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*The mass media have a critical role to play during “election periods” acting as the main sources of information for the public about the prevailing political environment, the preparations for holding the elections, and about the political contestants themselves. As the holding of harmonised elections on July 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the election results are announced. The daily media updates monitor the output of the mainstream domestic print and electronic media relating to coverage of election issues. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating the information the public needs to make informed decisions when they go and vote – and whether they can vote freely. For any views and comments, you can email us at [monitors@mmpz.org.zw](mailto:monitors@mmpz.org.zw)*

**The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe**

**Daily Election Report – No.20-2013**

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## **Electronic Media Report – Friday August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013**

### ***ELECTION AFTERMATH***

#### **ZBC celebrates ZANU PF’s ‘landslide victory’**

THE national broadcaster, ZBC, made no attempt to independently investigate allegations that the just-ended harmonized elections were grossly flawed.

Instead, the station suffocated and discredited such allegations with comments from domestic “analysts” and churches, and preliminary reports by regional observers, the December 12 Movement and China, endorsing the elections and urging outgoing Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his party to accept the results.

This was reflected in seven (70%) of the 10 stories ZBC carried on the elections.

The remaining three were updates on results of the elections, showing that ZANU PF was heading for a landslide victory. According to ZTV, ZANU PF had now won 137 National Assembly seats and only needed three to clinch a two-thirds majority. The MDC-T had won 48 seats. With more results yet to come from ZANU PF traditional strongholds such as the Midlands, Mashonaland West and Mashonaland Central, it has become clear that ZANU PF has taken a clear majority in the House of Assembly, which will enable it to make constitutional amendments when the need arises, ZTV added.

In its top story, ZTV reported head of the SADC observer mission Bernard Membe, declaring that Zimbabwe's elections had been held under a peaceful environment; that they met SADC electoral guidelines; and that they were credible.

Membe, who is also Tanzania's Foreign Minister, said this at State House, where he had gone to bid farewell to President Mugabe. Membe also extended his congratulations to the President for the imminent electoral victory on behalf of Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete.

***"President Kikwete who is the current chairperson of the Troika had told me last night that I should come to see President Mugabe and to wish him every bit of success because now the indicators are that President Mugabe has won".***

The meeting was also attended by the hierarchy of the SADC observer mission, including deputy ministers from South Africa and Namibia and Tomaz Salamao, the executive secretary of the regional body.

ZTV also reported Membe expressing his intention to meet the Prime Minister and urge him to accept defeat: ***"I will be meeting the Prime Minister to talk to him. The pure democratic dispensation and maturity in the world is not about campaigning, is not about voting but accepting defeat no matter how painful it may be".***

***"The only thing in this continent that disturbs peace is elections, the failure to accept defeat and we must do away with this. Once you enter into the game, you must know that there are losers and winners. If you lose, you must accept defeat, your credibility goes higher than what your fanatics may tell you and this is our call, just accept defeat no matter how much it pains, it is for the betterment of yourself, your nation and the region",*** Mwembe was quoted saying.

Earlier, ZTV reported Membe addressing a Press Conference at Harare International Conference Centre, echoing similar sentiments.

Asked about the Tsvangirai's comments dismissing the elections as ***"a big farce"*** and ***"null and void"***, Membe responded: ***"Politicians can make statements and retract statements and can beat below the belt and rectify themselves tomorrow. Our call is when the outcome comes a lot of words can be said, but, at the end when the dust settles down the aggrieved side will rectify statements for the betterment of the people of Zimbabwe".***

ZTV's news reporter, Reuben Barwe, inserted this editorial intrusion: ***"So as the journalists-cum-activists leave for their respective capitals seething with disbelief that their aspirations, anticipations and strategies came to naught as their last line of defence was SADC and AU observer teams and their reports. It was a bad day for them as the teams gave a clean bill of health to Zimbabwe's harmonized elections".***

The remaining reports were mostly based on legal experts and pro-ZANU PF political commentators such as Alexander Kanengoni castigating Tsvangirai for refusing to accept the outcome of the elections.

