



Zimbabwe Election Support Network

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

Press Statement

GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO RATIFY AFRICAN CHARTER ON DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE- A PROGRESSIVE STEP

29 March 2018 – The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) and Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) welcome the decision by President Emmerson Mnangagwa to sign the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance (The Charter) and urges the government to quickly move on to ratify, domesticate and implement its provisions ahead of the 2018 elections.

President Mnangagwa signed the African Charter On Democracy, Elections and Governance on Wednesday 21 March 2018 in Rwanda, where he was attending the African Union (AU) Extraordinary Summit.

Before appending his signature to the African Charter On Democracy, Elections and Governance, Zimbabwe had stood out as one of the few countries in Africa that had neither signed nor ratified the Charter, hence this is a welcome development in the country's efforts to hold democratic elections.

The African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance, which came into force in February 2012 seeks to promote adherence by African states to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights premised upon the supremacy of the constitution and respect for the rule of law.

ZLHR and ZESN lauds President Mnangagwa for signing the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance, which is one of the key instruments that will advance democracy, peace and security in Zimbabwe, the region, and the continent as a whole.

Considering Zimbabwe's well documented history of electoral irregularities such as hate language, violence and intimidation of voters amongst others, the decision to sign the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, is a progressive step to take to promote democracy in Zimbabwe.

As organisations that are deeply committed to fostering a culture of human rights and promoting democratic elections in Zimbabwe, ZESN and ZLHR urges the government to move beyond just signing the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance but to ratify and domesticate its provisions. The African Charter On Democracy, Elections and Governance can only be meaningful in the running of elections in Zimbabwe if the government ratifies and domesticates it as the country prepares for the holding of the 2018 elections.

ZLHR and ZESN are also worried about continued procrastination by the government in implementing recommendations of the African Union organs such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which five years ago delivered a landmark ruling directing the government to allow its citizens living



in the diaspora to vote in national elections.

The government needs to ensure that the right to vote for all citizens is upheld as guaranteed in Section 67 of the Constitution and several regional instruments of which it is a state party.

With general elections scheduled for this year, ZLHR and ZESN call upon the government to create a conducive electoral environment that guarantees the respect and enjoyment of universal suffrage and fundamental freedoms.

We urge the government to prioritise the alignment of electoral related laws particularly the Electoral Act with the Constitution and ensure adherence to principles of constitutionalism, put in place mechanisms and legal reforms to address issues of voter intimidation, violence and ensure that political party candidates and supporters campaign and participate in all electoral processes freely.

Zimbabwe Election Support Network

Promoting Democratic Elections in Zimbabwe

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