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CIZC and ZLHR hold public meeting

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) in collaboration with Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) on Thursday 15 August, successfully hosted a public meeting, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on the topical issue of, 'The July Harmonized Elections: Is Zimbabwe backsliding, stabilizing or advancing? Counting the gains and losses'.

The meeting, which sought to unpack the likely scenarios in the post-2013 harmonised election phase, was hosted by Women in Politics Support Unit's Tsitsi Mhlanga and it was attended by representatives of three political parties' representatives (ZANU -PF, MDC-T and MDC), a civil society representative from the

Electoral Resource Center (ERC) including members of the public.

Zanu Pf was represented by outgoing Chivi Central Member of Parliament (MP) Paul Mangwana while MDC- T was represented by outgoing Nyanga North MP Douglas Mwonzora, the party's spokesperson and the MDC was represented by Professor Welshman Ncube's Deputy Edwin Mushoriwa whereas civil society was represented by Tawanda Chimhini, the ERC Director.

The Crisis Coalition media team ensured the live streaming of the proceedings using various online platforms including the Crisis Coalition Facebook page and Twitter account to allow people to follow the discussion remotely.



The event was lively with interesting questions being raised during the plenary session in which some members of the audience shared their views on how Zimbabwe can successfully advance as a country after the disputed 2013 harmonized elections.

With more than 233 people inclusive of party supporters, academics, civil society employees and ordinary members of the public in attendance, the debate placed into sharp relief the reality that the election results are still an emotive and contentious issue.

Giving their respective closing remarks, Mangwana assured Zimbabweans that the country will advance under his party's leadership while Mwonzora said his party was doing everything in its power to ensure that Zimbabweans never suffer again and Mushorihwa said his party was now preparing for 2018 as 2013 was now a thing of the past.

Chimini took the opportunity to implore the political parties and relevant actors to ensure that there was transparency in election preparations and material to eliminate irregularities in future elections.

CSOs pile on pressure ahead of SADC Summit

A delegation of Zimbabwean Civil Society (CSOs) leaders on Thursday 15 August piled on pressure to get Zimbabwe placed on the agenda ahead of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Heads of State and Government Summit scheduled to take place in Lilongwe, Malawi this weekend.

Taking advantage of the SADC People's Summit and the People's Movement Platform that kicked off in Lilongwe, the Zimbabwean CSO representatives insisted that Zimbabwe's disputed elections needed to be on the agenda.

"The template that SADC is using for Zimbabwe is reversing the gains towards democratization in our region and sets a really bad precedent that SADC will grapple with for several years. This must be stopped for the good of the region," said Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Vice Chairperson, Grace Chirenje when addressing delegates at the People's Summit.

CSOs locally and regionally have maintained that SADC is setting a very bad precedent by using partial certification instead of being holistic given that the 31 July harmonized poll was clearly unfair.

The efforts of the CSOs may have paid off following media reports from Malawi to the effect that Mozambican President and outgoing SADC chairperson, President Armando Guebuza indicated upon arrival at Kamuzu International Airport on Thursday 15 August that Zimbabwe would be pencilled in for discussion during the Summit.

President Guebuza's stance marks a sharp departure from the position stated earlier by SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation that Zimbabwe is not on the Summit's agenda while South African President Jacob Zuma is on record for saying Zimbabwe was "a closed chapter".



CiZC Spokesperson Thabani Nyoni

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Spokesperson, Thabani Nyoni said the CSOs were surprised that some members of SADC see no problem with the Zimbabwe elections yet during a recent meeting in Mozambique members had a consensus that Zimbabwe was not ready for elections.

Botswana, which reportedly sent an 80-member observer team was the first to question the credibility of the elections and asked SADC to institute investigations.

The call has since been echoed by 30 CSOs from Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe that also called on SADC to include Zimbabwe on the agenda.

Ends/

Report by Malawi's The Nation/additional reporting by Crisis Report Staff

Election standards below par

Representatives of opposition political parties and civil society who addressed the public debate in Harare on Thursday, August 15, on the just-ended elections said the electoral standards in Zimbabwe had deteriorated, arguing that the recent July 31 election was worse than the March 2008 plebiscite.

Tawanda Chimhini, the director of Election Resource Centre (ERC), Douglas Mwonzora, the spokesperson of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by out-going Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, and Edwin Mushoriwa, the Vice-President of the MDC led by Prof. Welshman Ncube said the March 2008 had been relatively free and fair. The trio submitted that by comparison, the 2013 harmonized elections were not violent but unfair while the June 2008 Presidential run-off was violent and extremely not fair.

"In my view the March 2008 election was far much better than the 2013 election," Mushoriwa said, explaining that apart from the fact that people campaigned and voted freely, political parties were given the voters' roll in time to analyze it in March 2008.

"There are things that made the 2013 election a circus. Up to the Election Day as political parties we were not aware of what sort of voters' roll we would use."

"In answering the question, have we gone forward our view is that we have backslidden," Mushoriwa said.