In one such case, ZTV quoted Harare lawyer Farai Mutangamira saying: ***“Null and void is not the standard or yardstick for assessment of credibility of the electoral outcome. Elections are not just about the Election Day activities, they encompass activities before, during and after elections and most importantly it includes legal and constitutional framework of the holding of elections. And when you say the elections are null and void, you are otherwise saying the constitution, electoral Act, decisions of ZEC, work of observers, your campaigns and your vote is null and void.”***

The private radio stations presented a balanced perspective to the elections.

Not only did they report on regional and some international observers endorsing the polls, but they also gave space to those who felt that the polls were flawed.

They also gave space to ZANU PF, which is widely believed to have won, to express its plans to extricate Zimbabwe from its 14-year socio-economic and political crisis.

In one such story, SW Radio Africa reported outgoing Education Minister David Coltart claiming that the context in which Zimbabweans went to the polls had been fraught with many irregularities that render the whole process ***‘illegal’***.

Coltart raised concerns of widespread rigging in the election but conceded defeat to MDC-T’s legal secretary Thabitha Khumalo in the Bulawayo East constituency that he had hoped to represent in the next parliament.

In a statement conceding defeat, Coltart noted that there were serious irregularities and breaches of the Electoral Act, especially the absence of an electronic voters’ roll prior to the election. He told SW Radio Africa: ***“But on the (polling) day, we started to see why the failure to make us have the voters’ roll was so critical, and I saw it in two ways.”***

***“Firstly, earlier in the morning I became aware of a strange number of shaven youngsters around the Brady Barracks area, and that seven polling stations had been allocated all within a 2-km radius of the barracks. The results that came out of those seven polling stations were completely out of keeping with the historical voting patterns in an area where ZANU PF has always lost”***, Coltart added.

***“Secondly, many people were turned away from polling stations, with their names not appearing on the roll....”***, added Coltart.

Coltart said this affected the election result. He also cited the involvement of police officers in the vote-counting process as another Electoral Act breach that occurred on polling day: ***“The law is clear that the police should neither be inside the counting station nor be involved in the counting process, yet in Bulawayo East, they were. So it is all of these breaches to the law and the constitution which make us say that the entire election has been unfair and illegal,”*** Coltart said.

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## **Print Media report for Saturday, August 3, 2013**

### **SUMMARY**

The highlight of the day was SADC and the African Union expressing “**strong reservations**” over the credibility of the election outcome. The AU cited issues, such as the late availability of the voters’ roll and the large numbers of assisted voters. Head of the SADC election observer mission, Bernard Membe is quoted in both the two private dailies *NewsDay* and *The Daily News* stating, “**We didn’t say it was fair; the question of fairness is broad and can not (be answered) in one day. We didn’t want to jump into conclusion now, but it was free and peaceful**”.

At a press briefing the AU observer mission deputy head Aisha Abdullah gave details of her team’s findings that gave rise to their concern over the credibility of the poll. But the team’s leader, Olusegun Obasanjo, then gave his own, much less critical impressions, which appeared to conflict with the official findings of his team. And this was the statement *The Herald* chose to focus on. Although the state-owned daily extensively quoted SADC election observer team leader, Bernard Membe, urging African politicians to accept the results of elections, especially those who have been defeated, *The Herald* interpreted this to mean advice specifically aimed at the MDC-T. But reports in *NewsDay* and *The Daily News* that cast a different complexion on SADC’s opinion of the polling exercise when they quoted Membe saying, “**while the elections were free and peaceful, it was too early to declare the elections fair**”.

Also prominent in the media today was Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa challenging parties which disputed the election results to approach the courts with their concerns. Another government official who also made the headlines was Registrar-General Tobaiwa Mudede, dismissing claims that his department had manipulated the voters’ roll.

### **THE STATS...**

The print media carried 36 election-related stories.

Of these, 21 appeared in the private dailies, *NewsDay* (seven), *The Daily News* (14). The remaining 15 were captured in *The Herald*.

The reports were general updates on various aspects of the just ended electoral process.

## Herald censors AU's official findings

FOLLOWING MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai's Thursday declaration on the just ended harmonised elections as **"null and void"** and reports of widespread vote fraud, the AU's official findings will give some hope for millions of Zimbabweans disappointed with the election result.

