

Nightmare as first time voter

By Masimba Ngondonga

CHITUNGWIZA-So, the coalition government did manage to get rid of queues. The meandering bank queues, the bread lines and the hours on end lining for fuel.

In four years, all those queues have gone. Well, except one – the most important queue for a Zimbabwean seeking to exercise his right to vote.

Last week, I decided to register as a voter and came face-to-face with the chaos.

Suddenly, I was back to 2008 – the year of the queue.

Ignoring the reports of delays I was reading in newspapers, I decided to go and register at Mberi Primary School in Zengeza 2, Chitungwiza.

Despite many negative reports of the process that almost thwarted my zeal, I made up my mind. I wanted to be a registered voter.

Arriving at the registration centre at exactly 8:46 am, I was greeted by two long winding queues.

One was for those intending to acquire birth certificates and national identity cards while the other was for voter registration.

I approached one police officer manning the registration centre and asked her what a first time voter needed to do in order to register.

The response that I got from the police officer almost revived my lost hope and I quickly rushed to the queue, little did I know this was the commencing of a frustrating day – albeit ending with a ray of light.

The first batch of 25 people entered the hall at around 10am and we waited patiently for almost an hour and a half before the other batch got in.

Slow as it was, I was determined. But others were not so patient.

The snail pace at which the process was being conducted left many people frustrated and a good number returned home as they had come with hope to be served early before reporting for work.

Whilst in the queue, a group of nine young men arrived.

Clad in different ZANU PF regalia ranging from caps written “Vote ZANU PF”, red and black berets, overall coats with President Robert Mugabe’s signature they caused a scene.

Straight away, in an organised manner they picked

more than 20 people from the queue from whom they took registration documents and entered the hall. The move left many in awe and tongues wagging as no one had any idea of what was going on.

The incident triggered chaos, which brought business to a halt, as people demanded explanation from authorities of what was going on and why the process was consuming so much time.

Police manning the registration centre tried to contain the chaos but their efforts were in vain as most people had lost patience and for almost 30 minutes people demanded to know whether the process belonged to a particular political and why the ZANU PF youths got preferential treatment.

An elderly man who said he had been in the queue since 6am shouted: “We are being denied our right to register and the pace at which the registration process is going on is a clear act of sabotage.”

His protests were ignored.

As the chaos continued, I began chatting up one

guy. He told me he had earlier asked for assistance from the same group when he arrived.

“They began asking me who my ward chairman was and the names of people who were in the party structures within my ward,” he said.

“I told them I knew nothing about the party structures and they began teasing and harassing me, saying I was so foolish not to know party structures yet expected help.”

The discussion made everything fall in place. I began to understand why this group wearing ZANU PF regalia had caused so much chaos.

As business resumed, I waited patiently until around 18:30 pm when we entered the hall and there were four registration agents and among the four was a man who sat at the far end of the table, talking to another man while registering people. He took almost 15 minutes and when the man left he was given close to 10 registration slips.

With the registration slips, the man went and met a group of more than 20 people who were sitting inside the hall, opposite the registration desks and among them were those young men who had earlier caused commotion outside.

I recall checking my watch. It was now 19:20 when I sat at the registration desk. Finally, the nightmare was over. I was given my registration slip but left with more questions than answers on the credibility of the entire exercise.



Nightmare... chaotic scenes characterised the 30-day mobile voter registration conducted countrywide by the Office of the Registrar-General of Voters



Two nights in cells over voter T-shirts, jingles

MUTARE-Two nights in police cells for handing out a T-shirt and playing jingles which encourage people to register as voters.

Welcome to Zimbabwe.

Four human rights campaigners, Sydney Chisi, Masimba Nyamanhindi, Tichafa Musana and Taziva Machiwana can testify to Zimbabwe’s definition of democracy.

Next week on Tuesday they will appear before the Mutare Magistrates Court for their next remand hearing on charges of contravening Section 40 (c) (g) of the Electoral Act.

The four human rights campaigners are accused of conducting voter education at a concert that was held in Mutare earlier this month “without clearance from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission”.

According to the State, led by Prosecutor Sam Chabuka, the four human rights defenders distributed t-shirts written: “Certified to vote,” and “1st Time Voter Generation XG Its Happening.”