Mwonzora pointed to the fact that Section 155 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe describes a legal Zimbabwe election to be one which is "peaceful, free and fair" and anything short of that was unacceptable and subverted people's will. He went to state that Electoral observers from the African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) had not okayed the Zimbabwe July 31 election since it was fraught with irregularities that infringed on fairness.

"The elections never met SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. There are nine guidelines and Zimbabwe violated five," Mwonzora said.

To substantiate some of the violations, Mwonzora raised the issue of biased media coverage saying, “I actually went to ZBC to correct an MDC advert” because he felt that the electoral campaign advert had been sabotaged by the State broadcaster, in contravention of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Electoral Act and the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections.

The allegations made by Mwonzora were corroborated by regional election observers in their preliminary reports where they point out that the Zimbabwe broadcasting Corporation was biased during the election campaign.



ERC Director Tawanda Chimhini

“Right up until the 30th of July, most of the political parties that contested this election did not even have a voters’ roll. Clearly, as civil society we have backslid- den,” Chimhini said. “In other Southern African countries a voters’ roll is not a secret document”.

The ERC Director said the mobile voter registration was slow and left out more than 500 000 prospective voters, mainly in Harare.

However, outgoing ZANU-PF legislator for Chivi Central, Paul Mangwana dismissed the inaccessibility of the voters roll as a basis to dispute the elections.

“In 1980, I voted. I was not on the voters’ roll. The election was internationally accepted,” said Mangwana who main- tained that the voters’ roll could not affect the credibility of an election even if contesting parties were not granted their constitutional right to see it by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

Mushoriwa differed with Mangwana on the value of having an accessible voters roll arguing that the absence of the voters’ roll was a deliberate ploy to benefit the interests of one political party and constituted a major electoral flaw in the 2013 plebiscite.

He said that Zanu-PF connived and benefited from the underhand dealings to salvage the legacy of President Robert Mugabe after his humiliation in March 2008 elections.

“Our view is that Zanu-PF rigged the elections. They wanted to make sure that Mugabe’s legacy remains intact,” Mushori- wa said.

Mangwana said he did not know that an Israeli company called Nikuv had been contracted to prepare the voters’ roll and rig the 2013 elections adding that these allegations were made by the opposition parties in Zimbabwe, Mail & Guardian newspaper and an independent investigative company, Nasini, from South Africa.

“A lot of allegations were mentioned in respect to the voters’ roll. Unfortunately, there has been limited information in respect to the voters’ roll,” said Chimhini who said the inaccessibility of the voters roll made the process less transparent.

Mwonzora said his party would take a dossier to the SADC Summit in Malawi to prove his party’s rigging allegations, adding that Zimbabwean elections should not be allowed to be of a lower standard than what the regional bloc prescribes.

Zanu-PF digs in heels over election audit

MOVEMENT for Democratic Change (MDC), the aggrieved main challenger to the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) in the disputed 31 July harmonised elections has urged its opponent and erstwhile Global Political Agreement (GPA) partner to agree to an electoral audit.

The MDC is seeking the electoral audit through the Constitutional Court, but a Zanu-PF representative at the public meeting organized by Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CICZ) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) in Harare on Thursday, August 16, categorically stated that Mugabe's party would not entertain such a process.

Responding to Douglas Mwonozora, the outgoing Nyanga North legislator and MDC-T Spokesperson, Paul Mangwana, the outgoing Chivi Central legislator and Zanu-PF member said an audit was unnecessary given that many African countries had already endorsed the poll.



Douglas Mwonozora, the outgoing Nyanga North legislator and MDC-T Spokesperson,

Mwonozora however pointed out that an election audit could settle the election dispute once and for all adding that none of the contesting parties, especially Zanu-PF, should be afraid of transparency and that they should fully support an audit if there was no foul play in the poll process.

"What does anybody who is fair lose if we audit the voters' roll," queried Mwonozora, noting that besides the voters roll there were other electoral documents that needed to be audited.

Mwonozora added that there was no reason to attack Botswana President Ian Khama who urged the Government of Zimbabwe to be assisted by Southern African Development Community (SADC) in auditing the election to clear the post-election dispute, while Mangwana insisted that the case was closed.

Mwonozora said the MDC-T was preparing a dossier to present its case to SADC, after pursuing intra-national electoral appeal mechanisms.

Tawanda Chimhini, the Director of Election Resource Center (ERC), said disputed elections continued to embarrass the country, calling for better leadership from Zimbabwean leaders. *"It is embarrassing that we continue in an election mood because we have disputed elections."*

Chimhini concurred that there was need to release all information related to the election for scrutiny especially the electronic voters' roll which he said civil society identified as the primary instrument in elections.

Edwin Mushoriwa, the Vice-President of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Professor Welshman Ncube, cited many irregularities and rigging which he said went as far as determining who won parliamentary seats in the opposition, though he said his party would not take measures to contest the outcome because it was futile.