



**VOTERS ROLL:
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VOTERS ROLL: MIXED BAG OF PLEASANT AND UNPLEASANT SURPRISES

The late delivery of a surprise voters roll which many electoral stakeholders encountered for the first time at polling stations in Zimbabwe's 31 July vote yielded a number of surprises, mostly negative, but with some silver linings.

voters, who either found themselves completely missing from the roll, or relocated to constituencies and wards they have not previously voted in. Unlike first time voters or recent transfers who could then vote using their slips, people previously on the roll who found themselves removed, did not have any recourse but to give up their franchise because of the unexplained disappearances.



One man whose name was not found in the voters roll on July 31st

Some Pleasant surprises....for " Aliens"

However, the roll had a few pleasant surprises, with some people who have never registered or had failed to do so, getting information and confirmations that they actually were on the roll. Amongst these were a substantial number of Zimbabweans of Foreign decent, who got the surprise of their lives when they visited polling stations either to cast their vote or check on their possibility to vote.

Though some were turned away, It is reported that some were allowed to vote, while others were thoroughly shocked to find their names on the voters' roll following their removal in 2008.

The " new, consolidated roll" came to be used with very few of the queries that were raised in its earlier version actually addressed. These include the issue of Ghost voters, and the presence on the roll of thousands of centenarians in a country with a life expectancy of less than 50.

On 22 May 2013, following the President Robert Mugabe's signing of the new constitution Zimbabweans who were formerly regarded as 'aliens' celebrated section 36 of the Constitution which states that a person is a citizen of Zimbabwe by birth if the person was born in Zimbabwe and when he or she was born either their father or mother was a Zimbabwean citizen or any of that persons grandparents was a Zimbabwean citizen by birth or registration.

In addition to the above stated discrepancies which are reported to still abound, there also bad surprises in store for some

This section enables persons previously categorised as aliens to regularise their citizenship in accordance with the new Constitution in order to enjoy the full benefits of being a citizen including the right to vote.

The word “alien” was introduced into regular use after the amendment of the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act (Chapter 4.1) in 2002 resulting in many people losing Zimbabwean citizenship despite that in many cases they were Zimbabweans by birth and Zimbabwe was the only home they knew.

In an interview with Crisis Report Team, Collen Tembo, 25, who was unable to vote during the Constitutional referendum because he was regarded as an “alien” indicated that he was very happy to be a first time voter since he didn’t manage to vote in previous elections.



“I’m quite excited because it was my first time to vote since I wasn’t allowed in 2008. I voted well today at Belgravia Sports Club, and was serviced by electoral officials there in a professional manner. The officials there did not ask me any untoward questions, they just went about their roles, facilitating my franchise. The process was fast and for the first time in while, I stopped feeling like I didn’t belong, like an “alien”, but like a full Zimbabwean. I will always cherish and really do appreciate that I got this opportunity to register and actually vote,” said Tembo.

Collen Tembo once labelled ‘alien’ and denied the right to vote finally got a chance on July 31st

As a result of long disenfranchisement since 2002 Zimbabweans of foreign decent did not participate much in national process and even faced difficulties in obtaining national identity documents. When they did get the national documents, they were branded with a big ‘A’ for alien, rather than the watermarked ‘C’ for citizen, perpetuating a Zimbabwean variant of the cast system.

“My husband and I were not on the Online Voters Roll and we were not allowed to vote in 2008, when our names had been removed from the voter’s role. So my husband took a stroll to our Polling station (Eastridge School) this morning and decided to check. Just in case. His name and mine were both on the list and he was allowed to VOTE!!! I’m about to go now and stand in the queue. So please post and encourage ‘aliens’ to take the chance and go and check.,”

said one citizen who inboxed the Crisis Coalition on their Facebook page.

As mentioned above, it was not all former ‘aliens’ who had this good streak of luck. The NewsDay at 1500 hours, on election day, reported via Twitter, that most of the people who were turned away from Mai Musodzi Hall, in Mbare constituency were former ‘aliens’.

“A group of aliens at Mai Musodzi Hall in Mbare told NewsDay they constituted the bulk of people who were turned away #ZimDecides13,” from a NewsDay tweet update.

Too Early to Judge: Stakeholders

The 31 July 2013 Harmonised Election cannot be pronounced conclusively as smooth, calm and peaceful, just based on an assessment of the voting day. These are the sentiments of most electoral stakeholders, who have argued that it is too early to judge or over generalize the conduct of today's voting exercise, considering that an election is a process not event.



CizC Regional Information and Advocacy Coordinator, Mr. Joy Mabenge proud to show that he cast his vote

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Information and Advocacy Coordinator, Mr. Joy Mabenge highlighted that it was only reasonable to judge the election after the entire process is complete, including the collation, counting and announcement of results.

"Judging from the 2008 scenario, the political environment fundamentally changed after the election day as witnessed by the murder, maiming, displacements and intimidation of ordinary citizens and MDC supporters during the run up to the 27 June Presidential Run-Off. It is therefore premature to say today's process has been calm, peaceful, free and fair. Let us wait and judge after the processes which will follow the casting of votes," said Mr. Mabenge.

Crisis Coalition Director, Mr. McDonald Lewanika concurred noting that there are 2 main things in this election, (1) a free, fair and credible process and (2) an election result which re-

flects the will of the people. He indicated that today's exercise was largely peaceful, commending the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's (ZEC) performance following the chaos which characterized the special voting which was conducted 2 weeks before the election.

Mr. Lewanika however stressed that the actual casting of the vote is not an end in itself emphasizing that the aftermath of the voting process is equally important.