“Police recovered three t-shirts written ‘Certified to vote’ and a 16 gig memory stick containing voter education jingles,” reads the State outline. “The accused persons conducted voter education without approval from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as required by the law. The recovered three T-shirts and a 16 gig memory can be produced as an exhibit in court.”

The arrest of the four corroborates findings contained in a report “Walk the Talk” released Friday by rights group Amnesty International.

The report notes that there is alarming clampdown on basic freedoms ahead of the July 31 elections.

According to the report, Zimbabwean police are continuing to target and intimidate human rights defenders ahead of the watershed polls which will end the coalition government of President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai formed after the 2008 disputed presidential election. Chisi, Nyamanhindi, Musana and Machiwana endured two cold nights in police detention at Mutare Central Police Station after their arrest on Saturday 6 July.

They regained their freedom on Monday 8 July after Magistrate Noah Gwatidzo granted them \$50 bail each.

Blessing Nyamaropa, Jeremiah Mutongi Bamu of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) and Passmore Nyakureba of Maunga Maanda and Associates Legal Practitioners, a ZLHR member, represented the four human rights campaigners.



FEYA FEYA 11-PRINCIPLES WE ABIDE BY

1. **That all members of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) don't show favoritism whenever they are carrying out any of their duties.**
2. That the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and the government allow all political parties and all citizens to have a fair and equal chance to be covered in the public media; meanwhile they must protect journalists so they can work freely and without fear as stated in Section 61 of our Constitution.
3. **That the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission uses all its powers and authority to permit every observer, whether local or regional or international, to operate freely and without fear of being excluded, threatened or arrested.**
4. That the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission always transmits and tallies the votes in any election in a transparent and timely fashion and make certain that they announce election results within 5 days of the polls as required in the amended Electoral Act and in our Constitution, within 5 days of the polls.
5. **That everyone is free to decide whom they prefer to vote for without fear of being harmed or threatened and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission must protect the voter by ensuring that they can vote in secrecy.**
6. That the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission acts with honesty and integrity in counting every vote to ensure that everyone's vote counts so that the outcome is a fair one reflecting the true wishes of the people and that the results can be irreversible.
7. **That members of the police, army and other security services don't show favoritism whenever they are carrying out any of their duties so that no one feels afraid of fully participating in elections especially women, youths, people living with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.**
8. That The Police and prosecuting authorities allow civil society organizations and citizens groups to do their lawful work without any hindrance or harassment and that the police do not allow themselves to be manipulated into arresting innocent people to serve political interests.
9. **That Electoral Stakeholders such as Political Parties, ZEC, Government Institutions, the Media and the Judiciary, use their words and deeds to create a conducive environment for the holding of free and fair elections, to live up to the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.**
10. That all contesting political parties and stakeholders in the elections should make sure that all eligible and willing citizens of the Republic of Zimbabwe, are allowed the opportunity to enjoy full and equal participation in the elections without being restricted or denied.
11. **That international actors and solidarity partners do not encourage our country to make compromises that promote a lower standard which is outside the agreements of our regional blocs as expressed through the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections and The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.**



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Alarm as crackdown continues

HARARE-The fresh onslaught on Zimbabwe NGO Human Rights Forum executive director Abel Chikomo has raised fears that the ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders could worsen ahead of polls.

Local and international organisations such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) and Amnesty International say they are alarmed at the way police are continuing to target and intimidate human rights defenders ahead of elections set for 31 July.

Chikomo's arrest, they said, signified the level of harassment human rights defenders face on a regular basis.

Chikomo, who is not new to such harassment, has been served with fresh summons to stand trial on charges of running an "unregistered" organisation.

Two police officers only identified as Detective Gandidzanwa and Chipwanya served the summons on Chikomo to stand trial on 1 August 2013 at Harare Magistrates Court.

According to the summons, Chikomo contravened Section 6 (3) of the Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO) Act Chapter 17:15 after he allegedly conducted some activities without being registered under the PVO Act. The charge, which he denies, came after the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, a non-governmental

umbrella organisation conducted a survey on transitional justice in Harare's Highfield suburb.

The State says this was illegal since the organisation is not registered as a PVO.

