



**International
Solidarity
Strengthens
against Unfair
Election**



**Institutions
with integrity
requisite for
election audit**

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ZIMBABWEANS continue to raise questions on the fairness of the 2013 harmonized elections which saw President Robert Mugabe controversially clinch a landslide victory by 61% of the vote, whilst doubts over the fairness of the plebiscite have been echoed in the international community.

A Regional Observer Mission comprised of CSOs, Social Movements representatives and Ecumenical Sector representatives drawn from Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, which operates under South Africa based Action Support Center (ASC) has released an adverse preliminary verdict on the polls.

"Although the environment was calm, resembling peace, the overall electoral processes and environment were not conducive for the conduct of a free, fair and credible election," the report said.

The observer mission said the election did not meet SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections; neither did it meet the provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

Bussing of voters to constituencies to which they do not belong, coupled with the high number of assisted voters, as well as the high number of voters turned away and unavailability of the voters' roll were some of the concerns raised in the report.



ZEC officials checking for names in the voters roll

Respectable leaders in Southern Africa, Botswana President Ian Khama and former South African President and Global Political Agreement (GPA) broker, Thabo Mbeki, concurred that the harmonized election was not fair.

"There is no doubt what has been revealed so far by our observers cannot be considered an acceptable standard of free and fair elections in SADC.

"The Community, SADC, should never create an undesirable precedent of permitting exceptions to its own rules," the Government of Botswana said.

The indecisiveness in the regional blocs African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) after their

observer missions reported the rampant irregularities however could hamper the strength of any African solution after what could be Zimbabwe's fourth stolen poll since 2000.

The American Robert F. Kennedy Centre for Justice and Human Rights (RFK Centre) queried the indecisive stance of the regional blocs AU and SADC after their observer missions reported clear irregularities.

"To date, reported irregularities and allegations of fraud by civil society organizations, opposition political parties, and domestic observers have been ignored by the SADC and African Union missions and not addressed by the ZEC, despite its constitutional responsibility to do so.

"While the people of Zimbabwe must be commended for the peaceful and dignified manner in which they went to the polls, there are serious outstanding concerns about the integrity of the electoral process that must be thoroughly investigated.

"The evidence shows that the will of the Zimbabwean people has been systematically suppressed and not reflected in the official election results," the RFK said.

Institutions with integrity requisite for election audit

THE Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by former Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, has indicated that a formal application for an election audit will be in the offing after the party filed papers with the Constitutional Court, on Friday August 9, to challenge the results of the 2013 harmonized elections arguing the election should be nullified because of irregularities.

The calls for an electoral audit were prompted by the irregularities noted by all observer missions to the 2013 harmonised elections and come at a time when the MDC-T seeks to buttress its Constitutional Court case buoyed by a general consensus among civil society groups as well as African observer missions that the poll was not fair.

However, analysts have pointed out that the granting of an election audit by the court may be of little effect if the institutions that are entrusted with conducting such an exercise do not have the integrity that comes from being autonomous state entities.

Mary-Jane Ncube, the director of Transparency International-Zimbabwe (TIZ), which is a corruption watchdog, said an audit of the 2013 harmonised election would be useful, in principle, to clear the air with regards to allegations of fraudulent conduct in Zimbabwe's poll but in practice, the process could be compromised by lack of impartiality.

"We have a history of captured institutions. If these are the ones that will carry out the audit the parties who have brought up the complaints will not be satisfied.

"We have maintained as TIZ that the security institutions are compromised.

"The legitimacy of the audit will depend on the impartiality of the one who is going to conduct it to be acceptable to all parties," Ncube said who however conceded that "in principle, I would say yes an audit will be good," she said.

Ncube said it remained a matter of conjecture whether the state institutions perceived as lenient to the political establishment would do a satisfactory job if the courts granted the audit.

Moreover, Ncube said the issue of whether a meaningful audit would be possible, hinged upon the willingness of supposedly independent blocs the African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) to take up an oversight role.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) Spokesperson Thabani Nyoni said: *"An audit is very necessary because it gives us an opportunity to understand the electoral system, the gaps that are inherent in the electoral system that are open to manipulation and how we can address them.*

"An audit is also important for the purpose of historical record that an election was contested and there were specific issues around which the election was contested and that those issues were noted for public record.



CiZC Spokesperson Thabani Nyoni

"Our local institutions do not have the integrity to do the audit, they are actually respondents to the audit in terms of how they arrived at certain decisions," said Nyoni, adding that the Coalition regarded state institutions, including the judiciary as partisan basing on their past conduct.

Speaking at a public discussion held at the Sapes Trust in Harare on Tuesday, August 6, Tony Reeler, the director of the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), said an audit of the election was necessary, adding if fraud was detected "a rerun would be a good idea" in respect to the 2013 harmonized election.

CiZC Public Meeting Notice

"2013 Harmonized Elections, is Zimbabwe backsliding, stabilizing or advancing, counting the gains and losses

15 August 2013, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Harare @17.30hrs

Speakers Include:

D. Mwonzora - MDC-T

E. Mushoriwa - MDC

T. Chimhini - ERC

P.Mangwana - ZANU PF