

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK



ZESN CONDEMNS ELECTION RELATED VIOLENCE IN NORTON

Harare - 17 October, 2016- The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) a non-partisan group of 34 member organisations is concerned by continued reports of violence, intimidation and vote buying using food aid, residential stands and farming inputs in Norton ahead of the by-election scheduled for this upcoming weekend on 22 October 2016.

ZESN condemns the violence that erupted on Saturday 15 October at the Ngoni Stadium and calls for political tolerance and a level playing field that gives all contestants an equal opportunity to freely campaign. Political leaders and supporters should exercise restraint and tolerance of divergent political views as required by the Electoral Act which outlaws intimidation and obstruction of campaign rallies.

The disruption of election campaigns is an electoral offence as outlined in Section 133C of the Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13] which states that “*A person who, through intimidation, prevents or obstructs or attempts to prevent or obstruct a political party or candidate from campaigning in any election shall be guilty of an offence...*” ZESN notes that the absence of the special police liaison officer has hindered the ability of the ZEC, and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) to investigate and take swift action on reports of politically motivated violence and intimidation. ZESN calls upon the Commissioner-General of Police to appoint an Officer in compliance with the Section 133 H of the Electoral Act.

The disturbances in Norton are worrying given that the country is gearing for the 2018 harmonised elections. We therefore call for the creation of enforceable punitive measures to eliminate political violence and the creation of a conducive political violence where there is zero tolerance to violence and intimidation.

In addition, ZESN is worried by the conduct of the public media which has blatantly shown bias and support for the ZANU PF candidate by either ignoring other contestants or reporting negatively about them. This in contravention of Section 160 G (1) (d) of the Electoral Act

which states that public broadcasters must ensure that “*a fair and balanced allocation of time between each political party and independent candidate;*”. ZESN therefore calls upon ZEC to ensure that the media observe provisions of the Electoral Act in relation to media coverage of elections.

ZESN is committed to the promotion of democratic electoral processes in Zimbabwe.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

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