The State claims that Chikomo unlawfully instructed two of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum's employees to commence or carry out a survey in Harare's Highfield suburb to obtain people's recommendations on the preferred transitional justice mechanism for Zimbabwe, without his organisation registering with the Social Welfare Department under the PVO Act.

Last year, Chikomo's trial on the same charges, which first arose in February 2011, was shelved after State prosecutor Innocent Chingarande withdrew summons issued against him as the State was not ready to proceed with the matter.

At that time Chikomo was represented by ZLHR board member Selby Hwacha and Jeremiah Bamu from ZLHR.

Over the past two years Chikomo has been interrogated and asked to report to the police station on several occasions on the activities carried out by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum.

In a report released on Friday, Amnesty International said police have conducted systematic raids on offices, arbitrarily arrested human rights



Chikomo chats to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay during her visit to Zimbabwe last year

defenders and seized equipment to intimidate and disrupt the work of organizations carrying out election related human rights work.

"The clampdown on the work of human rights defenders is a worrying indicator that government agencies remain actively hostile to civil society," said Noel Kututwa, Amnesty International's Africa Deputy Programme Director launching the report 'Walk the Talk'.

"Zimbabwe's security forces must respect and protect fundamental freedoms as the country prepares for a high stakes election at the end of July," he said.

He said at the end of 2012, amid speculation that Zimbabwe would hold elections as early as

March 2013, Amnesty International documented increased targeting of human rights defenders and civil society organisations.

Since November 2012, at least five police raids of NGO offices have been conducted and dozens of human rights defenders unlawfully detained. Many are appearing in courts on trumped-up charges that are widely considered to be politically motivated, Kututwa said.

"Though the prosecution of human rights defenders doesn't necessarily result in convictions, they effectively paralyse the organisations through regular court appearances of the leaders; draining finances through high legal fees; and generating fear of long term imprisonment," he said.

Timeline of Chikomo's persecution

November 11, 2010-Abel Chikomo was summoned by Bulawayo Law and Order police regarding the Forum's public campaign against torture. Bulawayo Law and Order police alleged that billboards put up by the Forum and calling on the Government of Zimbabwe to ratify the Convention Against Torture and to outlaw torture were offensive and causing disharmony.

February 08, 2011-Police quizzed the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum's researchers Dzikamai Bere, a supervisor and Dorothy Mudavanhu, a field officer, who were administering a questionnaire on the research project in Highfield suburb. The police later freed the researchers and summoned them to return to Machipisa Police Station on Wednesday 9 February in the company of Chikomo.

February 09, 2011-Police interrogated Chikomo for six hours at Machipisa Police Station before being transferred to Harare Central Police Station after surrendering himself to the police, who had summoned him to "explain" his organisation's involvement in a research project on transitional justice in Zimbabwe.

February 9, 2011-two days after the inception by the Forum of a Transitional Justice National Survey, the Machipisa police in Harare detained two researchers from the Forum and questioned them about this survey. They released them only after receiving the assurance that Chikomo will report the next morning to the Machipisa police station. The next day, Chikomo was interrogated at the Machipisa police station about the work of the Forum. The police also insisted on the fact that the Forum required police clearance to carry out a survey and an authorisation from the Government of Zimbabwe. After approximately two hours of questioning, the Machipisa police said it was a very serious matter that required the intervention of the Harare Central Law and Order Section. As a consequence, Chikomo was transferred to the latter and questioned for more than six hours. During his six hour detention, police detectives led by Detective Inspector Mukwaira, Detective Sergeant Ndawana, Detective Assistant Inspector Mirimbo and Assistant Inspector Sikuni quizzed him over his organisation's research project on transitional justice in Zimbabwe. During the interrogation, the police quizzed Chikomo on issues to do with the registration and location of the Human Rights Forum's offices, the work of the organisation and tried to link the organisation to political activity. The police also sought some answers on the identity of organisations that support the Forum and why the organisation's research questionnaire contained questions about elections. Detectives from the Harare Central Law and Order Section also visited the Forum offices in the city of Harare on the same day accompanied by Chikomo. After the visit, he was released without charges but the police insisted they would call him later.