"Trying to judge the freeness and fairness of this election based on the election day alone, is akin to measuring matrimonial happiness on a wedding day. What happens after the period of courtship and the event before and what happens after the election is what we are most worried about. In the immediacy, the election also has to be judged on the transparency and efficiency of ZEC's results management system, the insolubility and irreversibility of the will of the people. Besides, election day has not been the problem in Zimbabwe, it has been the prelude and the aftermath of election day that have been problematic," Lewanika said.

The Crisis Coalition team sought views from the three main political parties also contesting in this election who expressed mixed feelings over the process.

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) Spokesperson, Mr. Douglas Mwonozora reported that by the time of closing of polling stations at 19:00 hours, there were still a number of long queues at some polling stations particularly in cities, and insisted that that ZEC must ensure that the queues are cleared.

At the time of writing ZEC had identified a number of polling stations with outstanding voters, whose closing time was extended, in order to clear the lines. On the same issues the MDC-T National Organizing Secretary, Mr Nelson Chamisa and Member of Parliament for Kuwadzana East constituency shared his disgruntlement on today's voting exercise highlighting that a record of about 300 to 400 people were turned away at most polling stations in his constituency for various reasons.

Addressing a press conference held in Harare on 31 July 2013, MDC-T Secretary General, Mr. Tendai Biti said,

"We have already made it clear that this election is illegal, illegitimate, unfree and unfair. We are participating in this election with a heavy heart." Mr. Biti's statement was in line with his report which indicated that ZEC failed to timeously release the new Voters' roll which he claimed to consist of over 200 000 people who are over the age of 103 years. He also reported that a lot of voters, especially MDC-T supporters were turned away for reasons such as failure to find their names on the voters' roll, citing a case at Tafara Primary School polling station where 130 MDC supporters were turned away. Mr. Biti also accused ZEC officials of deliberately slowing the voting process in MDC-T strongholds and stressed that manipulation of this election started way before election day highlighting that, *"A lot of shenanigans have taken place before polling day."*

On the other hand, MDC Spokesperson, Mr. Nhlanhla Dube indicated that the voting process on election day was relatively fair, quiet and peaceful, reporting that the MDC was happy with the turnout of voters. He however expressed concern on the rate at which voters were turned away for reasons such as

turning up at the wrong polling stations, not being able to find their names on the voters' roll and various other administrative hitches. Mr. Dube reported that at Njube High School polling station alone, 64 potential voters were turned away for various reasons.

Asked when they would expect results, Mr. Dube said, *"We are patient and ready for the results when ZEC is ready."*

Contrary to mixed feelings expressed by the 2 MDC's, the Zimbabwe African Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) remains overly optimistic. Their Spokesperson, Mr Rugare Gumbo expressed satisfaction with the entire electoral process, which he described as "smooth and peaceful".

"Everything went well, there were no reports of violence or any form of disturbing conduct."

"There is no anticipation of delay in the announcement of results or any other challenges going further though we know that the MDC guys are going to cry foul," Gumbo added.

ZEC should Shape Up: Crisis Comment on ZEC's Press Briefing on the Evening of the Election

Addressing a press conference, on the night of a critical election, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, yesterday, July 31 2013, failed to give practical answers to the challenges experienced by Zimbabweans in their bid to vote. Their failure to provide credible explanations continues to dent their credibility and the public's confidence in their ability to shepherd the electoral process to its logical conclusion.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) admitted to technical glitches, such as the late delivery of voting material in Wednesday's poll. The ZEC, conceded there had been "logistical problems" when polling started. ZEC also said they are still verifying reports that some people attempted to vote using fake voter registration slips. The ZEC, which is in charge of the electoral process, was ordered late on Tuesday 30 July 2013 by the High Court to release the voters' roll to all interested parties by midday Wednesday, five hours after the polls opened.

There were a great number of people who were being turned away on election day. Thousands of people were



ZEC chairperson, Justice Rita Makarau

The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is a broad based civil society network of over 72 active members comprising churches, women's groups, social movements, residents associations, labour unions, human rights lawyers, and health professionals. It was formed in August of 2001 to focus on democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development issues – working locally, regionally and internationally.

disenfranchised through administrative bungling and a clear rushed job on the voters roll by ZEC and the Registrar General's office. ZEC chairperson, Justice Rita Makarau said people who could not find their names on the voters' roll in their constituencies may have forgotten where they were registered to vote and said the commission would need more information to sort this out. All this, at a time when the election and the opportunity to vote would have long passed by.

ZEC clearly needs to take seriously all election related reports as they relate to the freeness and fairness of the election. The commission should desist from unreasonably defending themselves by starting to act on matters as they arise and not after the fact. Our belief is that everyone who wants to participate in an electoral process should be able to do so, without the unnecessary hurdles, and man made difficulties that the state of the voters roll has necessitated.

ZEC is the final arbiter on the issue of elections in Zimbabwe and engaging in fundamental attribution errors through pointing to and passing the buck to the Registrar Generals office, is not only a dereliction of duty and responsibility on the part of ZEC, but also an awkward display of the disdain and contempt that ZEC holds for the peoples sacrosanct rights to vote.

With voting over, the next tasks for ZEC around counting and weighing each vote equally and doing so transparently. Their immediate tasks are around insulating and securing the will of the people, and ensuring that this will is irreversible. Based on current form, there is little that inspires us to believe that these tasks are not beyond the competence of ZEC. It is prudent for the Commission to man up and address issues as they are raised, instead of turning themselves as commissioners into glorified investigators, who have the luxury of time on their hands.

It is well within the province of ZEC's to conduct the elections and address all election related issues in a timely fashion. Whilst investigations are prudent, they have to be concluded within reasonable time to allow for the saving if whatever little credibility maybe left, in this other wise patently and almost irretrievably unfree and unfair election.



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