



Election Watch | Zimbabwe

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MEASURING THE ZIMBABWEAN ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT ACCORDING TO THE SADC GUIDELINES GOVERNING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

On the 17th of August 2004, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) leaders adopted the "[SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections](#)." As a member of SADC, Zimbabwe was a signatory to these benchmark principles, and therefore it is entirely fitting that Zimbabwe's performance in relation to the future elections be measured against these principles and guidelines.

The Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa presents a brief [overview](#) of Zimbabwe's electoral system on their website.

SADC principles for conducting democratic elections:

	Divergence/Obstructive Legislation	Compliant
2.1.1 Full participation of citizens in the political process	• MDC-N president Welshman Ncube has said Zimbabweans will not go for elections next year because the constitution and a battery of electoral reforms were only likely to be completed by December 2012 • Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2003 • Guardianship of Minors Act, 1961 • Broadcasting Services Act, 2001	☐ Yes ☒ No

2.1.2 Freedom of association	• Supporters of Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe stoned and beat backers of Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, blocking MDC's planned rally in the Harare suburb of Chitungwiza • Police forced the MDC-T to reschedule two of its party rallies in Zaka and Bikita Masvingo, claiming Zanu PF had already booked the venues • Zanu PF Insiza district official Aggripa Ndlukula, in the company of an accomplice only identified as Moyo, gate-crashed an Insiza/Shangani Farmers Association meeting at Shangani Farmers Hall and told farmers to donate towards the Zanu PF conference, threatening that those who did not would lose land • Zanu PF youths in Harare performed a citizen arrest of Henry Harkin, 71, accusing him of insulting and undermining the authority of Mugabe. Harkin was taken to the Harare Central Police Law and Order section and detained overnight • A meeting scheduled by the MDC-N was banned by police in Binga district, Masvingo • Public Order and Security Act, 2002, amended 2007	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.3 Political tolerance	• The leaders of MDC-T, MDC-N and Zanu PF met in Harare to initiate a rare drive to curb the violence that has plagued Zimbabwe and threatened to derail the unity government. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai called for peace and political tolerance in the country after a series of attacks on the premier's party • Both MDC formations have called for the arrest of Zanu PF national chairman Simon Khaya Moyo for alleged inciting of political violence on Zanu PF opponents in the Midlands provincial conference in Gweru • Retired Brigadier Ambrose Mutinhiri used a gun to threaten MDC-T supporters in the Marondera West constituency in Mashonaland East. Villagers in the constituency said Mutinhiri has increased his presence in the constituency, which he narrowly won in 2008 • Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) National Director Rindai Chipfunde Vava said the country's political environment has gone back to where it was in 2008 with some no go areas being created by Zanu PF • Try Pfebve, MDC-T district security officer for Mount Darwin North, was severely assaulted by three Zanu PF members at his home in Mukumbura, Mashonaland Central. According to an MDC-T statement, the three ZANU PF members who attacked Pfebve are Tandirai Chakari, Chiripo Chitoro and Tinashe Chakari	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.4 Regular intervals for elections as provided by the respective National Constitutions	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No