March 10, 2011-two officers from the Harare Law and Order Section visited the Forum offices and requested to meet Chikomo who was at the time out of the office. They then asked for the organisation's registration certificate and number under the Private Voluntary Organisations Act. The two officers instructed that the Executive Director should report in person without fail on March 14, as he had "questions to answer" and needed to provide the certificate of registration.

March 14, 2011-Chikomo was again summoned by the Law and Order Section of the Zimbabwe Republic Police at the Harare Central police station. Accompanied by his lawyer, Harrison Nkomo, he was interrogated by police officers on the work carried out by the Forum and its legal status. Chikomo explained the Forum was a Common Law Universitas, recognised by Section 89 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. He was then informed that the investigating officer in charge was away and had not left the file or any instructions. Chikomo was then allowed to leave the police station and informed that he will be summoned to appear on a later date. Chikomo reported on March 15, 2011 in the afternoon and was told that he would be summoned again at a later stage.

March 29, 2011-Chikomo was again summoned to Harare Central Law and Order Section and spent the whole day being asked the same questions over and over again by different officers. He was released but asked to report the next morning.

March 30, 2011-Chikomo reported to Harare Central law and Order Section and was, after a whole day of interrogation, eventually formally charged for allegedly contravening Section 6 (3) as read with subsection (1) of the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Act. Police alleged that Chikomo has been managing and controlling the operations of an illegal PVO, which is required to register as a PVO before it can commence any of its activities as stipulated in its constitution. Chikomo denied the charges and allegations by the police and stated that the Forum is not a PVO and is not required either by the PVO Act or any other law, to register. To the contrary, the PVO Act exempts organisations like the Forum from such registration.

February 28, 2012-Police summoned Chikomo to Harare Central Law and Order so that they serve him with court summons but through his lawyer, Trust Maanda, Chikomo advises the police that he would not report as police had both his business and home addresses which they should use if they want to serve him with summons. Angry officers beset the Forum demanding to see Chikomo who was not in the office at the time.

May 22, 2012-Police besieged the offices of the Forum looking for Chikomo who was not present at the time as he was attending a meeting of CSO's with visiting United Nations human rights chief, Navi Pillay, who was in Zimbabwe to assess the human rights situation.

July 3, 2012-Detective Sergeant Ndawana and Detective Chipwanya serve summons on Chikomo to stand trial at Harare Magistrates Court on 25 July 2012 for running an "unregistered" organization by "unlawfully instructing his employees to commence or carry out the activities of house to house survey in Canaan, Highfield, Harare with the intention to obtain people's recommendations on the preferred transitional justice mechanism for Zimbabwe, without registering his organization with the Social Welfare Department under the PVO Act."

July 1, 2013-Detective Chipwanya and Gandizanwa summoned Chikomo to stand trial again on charges of running an unregistered organisation in yet another official harassment of civic organisations and human rights defenders.

Extend voter registration-ZESN

HARARE-The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) has joined calls for the recently ended 30-day mobile voter registration exercise to be extended.

The elections watchdog said it was "deeply concerned that many potential voters could have been left out of the process".

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) ended the 30-day mobile voter registration exercise last week on Tuesday, with Hon. Tendai Biti, the secretary general of the MDC-T, saying about 300 000 people in Harare alone had been left out of the registration process.

ZESN said people who failed to register because of long queues and poor service from the Registrar General's Office deserve a chance to appear on the voters' roll for the next elections.

"Reports received from ZESN observers and feedback from its social media platforms indicate that many people failed to register due to the slow processing of people, limited days spent in a ward, lack of adequate personnel, inadequate voter education and publicity about the process," said ZESN in a statement.

ZESN said despite ZEC having extended the exercise to 12 midnight on the last day of registration, many people in "most urban centres failed to be attended to".

"The three days spent per ward by the teams were inadequate given the huge turnout of potential voters in various parts of the country, especially urban areas. ZESN is of the view that the teams should have been deployed for 30 days in every ward to cater for the vast number of people intending to register to vote," added ZESN.

The organisation, which is the country's biggest independent elections watchdog, said it was concerned by the slow processing of people at the registration centres, the few number of centres in urban areas as well as long distances in rural areas.