The privately owned dailies have started diverting their focus from premature celebrations of ZANU PF's apparent victory to significant doubts of the election's credibility raised by regional observer missions.

Both gave details of the AU's Aisha Abdullah explaining her team's concerns, and especially, that **"...Despite the assertions by the RGV that hard copies of the voters' roll were availed to all political parties other than one political party, observers have found no evidence that hard copies were generally available to all who required them and who by law should have them."**

She also noted that the roll was not made available in time for a **"meaningful inspection and verification by voters, parties and candidates to take place"**.

The private dailies also reported the AU's observation that the elections fell short of international practice. For example, by printing 8.7 million ballot papers - 35% more than the number of registered voters – the figure was **"significantly higher than international best practice of (5 – 10%), and raises concerns of accountability of unused ballots"**.

*NewsDay*, unlike *The Daily News*, did not give the report on the AU findings due prominence. Instead, it gave front-page status to Jonathan Moyo losing his parliamentary seat, relegating news of the AU's reservations to page three.

Other **"flaws"** that the observer mission noted included a high number of assisted voters and a significant number of ballot booklets that had missing ballot papers and were not serially identified.

This directly conflicted with the impression given by *The Herald*, which censored the AU observer team's findings. Instead, its report **"3 observer missions endorse election"** focused on Obasanjo's unofficial comments during the presentation of the AU mission's preliminary report: **"I have never seen an election that is perfect... The point has always been and will always be how much the infractions, imperfections have affected the reflection of the will of the people, and up to the point of the close of the polls our observation was that...we do not believe that those incidents will amount to the result not to reflect the will of the people."**

*The Herald's* lead story gloated about the size of the MDC-T's electoral defeat under the headline '2013 total political eclipse', which also listed the party's "big-wigs" who had lost their parliamentary seats.

This added to the editorialization of Membe's comments on democracy that accompanied it on the front page. The paper said Membe (and others) spoke **"...as a rampant ZANU PF gobbled up constituencies like the early 80s video game Pacman gobbles dots"**.

*The Herald* also reported a group called the SADC Lawyers Association (SADCLA) endorsing the election. The paper reported the lawyers grouping describing the poll as ***“peaceful and a realistic expression of the will of the people of Zimbabwe”***.

However, in a *NewsDay* report the SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO) in its statement sharply disagrees with Obasanjo's observation. The organization stated ***“the observed anomalies...themselves constitute serious electoral deficits”*** and concluded: ***“the credibility, legitimacy, free and fair conduct of the...elections and therefore, their reliability as the true expression of the will of the people of Zimbabwe have been highly compromised”***.

All the three dailies reported Registrar-General Tobaiwa Mudede exonerating himself from having any part in the alleged rigging of elections. *The Herald* quoted him dismissing allegations that the voters' roll was a mess: ***“There is nothing like that. The voters' roll was not manipulated at all...”*** He also gave his years in office as proof of his ability to run elections ***“...I have been running elections in this country for a long time before the coming of Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. Why was I not accused of manipulation?”***

However, it only *NewsDay* highlighted Mudede's evasiveness after he was asked that since they were short of time, why did they not dispatch electronic copies of the roll as this would have been faster. The paper noted that he evaded the question, ***“I am entitled not to answer certain questions”***. When pressed the paper reports that Mudede blamed the MDC-T who he accused of trying to frustrate him by only collecting the roll late in the day.

All the papers reported Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa telling anybody who disputed the election result to take legal action. Under its headline, 'ZANU PF gloats over victory', *The Daily News* quoted Chinamasa saying, ***“If there is any ground, I tell Mr Tsvangirai to feel free to employ the best lawyers, I know the MDC has some of the best lawyers. Take your grievances to the Constitutional Court”***. He also dismissed concerns about the impartiality of the court adding, ***“That is rubbish...we do not decide who the judges are...”***

For statistical evidence of the media's coverage of political party campaigns, please feel free to contact us or view MMPZ's daily reports on the media's coverage of the election process on our website <http://www.mmpz.org/>

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) was founded to promote freedom of expression and responsible journalism in Zimbabwe.

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