2.1.5 Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media	• The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) licensed radio stations owned by the government-controlled Zimbabwe Newspapers group and AB Communications, owned by Supa Mandiwanzira, a former journalist linked to Mugabe's Zanu PF. The advocacy group Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) criticised the decision, saying the state was trying to maintain its grip on the broadcasting sector • KISS FM is suing the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe over the denial of its application for a license • Broadcasting Services Act, 2001	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.6 Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for	• Scores of vegetable sellers were forced to attend a Zanu PF meeting in Bulawayo, at the Royal Hotel after being rounded up and threatened by a group of party youths led by Zanu PF activist Shepherd Gomera • The Sunday Times reported that ANC secretary general Gwede Mantashe told delegates at a Zanu PF national conference that his party would assist Zimbabwe's ruling party retain power at the next election • Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2003 • Guardianship of Minors Act, 1961	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.7 Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions	• The Electoral Amendment Bill mandates the Registrar-General's office to oversee the production of the voters' roll which undermines the independence of the ZEC	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.8 Voter education	• The language used in the Electoral Amendment Bill gives the Electoral Commission the discretion to decide on the inclusion of other players in the provision of voter education. This may make the partisan electoral commission exclude other stakeholders in providing voter education	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.1.9 Acceptance and respect of the election results by political parties proclaimed to have been free and fair by the competent National Electoral Authorities in accordance with the law of the land	• The International Crisis Group (ICG) warns reforms will not be in place before June 2013, the deadline for Zimbabwe's next election. In a new report, the ICG says President Robert Mugabe's Zanu PF party is the main obstacle to timely and fair elections • Global Political Agreement (GPA) negotiators have drawn up a list of "teething" problems affecting the smooth implementation of the agreement to lay the framework for free and fair elections. The problems were identified during a meeting held by negotiators from Zanu PF and the two MDC formations in Harare • Finance Minister Tendai Biti told business leaders at a post-budget seminar in Harare that the slow pace of democratic reforms, agreed to under the power-sharing deal, would make the prospect of a 2012 election far-fetched. Biti deliberately omitted allocating any funds for elections in his budget presentation	☒ Yes ☐ No
2.1.10 Challenge of the election results as provided for in the law of the land	• Where there is a tie in the run-off election, the EAB requires that the election of the President can be decided by an electoral college of MPs in Parliament. This provision usurps people's power to determine who is to occupy the highest office in the country and gives this power to a few MPs	☒ Yes ☐ No

Assessment of electoral processes

	Divergence/Obstructive Legislation	Compliant
Voter registration	• MDC-T National Executive member Charlton Hwende said the strategy to remove their members from the voters' roll by the Registrar General's office would not work because they were already demanding a new roll. Hwende said they would not participate in any election that did not use a 'credible' voters' roll • Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act, 2003 • Guardianship of Minors Act, 1961	☐ Yes ☒ No
Freedom of choice	• Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare Tracy Mutin-hiri is set to lose her government job following her expulsion from Zanu PF. In September Zanu PF decided to expel their MP for Marondera East, following long running accusations that she was building a relationship with MDC-T • MDC-N has expelled Deputy Speaker Nomalanga Khumalo from the party, accusing her of being too close to a rival MDC grouping. Khumalo risks losing her parliamentary seat following her expulsion • Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), 2002	☐ Yes ☒ No
Impediments to standing	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No
Boundary delimitations	• Election Resource Center Director, Tawanda Chimhini, said language in the Electoral Amendment Bill that requires voters to cast ballots only where they are registered - and not at any polling station in a ward as currently - would leave rural voters vulnerable to intimidation	☐ Yes ☒ No
Use of public resources and political party financing	N/A	☐ Yes ☐ No
Code of conduct	• Zimbabwe's Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration says it has finished drafting a code of conduct to hold political parties perpetrating violence to account for their actions. The organ's co-chairperson, Sekai Holland said the code of conduct will be voluntary to start with but will have a punitive mechanism for enforcement and possibly instilling discipline • Sesel Zvidzai, the deputy minister of Local Government and Urban Development said traditional chiefs' posts should be abolished as Zanu PF is now using them to gain political mileage. Zvidzai said their posts should be abolished since most chiefs have turned into Zanu PF activists	☒ Yes ☐ No