"ZESN observers in Bulawayo noted how some officials from the Registrar General's office seemed to be inadequately trained. They also noted different application of procedures and varied handling of affidavits. This resulted in some people being turned away at the close of the process despite having been in queues for the whole day," said ZESN.

The organisation said this was witnessed by its staff members and volunteers who tried to register at Harare's Kambuzuma Community Hall, Marlborough High School and Market Square, Zaloba Primary School in Chiundura constituency, Phumelelo Primary School in Gweru, Rusunguko High School in Shurugwi, Lobengula Secondary School in Bulawayo and Fairbridge Primary School in Umguza.

"We believe this process was also affected by inadequate voter education given that only two people were deployed per ward to conduct voter education.

"ZESN therefore calls for an extension to the mobile voter registration process by another week," said ZESN.

The 30-day mobile voter registration exercise had started on 10 June after civic organisations condemned another chaotic registration exercise which had run between April and May.

'Your place is home'

...sexist police impose curfew on women

HARARE-From Operation Chipo Chiroorwa to Operation Zvanyanya, Zimbabwe's police have intensified their crackdown on women who dare venture out after dusk.

Under the guise of clamping down on prostitution, armed police have been indiscriminately rounding up women who they find outside the home at night and charging them with loitering for the purposes of prostitution.

The current crackdown, codenamed Operation Zvanyanya, has seen dozens of female cops forcing their way into restaurants, bars and nightclubs to arrest female patrons. The operation includes officers dragging professional dancers from the stage to police cells.

Just last week, police arrested 53 women on a single night, leaving gender equality groups and human rights lawyers seething with anger at the gender discrimination associated with the operation.

Legal practitioners from Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights have now taken up the matter in a bid to stop such discriminatory action by the police.

The lawyers are representing the 53 women. They say many of the women were languishing in remand

prison because they could not afford to pay the hefty fines and bail.

"The women arrested under a police operation code –named 'Operation Zvanyanya' aimed at flushing out sex workers from the Avenues area and lodges in the city centre were placed on initial remand after a number of them either could not raise the \$100 fine or the \$200 bail," said one of the lawyers representing the women.

Charged under Section 81(2) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, which criminalises solicitation in a public place, the women were arrested in different places around the city of Harare ranging from streets to pubs and lodges. Thirty-seven pleaded guilty but could not raise the fine and the remaining 16 pleaded not guilty and were granted \$200 bail by Magistrate Blessing Murwisi.

Lawyers said they were concerned by the level of fine and bail given to the women, as the amounts were clearly beyond the reach of the average Zimbabwean.

"ZLHR made a complaint against the police on initial remand that some of the women were assaulted by police using baton sticks and were subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment which included being denied sanitary wear," said one of the lawyers.

Radio VOP director scoops press freedom award

BULAWAYO-John Masuku the executive director with Radio Voice of the People (VoP) is the winner of MISA-Zimbabwe's Press Freedom Award for 2013.

"When we do our work we do not expect to receive any award. I am very excited and humbled to receive the MISA Press Freedom award," he said.

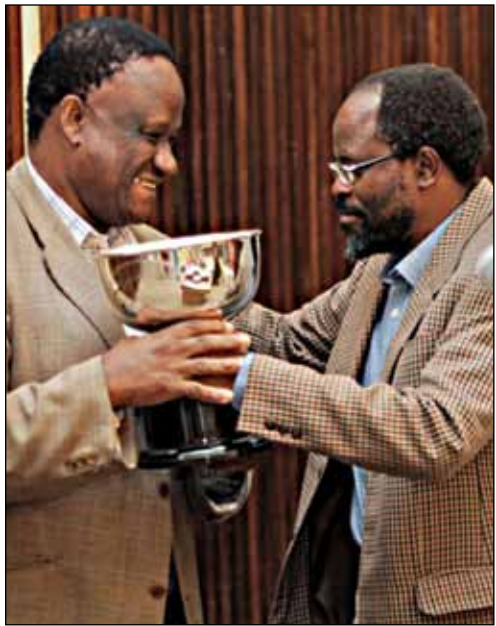
Masuku was cited for the award for continuing to weather the storm in his quest for a diversified broadcasting sector in Zimbabwe despite being

vilified for operating what the authorities refer to as a 'pirate radio station'.

