

Statement: Outlook for 2018 Elections

29 July 2018- As the country gears for the polls tomorrow, the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) with a network of more than 500 community based monitors at constituency and district level provides you an outlook of the political environment leading into the 2018 historic polls. The political environment has since January been tension laden, volatile, competitive within and across political parties, at times leaving people on the edge and unpredictable. The murder of the toddler in Mazowe, the explosion at a Zanu PF rally in Bulawayo and the bloody encounters within political parties stand out. While all this has been happening, the environment leading up to the polls has been relatively peaceful..

Violations

The highest number of violations was recorded in Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Midlands and Harare. The southern part of the country namely Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and South had the lowest number of violations. In Manicaland, 62 violations were recorded in January which was a peak compared with the lowest number of 19 in June. In Mashonaland Central, violations peaked in March at 53 and the lowest figure was 26 in May. Harare's violations peaked in May and June at 28 violations and the lowest figure was 14 in April. In Midlands, violations peaked in May at 29 violations. The low risk provinces were Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and South. In Bulawayo, violations peaked in March at 16 while the lowest figure was recorded in January at zero. In Matabeleland North, violations peaked in July at 16 violations while the highest figure for July violations in Matabeleland South was 9. In July, the highest number of violations was reported in Manicaland at 30 and the lowest in Matabeleland North at 9.

Violations in Mashonaland Central peaked in March when Zanu PF held its primary elections. This mirrored the unresolved factional fights pitting Lacoste against G-40. By May, when the lowest number of violations was recorded, Zanu PF had already settled its primary elections. In Harare, the violations peaked during the opposition MDC Alliance primary elections. The violations peaked in Midlands and Manicaland in the month of May. These provinces have urban areas that are considered safe constituencies by the opposition hence the jostling. In the usually quiet Matabeleland regions, violations are peaking in July close to the election, signalling that the violations in these areas are special event related and directly linked to the 2018 elections.

Statistical Comparative Analysis and Selected Cases

Intimidation was high during the month of June. To date, there is a decrease of 2% in intimidation cases from 68% of all cases reported in June to 66% in July. These figures remain high considering that there have been measures to curb election related intimidation and harassment. Zanu PF has been the lead perpetrator of intimidation and harassment responsible for 83% of the violations while MDC Alliance was responsible for 11%. Traditional leaders made up 4% of the perpetrators. Among others, some of the notable cases of intimidation are the abduction of Peter Machoba in Chimanimani by a war veteran who has been arrested. In Manicaland, Nyasha Marange, the son of the chief, threatened

villagers with violence similar to what was experienced in 2008. Voters are also being warned to avoid a runoff situation if they do not want a repeat of the 2008 violence. The intimidation has also taken a new twist with villagers being told that they will be led to the polling station by traditional leaders where they will stand in a particular order based on the numbered cards they will receive or alternatively being told to ask to be assisted to vote. Such cases have been reported in most areas in the country. In Hurungwe West villagers have taken up these intimidation cases to the police for the perpetrators to be brought to book. In some communities in Gokwe South and Guruve for example there are complaints about traditional leaders taking up roles as polling agents in the elections which in itself is an intimidatory tactic and which will rob villagers in affected areas the right to vote freely.

The ZPP has noticed continued impunity and the disregard of mechanisms put in place to curb political violence by some activists and traditional leaders. Victims are not yet fully confident with the conflict resolution mechanisms as seen by high number reports to ZPP with victims pointing out they fear reporting to the police. The ZPP therefore appeals to political parties, traditional leaders and other community leaders to contribute to citizens exercising their constitutional right freely tomorrow as they throng polling stations. Those who are literate should not be forced to feign illiteracy and there is no law in this country that says a whole village has to go to the polling station together. Do not allow the usual perpetrators of violence to intimidate you the police are ready to deal with culprits.

ZPP is a Non Governmental Organization that was founded in 2000 by a group of faith based and human rights NGOs working and interested in human rights and peace-building initiatives. ZPP has become a vehicle for civic interventions in times of political crises. In particular, ZPP seeks to monitor and document incidents of human rights violations and breaches of peace.

If you are concerned about acts of violence in your community, ZPP encourages you to get in touch with us on Hotline and WhatsApp numbers
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