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Zimbabweans Want 'Feya Feya' Elections – CiZC Survey



ZIMBABWEANS have expressed consensus on the need for the country to hold free and fair, or 'Feya Feya' elections as the power-sharing Government established in February 2009 comes to an end.

The Government of National Unity (GNU) followed the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) on September 15 2008 and a disputed presidential run-off poll on 27 June 2008 preceded by violence which according to some sources claimed about 200 people.

The results of the online survey, Do We Need Free and Fair Elections This Year, will be released as part of commemorating the disputed elections of June 2008, bringing into focus the need for free and fair elections, or 'Feya Feya' elections when Zimbabweans vote for President, Members of Parliament and Local Government later in the year.

The disputed poll condemned by both African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) necessitated the latter, the regional bloc to mediate between the three governing parties, Zanu-PF and MDC formations

through the mediation of former South African President Thabo Mbeki.

Preparations for launching a nationwide campaign for free and fair elections spearheaded by civil society called Feya Feya, first scooped in newspaper story that appeared in The Herald in May, gather momentum this week.

The campaign which was floated at a civil society indaba in Bulawayo from Wednesday June 26 to Friday June 28 involved a jamboree of events including a media reception, civil society conference and a public launch at the small city Hall.

Now fully fledged the campaign first saw the light of day in the State-controlled media amid falsehoods of a US\$ 2 million project of foreign-engineered illegal regime change machinations.

Feya Feya will publicize the principles of free and fair elections as guided by Zimbabwe's new Constitution, SADC Guidelines and Principles Governing Free and Fair Elections and related AU frameworks as well as resolutions to be drafted by civil society delegates.

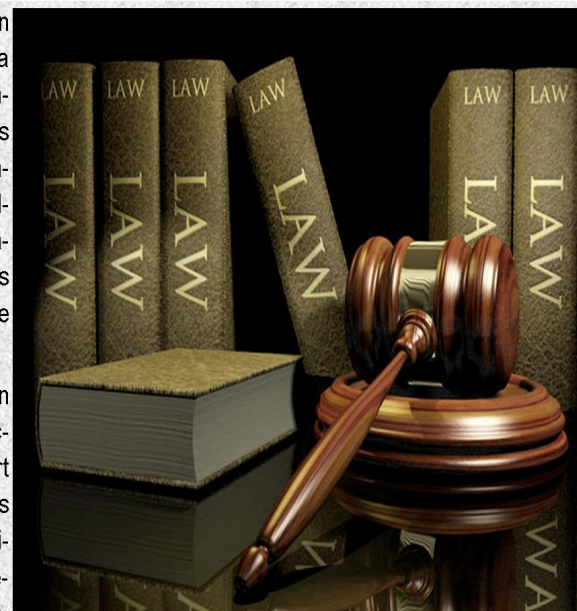
The Election Season Upon Us....

Constitutional Court Rules in Favour of Dual Citizenship

Zimbabwean-born businessman Mutumwa Mawere has won a landmark ruling on dual citizenship, that will have implications for tens of thousands of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora. The ruling also has far reaching implications for the electoral processes that are currently underway in the country.

Mawere, who is a South African by naturalisation, took legal action in the Constitutional Court earlier this month after he was told by Registrar General Tobaiwa Mudede he'd have to renounce his South African citizenship before he could apply for identification documents and a passport.

The ruling means dual citizenship is not prohibited to those who are citizens by birth. The constitution sets out different classes of citizenship rights and an Act of parliament may limit citizenship by descent or by registration.



Visit the following useful sites on the election: www.zec.org.zw

www.zesn.org.zw

zimbabweelection.com

www.erc.org.zw

The online survey carried by the CiZC shows that 94.91 percent of the respondents canvassed by the CiZC as sponsors of the research, when asked what kind of elections the next Zimbabwean elections should be, chose Feya Feya (free and fair elections).

In a sign that the Feya Feya initiative could receive support from ordinary Zimbabweans and was in sync with their aspirations, 94.91 percent of the respondents to the survey said they would support a nationwide campaign for free and fair elections.

Related to this aspiration, 64.69 percent said they would like to receive more information from CiZC as the commissioners of the survey on findings and elec-

tion related campaigns and information.

Members of the civil society recently petitioned the SADC as guarantor of the GPA to ensure free and fair elections in Zimbabwe ahead of the bloc's Summit in Mozambican coastal capital Maputo on June 15, which affirmed the need for a conducive environment and critical reforms ahead of elections.

