toxic. In a similar incident, while carrying out a door-to-door campaign, Citizen Coalition for Change activist Shadrack Msipa was assaulted by Zanu PF youths opposite Mutapa Police Station in Gweru. The people who were led by Msipa were targeted as they had mobilized a lot of citizens ahead of a lined-up rally at Mkoba Stadium. In Goromonzi South there were skirmishes where CCC supporters were pelted with stones by Zanu PF youths during a community campaign.

A video that went viral on social media shows Zanu PF youths throwing missiles at a CCC branded campaign vehicles while, hurling insults at CCC supporters calling them sellouts. In Chitungwiza it is alleged that there were running battles between Zanu PF youths and police officers on 12 July. In a viral video, police officers were seen retreating for safety with Zanu PF party youths advancing towards them throwing missiles. ZPP condemns the incidences of violence recorded in Goromonzi and Chitungwiza and other parts of the country. ZPP urges political parties to reign in their supporters to promote peace before, during and after elections. The growing number of incidents of political violence ahead of the crunch elections ahead diminishes the prospect of free, fair and credible elections

Intimidation and harassment

ZPP recorded cases of intimidation and harassment of citizens and opposition members by Zanu PF supporters. On 3 July, Zanu PF members besieged the shop of CCC Gutu Central ward 38 aspiring councillor, Mr. Anderson Sigende. About 60 Zanu PF members were spotted on video singing and chanting revolutionary songs denouncing President Chamisa, CCC aspiring councillor Mr. Singende, and the CCC party. On the same day, Zanu PF force marched vendors and informal traders in Mbare to attend a campaign rally that was addressed by Vice President Constantino Chiwenga. Reports indicate that several vendors and small business owners were forced to close stalls to attend the rally which was held at Mbare Stoddart Netball complex.

Chief Nhema of Zaka reportedly abused his power forcing citizens to support the ruling party. This is against the traditional leadership act where custodians of traditional authority are prohibited to participate in partisan politics. In the same province of Masvingo in ward 1, it is reported that Forever Associates of Zimbabwe (FAZ) members led by Valencia Shunje were intimidating citizens, claiming that they were prepared to beat or kill anyone seen participating in any opposition activity. FAZ has over the months been identified as a major perpetrator of harassment and intimidation among the rural electorate in support of the ruling party. They have disrupted civic engagement and electoral processes countrywide. During a soccer match between Highlanders Football Club and Platinum, it was reported that Mncendisi Moyo was assaulted for wearing Zanu PF regalia by 6 Highlanders supporters at Barbourfields Stadium in Bulawayo. The group was led by Malfort Nyoni who accused the victim of wearing Zanu PF regalia at a soccer match. In Bulawayo at Cowdry Park constituency, it was reported that suspected Zanu PF youths disrupted a CCC meeting resulting in those in attendance including their leaders fleeing. They allegedly stormed the residence of the victim where the CCC members had gathered with other party members.

Hate Language

ZPP notes with grave concern the proliferation of hate language directed at opposition parties, western countries and anyone known for having dissenting views. Since the beginning of the month, media has been awash with public statements from politicians attacking their opponents with hateful and inflammatory language. Some of these attacks have video evidence with ruling party supporters celebrating incidents of violence and in some instances the denigration of women in the opposition CCC. Hate language fuels violence.

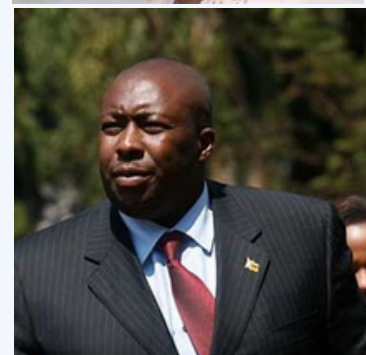
President Emmerson Mnangagwa smacked in ChiShona 'musoro wambuya vako' (your grandmother's head) at Western countries for blaming Zanu PF and his government of shrinking the democratic space and violating human rights. He was speaking at the Mining Convention hosted by the Miners for Economic Development at the Zanu PF Winery Convention Centre in Gweru on 28 June, where he was the Guest of Honour. In a strange statement, addressing Zanu PF supporters president Mnangagwa prayed that those who by show of hands said they would vote for the party, if they lied should be struck by illness.