Together with his board members, John has been incarcerated for operating Radio VOP without a licence in terms of the Broadcasting Services Act.

He has nonetheless soldiered on providing alternative voices and views on Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political dynamics. Masuku has thus been a vital cog in lobbying for media reforms in Zimbabwe.

SOURCE: MISA Zimbabwe



John Masuku receives his trophy from MISA-Zimbabwe Trustee Cris Chinaka

The award was presented at MISA-Zimbabwe's annual general meeting held in Bulawayo on 29 June 2013.

The award is presented in honor and recognition of an individual or institution that would have played a significant role in the defence and promotion of media freedom, freedom of expression and the right to access to information.

Commitment in the defence and promotion of media freedom is demonstrated through media reportage, opinion pieces or lobby work for media reforms in Zimbabwe. Individuals or institutions that demonstrate journalism excellence in their pursuit of the truth through professional and ethical reportage, are also eligible for nomination.

Excellence in journalism is determined through the upholding of ethics of the profession at all costs as well as relentless pursuit of truth behind the bare facts.

Other nominees included ZiFM's 'Supa Mandiwanzira, veteran broadcast journalist Tapfuma Machakaire, and Masvingo-based freelance journalist Golden Maunganidze.

Presenting the award, MISA-Zimbabwe Trustee Cris Chinaka, noted Masuku's immense contribution in raising the professional standards of journalism through lecturing, mentorship and gender mainstreaming in the media.

"He (Masuku) seemed shy and surprised that anyone had noted his work" said Chinaka.

On receiving the award Masuku said he was excited and humbled as he did not expect to receive anything for his work.

Dream shattered...

HARARE-Nixon Nyikadzino must be one of those Zimbabweans who will vote in the July 31 elections with a heavy heart.

He had approached the Constitutional Court to set aside the election date, arguing that the country needed more time to implement reforms necessary for free and fair elections.



"After perusing the papers and hearing counsel, the court unanimously concludes that the applications should be dismissed... For the avoidance of doubt, elections should be held on July 31 in terms of the proclamation by the president of Zimbabwe in compliance of the order of this court," said Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku while dismissing the case.

Nyikadzino's case was put together with that of Justice and Legal Affairs Minister Patrick Chinamasa, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, Industry and Commerce Minister Welshman Ncube and private citizen Mariah Phiri, who had all applied for a postponement of the 31 July election.

Nyikadzino had argued that the 31 July date violates his rights, as it would result in "restrictive time frames within which the impending elections must now be held...and that these timeframes significantly threaten or compromise my right to vote as a citizen and to participate in free and fair elections".

In his urgent application at the country's highest court, Nyikadzino had argued that: "There has not been progress in key and mandatory processes necessary for the holding of free and fair elections. Some of the processes have not yet commenced and some are about to commence. None have been finalised."

Nyikadzino cited President Mugabe as first respondent, Prime Minister Tsvangirai as second respondent and Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Eric Matinenga as third respondent.

Minister Chinamasa was cited as the fourth respondent while Registrar-General of Voters Tobaiwa Mudede was the sixth respondent.

LM Sport



Left for dead... Zim lawyers leftback, Tatenda Chinyan'anya leaves Crowne Plaza players clutching thin air on his way to score his third goal. Tatenda had a hat-trick in the match

Harare Professionals Soccer League

LOG STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Zim Lawyers	13	11	1	1	44	12	34
H-Metro	12	8	2	2	22	15	26
Obama Boyz	11	7	3	1	35	18	24
ZIFA Social	12	7	2	3	25	18	23
Red Rose	13	6	2	5	28	16	20
Crowne Plaza	12	6	1	5	26	21	19
BAK Logistics	13	5	4	4	23	18	19
JOMA	12	5	3	4	27	21	18
City Wolves	12	5	2	5	32	34	17
Fresh Pro	11	3	4	4	21	28	13
FC Triton	12	3	3	6	19	25	12
Unifreight	12	4	0	8	19	31	12
Star FM	12	2	4	6	19	27	10
Holiday Inn	10	3	0	7	13	25	9
Unilever	13	2	2	9	16	35	8
Tren Tyres	12	1	3	8	18	45	6