Ends/

We Will Keep Knocking On SADC Doors'

As Zimbabwe hurtles towards watershed elections whose date continues to be contested despite a court ruling and a SADC summit which gave recommendations for an extension on the date, the Daily News Senior Assistant Editor Guthrie Munyuki, sought the views of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition regional coordinator, Joy Mabenge, on their advocacy and lobbying in southern Africa as well as the reading of the SADC summit outcome. Below are excerpts of the interview conducted in Johannesburg.

Q: How significant is the outcome of the SADC summit held in Maputo to your calls for the holdings of free and fair elections?

A: The outcome of the Maputo summit was very clear, with the writing bold on the wall for President Mugabe: No elections without the necessary reforms! One would be tempted to think that the resolution was crafted from the civil society's well documented position calling for crucial reforms before the harmonized election to ensure the elections are credible, free and fair. We took this position to all corners where we thought recipients would influence our GPA guarantors ahead of the extraordinary summit and finally we were in Maputo with the same message. No amount of spinning from anywhere in this world will change the meaning of the resolutions of the Maputo Summit and the significance is that SADC as guarantors of the GPA are still lively engaged on the Zimbabwean question and will not allow gains of the past five years towards democratic reforms to be reversed at the last minute through unilateralism on the part of President Mugabe and his party.

Q: What other options are there for both the civil society and the three political parties in the inclusive government other than an extension of poll dates as recommended by SADC?

A: Reading of the SADC resolutions 8.4, 8.5 and 8.6, read together with the facilitator's report, particularly the recommendations, lays out what is expected of the government of Zimbabwe on three things: implementation of a raft of imperative reforms, creating conditions for the conduct of free, fair and credible elections as

well as negotiating the counterbalance between a purely political process represented by the letter and spirit of the GPA as it still subsists and legal process represented by rulings of the courts, the Con-Court ruling in



Mr Joy Mabenge, Regional Coordinator, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition

question in particular. We are not looking for partial satisfaction of any of these but a holistic approach as these imperatives are mutually reinforcing and don't act and impact independent of one another. As civil society, our role is to monitor implementation and apply the necessary pressure to ensure compliance with the above at home. We will not tire to knock on the doors of the GPA guarantors: SADC and AU, the facilitation team and any other relevant stakeholders. We have made friends with a lot of powerful like-minded solidarity groups in SADC and beyond, and these have always stood ready to push our cause through exerting pressure to their authorities to stand by the people of Zimbabwe in our times of need.

Q: What are your views on the immediate deployment of SADC observers and what role is the civic society playing in making sure that this is done?

A: The SADC observers are in fact late. If you follow through earlier positions by a good number of civil society organizations on joint platforms, we have often requested that the SADC adopts and implements a Long Term Observer strategy with their team of observers or monitors being deployed into the country at least six months

before the holding of our watershed election. Of course funding may be a challenge on the part of SADC, but in hot spots such as ours, this is necessary so that SADC does not use a layman's observation to validate or inval-

idate the election in Zimbabwe. I understand the AU has issued a statement that their Long Term Observer Mission to the Zimbabwe election is now in the country for a period of 2 months from 15 June until 14 August 2013. That is a fair compromise, if they were working on the earlier announcement of 31 July as the election date. If SADC could work with at least 3 months observation to cover the critical moments: before, during and after voting, they may have a fair judgment as a lot happens in between these electoral processes. They must have a deliberate bias towards remote and rural areas and must be able to observe not only voting but voter registration, inspection of the voters roll, nomination court processes, electioneering or campaigns, among others. Election rigging can happen at any of these intervals.

Q: As Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition regional coordinator, how do you describe your interface and interactions with the South African government on the political and rights situation in Zimbabwe?

A: Since the time of other regional coordinators who have come before me, the SA government has seemingly often been a good friend, especially in executing their role as facilitators to the Zimbabwean political dialogue. However, on a num-

ber of occasions on this journey, they have also shown signs of tiredness as they have often been faced with their own domestic challenges as a fairly young democracy. We as the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition regional office have a cordial working relationship with the different arms of the SA government which is why we can at any point interact with their National parliament, the executive and the judiciary occasionally.

Q: How do you describe your advocacy work in southern Africa in terms of success?