Assessment of electoral environment

	Divergence/Obstructive Legislation	Compliant
Freedom from intimidation, fear and violence	• Zimbabwean Police Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri has warned political parties to refrain from violence ahead of a constitutional referendum and elections next year, vowing a tough response. Chihuri's remarks came after similar calls for tolerance and peace by the leaders of the three governing parties • Masvingo police arrested MDC-T provincial chairman Wil-staff Stemere and Mwenezi district secretary Fortune Makonzo in circumstances described by their lawyer as politically motivated	☐ Yes ☒ No
Media freedom and access to information	• In its report, the International Federation of Journalists for Human Rights (IFJHR) has said Zimbabwe's media environment remains hostile to privately owned newspapers and its journalists despite the disbandment of the Media and Information Commission • Nevanji Madanhire, the editor of the weekly Zimbabwe Standard newspaper, and reporter Nqaba Matshazi, were arrested in Harare and charged with theft, unlawful entry and criminal defamation. Media organisations roundly condemned the police raid saying such actions were detrimental to the development and growth of press freedom in Zimbabwe • Givemore Chipere, the communication and advocacy officer for Community Radio Harare, said the application fee and radio broadcasting service license cost of US\$2,500 and US\$7,500 is too much for would be broadcasters in Zimbabwe. The basic license fee is also expensive at US\$50,000 • Independent daily newspapers are being blocked from circulating in politically volatile Mashonaland West province. The Deputy Information Minister Murisi Zwizwai of MDC-T confirmed that the youth militants affiliated Zanu PF and soldiers have been blocking the sale of the Daily News and Newsday • Thabani Moyo, the MISA advocacy officer said MISA has intensified its campaign for the freeing of the country's air-waves targeting rural areas where it is assisting information-starved villagers establish community radios • Broadcasting Services Act, 2001	☐ Yes ☒ No
Role of civil society	• Eight civil society leaders were arrested in Bikita, Masvingo Province after the Zimbabwe Republic Police entered a meeting organised by the Community Tolerance Reconciliation and Development (COTRAD). The COTRAD executive said the meeting was aimed at widening the consciousness of the youth in national issues • Bulawayo Agenda, a local-based civic organisation has begun a process of facilitating dialogue between structures of political parties in Matabeleland to forge a united front for development	☒ Yes ☐ No

	• Zimbabwean human rights groups have expressed grave concern at remarks made by Zanu PF chairman Simon Khaya Moyo and an army general seemingly advocating violence shortly after leaders of parties in the unity government advocated peace. Zimbabwe Human Rights Association Director Okay Machisa said the principals in the country's national unity government must sanction the perpetrators of violence • Zimbabwean pressure group, Women and Men of Zimbabwe Arise (Woza) has launched a campaign to garner the sympathy of human rights fighters to write to The Deputy Commissioner General (Crime), Innocent Matibiri demanding that he stops harassing and arresting them • Police raided a hotel in Harare, where Oxfam officials were holding a meeting, and arrested 10 foreigners. President Robert Mugabe, who has ruled the country for 31 years, has often accused Western aid agencies of running clandestine spying missions • On 8 December, human rights lawyers marched to the offices of Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and submitted petitions calling on the authorities to respect the rule of law • Police in Gwanda arrested and detained journalists employed by the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) for organising a meeting on peaceful and accurate reporting • Non-Governmental Organisations Bill, 2004 (not yet signed into law) • Private and Voluntary Organizations Act, 2007	
Role of the security sector	• Concerned residents in the suburb of Tsanzaguru, Manicaland have accused junior soldiers based at 32 Infantry Battalion in the same suburb of leading a campaign of violence and intimidation. Residents said uniformed and armed soldiers, are intimidating known MDC-T supporters in an effort to suppress the people's vote in the envisaged elections • A Zimbabwe National Army colonel, Charles Muresherwa, has allegedly been resuscitating torture bases which were used by Zanu PF during the run up to the bloody June 2008 presidential run-off. Villagers accused Muresherwa of setting up semi-military bases at Mhakwe, Biriwiri, Nhedziwa and Shinja primary schools in Manicaland province, where Zanu PF youths are being indoctrinated	☐ Yes ☒ No

SITO has replaced its monthly GNU Watch with this publication to monitor Zimbabwe's progress toward inevitable elections.