ZPP condemns the use of hate language by the political leadership ahead of the harmonised elections. Political leaders who will access many platforms as they campaign are urged to promote peace and to take steps to sanction their supporters who perpetrate violence. In Bikita West, Zanu PF ward 23 Chairperson only identified as Mai Chamisa intimidated citizens to vote for the ruling party in the forthcoming harmonized elections. It is said that she also denounced the opposition aspiring candidates especially the CCC calling them sellouts and dogs. The language that was used by Mai Chamisa violates the Electoral Act which condemns use of hate speech by political activists aspiring to hold office. Some leaders like Chief Mathema are applauded for adopting language that fosters peace.

Of Nominations, nullifications and appeals

After ZEC announced 11 presidential candidates on July 12 the High Court nullified the nomination of former minister and member of Zanu PF Saviour Kasukuwere on the basis that he has not been resident in the country for the last 18 months. The ruling by Justice David Mangota came after Zanu PF member Lovedale Mangwana approached the High Court seeking an order to block Kasukuwere from contesting for the presidency on 23 August. Kasukuwere has however successfully applied to appeal the decision of the High Court and according to his lawyers this automatically sets aside the decision of the lower court.

SI 144 of 2022, which increased the cost of nomination to USD \$20,000 for presidential candidates has prevented some women from contesting for president. The only female candidates, Elisabeth Valerio of the United Zimbabwe Alliance (UZA) and Labour, Economists and African Democrats candidate Linda Masarira were not successful at the nomination court as they wanted to pay the nomination fees in local currency. They faced challenges of not having proof of payment because of bank limits imposed by current monetary policies. Both women have since filed appeals with the Electoral court to overturn the decision of the nomination court.



Increased intra- Party Violence

It is very likely that political parties are going to encounter intra-party violence during this electoral period considering the violence that was recorded during the Zanu PF primary elections and the CCC party's candidate selection process. In Zimbabwe, political party structures have a history of factions within their ranks. This history of violence within parties has resulted in breakaway factions in Zanu PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in the past. Considering that there are rumours of opposing factions within Zanu PF, and speculations about who leads the factions, it is likely that intra-party violence may occur. It is also possible that the CCC will also have factions since it was formed after breaking away from MDC Alliance and there are underlying tones of disgruntlement with the candidate selection process.

Opinion polls galore

Zimbabwean citizens are clearly in fear of the upcoming elections, according to the opinion polls conducted. Besides indicating who might win the elections between the incumbent and CCC leader, the fact that a large percentage of the sampled citizens by the opinion polls are not comfortable revealing who they are going to vote for. Since the beginning of the year there have been 4 opinion polls. Two have revealed that Zimbabweans will choose the incumbent President Mnangagwa, and 2 have revealed the result will tilt in favour of opposition leader Chamisa. The opinion polls have been done by Brenthurst Foundation, the Pan-African Forum, Afro-Barometer and Elite Africa Research.

Partisan Food Distribution

It is highly likely that the ruling party Zanu PF will use food and other aid to force people to attend their rallies and meetings. The trend is likely to continue with opposition supporters and apolitical citizens being sidelined from distributions for not attending ruling party gatherings. ZPP has documented numerous cases of food and other aid distributed in a partisan manner in 2023. In 2018, civil society organisations under the banner of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition recorded serious incidents of vote buying. The CSOs concluded that the elections failed to pass the credibility test following anomalies where some Zanu PF members were distributing food and other goodies at polling stations on polling day. In Mashonaland Central (Mazowe Central) Zanu PF candidates were seen distributing maize using forms from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare a day before polling day in 2018.

Our Call to Action: ZPP implores:

- The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to execute their duties in a professional and non-partisan manner and fully investigate all cases of political violence.
- Political Parties to reign in their supporters and sanction those who perpetrate violence and violate the rights of the electorate.
- ZPP implores the State to promote citizen's fundamental rights to create an environment for free, fair and credible elections.
- ZPP implores state and political players to desist from using hate-language which has potential to incite public violence.



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