
ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN Dismayed by Vice President's Statements

26 February, 2015 - The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) is disheartened by statements made by Honorable Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa at a rally held in Chirumanzu-Zibagwe over the weekend. In an audio recording and subsequent reports in the press, the Vice President chronicled how the ruling party would employ strategies to neutralize voters perceived to belong to opposition parties to ensure electoral victory. The utterances by the Vice President are unfortunate and a direct attack on Constitutional provisions in Section 155 that guarantee the electorate freedom to choose their leaders without fear, coercion and intimidation.

ZESN also notes with concern the planned and deliberate abuse of traditional leaders, village heads, ward councilors and chairpersons in closely monitoring the voting patterns of the electorate in the constituency to ensure electoral victory for the ruling party candidate Mrs Auxillia Mnangagwa. ZESN is worried that such utterances by candidates and high profile public figures may lead to violence and unruly actions from the supporters against opposition supporters. ZESN urges the leaders in government to continually uphold fundamental constitutional rights and foster peace and tolerance in communities.

An audio recording of the rally on the internet, the Vice President Mnangagwa is quoted as having that, "nobody comes to vote in the same manner that death comes, for death you cannot build a fence to keep it out, but a person who votes we can tell if they are for us or not with us and those who are not ours we will fence them out". ZESN notes that such statements can incite violence against purported political rivals and therefore efforts must be put in place to ensure that the will of the people is safeguarded and that there is no retributive action against supporters of the opposition political parties.

Furthermore, with ZEC set to implement the polling station based voters' roll as mandated by the Electoral Act (Section 22A) the statements by the Vice President of 'fencing out' those who belong to other political parties are particularly disturbing. ZESN reiterates its position that the adoption of the polling station based voters' roll will ensure a new and clean voters' roll, however proper mechanisms have to be put in place to ensure that the system will not be used to disenfranchise or for retributive action towards voters perceived to be supporters of the opposition parties.

Government officials should be committed to serving all Zimbabweans regardless of political affiliation; as such threats of closing out of government programmes meant to benefit everyone to those who do not vote for ZANU PF are unfortunate. ZESN would therefore like to urge the government to ensure equitable distribution of resources, government programmes and subsidies regardless of political affiliation or association.

ZESN calls upon ZEC to make a public announcement clarifying the right for people to vote for a candidate of their choice, and that they do not condone and will not accept the abuse of traditional leaders. ZESN urges the

Commission and stakeholders to be observant in monitoring the developing situation in the constituencies where by-elections are impending.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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