A: Since March 11 2007, after the assault of the then opposition leaders together with civil society and church leaders, Zimbabwe got on the radar of regional and international politics. Our work as the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition has been to keep on knocking on the doors of the centers and levers of power in the region and beyond in trying to ensure that the Zimbabwean issue is not overshadowed by other emerging crisis points, at least until the Zimbabwean question is finally resolved. Success can only be measured through the various interventions we have had on the journey towards a democratic and free Zimbabwe. Ours has been to make sure SADC and the AU at least remain interested in the Zimbabwean issue and continue to be on the side of ordinary Zimbabweans in our quest for a better Zimbabwe. We wait with eagerness and great hope for the day Zimbabwe will be off the agenda of the numerous SADC summits and on that day I am sure many will pronounce success on our behalf.

Civil Society Joint Statement on Observations on the Mobile Voter Registration Exercise

Harare - 26 June 2013 - We the civil society organisations in Zimbabwe would like to commend ZEC for having rolled out the mandatory Voter registration exercise from the 9th of June 2013. As we prepare for the harmonised elections we are of the view that voter registration and inspection are essential components of an electoral cycle especially as we head toward these watershed elections. We note the 15 June SADC Special Summit on Zimbabwe resolution which directed the government of Zimbabwe to approach the constitutional court and seek an election date extension.

After having observed the first phase of the mobile voter registration, we raised concerns with ZEC over a plethora of issues which needed attention. Our view is that certain problems that bedevilled the first phase were addressed while some of the teething issues remain prevalent in the current 30 day voter registration and inspection exercises.

Since the beginning of the second phase of the voter education, registration and inspection exercise, there are issues which have consistently hampered the effectiveness of this critical exercise. Our observations as civil society organisations have unearthed the following concerns:

Inadequate timeframes – We have noted with concern the limited timeframe given to mobile voter registration, with the registration teams spending 3 days to register people in 2 – 3 wards instead of the 30 days per ward as had been promised. It has also been noted that some advertised centres that were meant to be open were closed earlier than the stipulated time. For instance, reports from Bulawayo revealed that potential registrants were turned away at Lobengula Secondary school because the ZEC officials closed the centre before the stipulated time.

Exclusion of non-state actors in the voter registration exercise.

We note with concern that despite applications for accreditation to observe the mobile voter registration process, following an advert by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission inviting organisations seeking letters of permission to visit mobile voter registration sites; none of the organisations who are part of this joint statement have received a response from ZEC regarding their applications. This limits credibility and transparency of the mobile voter registration exercise, as civil society is unable to play its critical watchdog role to ensure transparency in the process.

Lack of sensitivity to vulnerable groups including people living with disabilities, pregnant and nursing mothers and the elderly. There have been no special measures observed to ease the burden of registration of vulnerable groups, in terms of separate queues or preferential treatment which has led to structural discrimination against vulnerable groups in the mobile voter registration exercise.

Lack of access to information on voter registration procedures and requirements. We have observed the lack of clarity in registration requirements, in particular, the documentation needed to register. There is no uniformity in terms of what documentation potential voters need to be able to register, particularly proof of residence and the use of affidavits to provide this proof. Women and youth have been disproportionately affected by this as the failure to produce proof of residence has been the main reason these groups have been turned away from the voter registration centres.

Slow processing of potential voters and unprofessional conduct by voter registration officials. We have observed the long queues to register, particularly in the urban areas with voters indicating that they sometimes have to wait for up to 10 hours on all the set days per ward to be registered. There has also been no separation of voter registration and voters' roll inspection lists, and this has further slowed the process. Registration officials have also been observed shouting at and harassing potential voters. For example in Harare's Mt Pleasant suburb the process was reported to be slow because of inadequate human resource coupled with the bussing in of

police officers to register.

Continued disenfranchisement of Zimbabwean citizens still classified as "aliens". We have noted varying reasons of how the so called aliens are being treated one example being of Aliens who are being referred to renounce their citizenship at a certain fee first before they register.

Inadequate voter education – ZEC has deployed only two people per ward to conduct voter education and this has compromised the reach and quality of the education provided. In addition we have noted with concern the recruitment of voter registration personnel who are known political party activists, youth officers, war veterans with known links to political parties

Lack of clarity on the role of political parties in the mobile voter registration exercise. ZEC has failed to clarify the role of political parties in the mobile voter registration exercise.

We therefore call upon ZEC to:

Immediately accredit all civic society organisations, media and political parties to observe and monitor the electoral process without undue restrictions.

Audit the Voters' Roll once the registration process is completed by the Registrar general

Make available the Updated Voters rolls before election day
Ensure that the MVR personnel stick to the ZEC manuals on voter registration to ensure uniformity in the process.

Scale up voter education to ensure comprehensive coverage of the whole country.