

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



PRESS STATEMENT

ZESN OBSERVES NOMINATION COURT PROCEEDINGS

29 June 2013-Harare. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network deployed volunteers nationwide to observe the nomination court proceedings on the 28th of June 2013. The environment during which candidates filed their papers for nomination was generally calm and ZESN teams observed that there were no major incidents.

The teams deployed in Matebeleland South, Masvingo, Harare, Matebeleland North and Midlands provinces reported that the courts opened on time at 1000hrs and closed at 1600hrs. However, some nomination centres were not able to open at the stipulated time such as Manhenga RDC in Mashonaland Central which opened after 10 am. At the same centre that opened late, nomination papers from a ZANU PF candidate were accepted after 1600hrs. In Glendale, Mashonaland Central, there was a soldier who filed his documents while wearing his uniform. ZESN observers reported that the interpretation of 1600hrs deadline was construed differently in centres as aspiring candidates were allowed to bring in documents after the cut off time if they had been at the nomination centre earlier than 1600hrs. For example, in Bindura, Mashonaland Central the nomination court received documents from candidates until 12 midnight. In Chinhoyi, Mashonaland West, there were problems for aspiring councilors whose papers were rejected as they owed their local authority, a condition which ZEC had waived for councilors. This was later rectified around mid-day however, aspiring candidates who had filed papers in the morning were prejudiced and their papers rejected on this basis. Observers in Mashonaland East reported that most aspiring candidates had filed their papers earlier, however the process remained slow in most centres. The rooms allocated for the process were small and generally crowded.

ZESN observers also noted double candidature in ZANU PF for the Bikita West constituency seat in Masvingo. ZESN teams also noted double candidature in the MDC T in Mashonaland West particularly for the council elections. This resulted in confusion and chaos at the centres where this was prevalent. In cases where aspiring candidates were not happy with the primary election results of their parties, they filed their applications as independent candidates. ZESN urges parties to uphold the values of intra-party democracy in order to allow the will of the people to prevail.

Most of the ZESN teams were able to observe the process; however in Umzingwane, Beitbridge, ZESN observers were denied access to the nomination court located in the rural district chambers in Esigodini

as well as Murehwa Centre Rural District Council Board Room in Mashonaland East. Given that this process is open to citizens, denying access to interested citizens violates the values of transparency.

In some cases, ZESN teams noted different treatment given to political parties by the some of the officials in the chambers. Candidates whose nomination papers were rejected were as a result of failure to meet the stipulated requirements except for Mutumwa Mawere who papers were rejected for undisclosed reasons. ZESN holds that in the interests of transparency and fairness, the court should disclose reasons for rejection of nomination papers. In Masvingo, one MDC T aspiring candidate had nine people supporting his nomination instead of ten and failed to rectify this in time. ZESN noted that some aspiring candidates had problems getting signatures from registered voters as voter registration was still in place. ZESN observers reported many candidates that filed as independent candidates due to problems with intra-party democracy. The timeframe between political parties' primary elections and nomination did not allow aspiring candidates adequate time to put together the required documentation. ZESN recommends that the nomination period be extended to allow aspiring candidates to put their papers in order without rushing. Furthermore, the nomination process should take place after voter registration process. The ZEC became overwhelmed by the many processes taking place while preparing for the election.

ZESN observers also reported that most candidates who filed their papers were men and very few women filed papers. It is important for political parties to promote the participation of women in political processes. Observers reported media bias and preference for known politicians as these were covered the most. In the places where ZESN teams observed, the process was generally peaceful and without much incident. //ENDS/