



On March 29, Zimbabweans went to the polls to elect local government representatives, Members of Parliament, Senators and a President for the next 5 years. This was the first time in the 28 years history of the nation to hold 'harmonised' elections, but they have proved less than harmonious.

About 5.6 million voters registered and only 2.4 million or 42% of Zimbabweans cast their votes. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission painstakingly released results through the mass media. Senate and Parliamentary results took three weeks to be finally known and another week was blown on recounts while it took a record 35 days to release presidential election results.

On the 2nd May the ZEC gave the following as the outcome of the presidential poll:

- Tsvangirayi polled 1 195 562 votes or 47.9 percent of total valid votes cast, defeating Mugabe who polled 1 079 730 ballots or 43.2 percent of total votes cast in the March election.
- Makoni took 207 470 votes or 8.3 percent of total ballots cast while another independent candidate Langton Towungana polled 14 503 votes equal to 0.6 percent of total votes cast.

The Movement for Democratic Change dispute the figures and argue they won the election with an outright majority that puts aside the question of a run-off. They have called on SADC to verify these results while a leading civic organisation, the Zimbabwe Elections Support Network has also refused to validate ZEC results citing queries over delays in announcing them.

The Chief Elections Officer then concluded a run-off would be held at a date to be announced by the Commission. Legal pundits say this has to be within 21 days from the 2nd May while government sources have thrown spanners at this timeframe and indicated the ZEC are by law allowed to delay a run-off for 40 days.

At the time of this update the ZEC had not set a date.

In a rare show of people power, news broke that a Chinese ship carrying 77 tonnes of armaments intended for Zimbabwe docked in Durban after the elections but before presidential election results were announced. The South African Federation of Transport Workers Union refused to off-load the ship. Calls condemning the Zimbabwe government for importing weapons and not food, drugs or other basic grew worldwide. In the end, people power prevailed and the ship was refused entry by all SADC countries.

This is the first time SADC have isolated Mugabe.

Run off or No Run Off.

It would seem the MDC are divided over participation in a run off given the increased level of retribution through brute force and violence unleashed by the ruling party agents mainly in the rural areas.

Civic organisations like the Zimbabwe Elections Support Network, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the Zimbabwe Association for Doctors for Human Rights have all reported terror camps in rural areas, adding this seems to be concentrated in areas that used to be traditional Zanu PF strongholds.

Media reports confirm there is a state orchestrated **Operation Mavoterapi** (where did you vote) meant to punish those who voted for the MDC and do so in such a way that in the event of a run-off people will be too terrified to vote otherwise.

The MDC has to therefore decide (albeit against no other choice) to engage in the run-off. Should they opt not to participate then Mugabe will be declared winner.

Statements from the MDC show they will participate but are calling on the SADC and international community for monitors. The United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States of America and the UN chief, Ban Ki-Moon have also added their voice on the need for international monitors should a run-off be held.

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) in Zimbabwe have argued conditions do not exist for a free and fair run-off adding Zimbabweans are too 'traumatised and terrified' to enter into another election.

One of the Presidential candidates, Simba Makoni, argues that such a stalemate can only be broken through a transitional authority drawn from political parties, civic organisations and other stake-holders. This authority he argues, can then be mandated with an urgent call to come up with a people centred constitution, the immediate re-building of the economy and preparations for an election in one or two years time.

The writer buys into both the CCJP and losing presidential candidate Simba Makoni arguments. In the early 1980s when Mugabe went on a violent spree that saw over 20 000 people butchered in Matabeleland and Midlands, the then ZAPU leader, Joshua Nkomo, made a compromise pact that paved the way for the 1987 Unity Accord. He looked at the big national picture and saved souls and limbs for 'peace and tranquillity's sake. Years later, Zimbabweans may have to take a leaf from the same book and compromise for the sake of the nation.

The Economy.

It is quite clear that this recent election has not been won by the MDC on the strength of their political capacity. Rather they have had on their side, a formidable opposition force – the economy. There is nowhere in the world where a political party presiding over 165 000% run- away inflation, 80% unemployment and chronic shortages of all basics can win an election. The ruling Zanu PF's Waterloo has thus been the economy.

On Tuesday the 6 May, the central bank of Zimbabwe released new bearer cheques in denominations of Z\$100million and Z\$250million. Sadly Z\$250million is about NZ\$2.50 and buys no more than 5 bananas (when available). On the 7th May, \$1NZD was equivalent to Z\$200million.

Some proponents of the run-off are dubbing it '**finish-off**' arguing that even if a donkey was to contest against Mugabe; Zimbabweans would overwhelmingly choose the donkey. They submit that a hungry and angry electorate cannot be swayed by violence and brute force.

Quick Notes

1. The ZEC have not set the date for the Presidential election run-off.
2. Unconfirmed reports show 24 people (opposition party supporters) have been killed so far while thousands have been displaced, tortured, beaten and victimised by the ruling party supporters who have gained immunity from police arrests.
3. Conditions on the ground do not provide for a climate to conduct any credible election
4. The ZEC has not offered any credible explanation as to why they took more than a month to announce Presidential election results and this poses questions as to their suitability and ability to run another election. Their credibility is heavily dented.
5. South Africa has sent an envoy (Local Government Minister, Sydney Mufamadi) to Harare to investigate reports of violence and murder of opposition supporters.
6. Zimbabwe's financial capacity to afford a run-off is also in doubt as the nation faces a heavy grain deficit owing to drought and largely to failure by Mugabe's so called 'new farmers' to grow food.
7. Local government, Parliament and the Senate have still not been sworn in. In theory the country is being run by the incumbent president who has slowly restored his un-elected cabinet.
8. It would seem the day to day country activities are now in the hands of the Joint Operations Command (a Council of military, security and intelligence chiefs) who largely owe their allegiance to Mugabe.
9. Virtually all sectors of the Zimbabwe society have collapsed. If Zimbabwe was a country it would be in receivership and all its directors (president and cabinet ministers) under investigation.
10. Sceptics such as this writer, who indicated there was no political will under Mugabe to run free and fair elections, have been vindicated. The recent harmonised elections are nowhere near free and fair. Results were clearly 'contaminated' to save face for the ruling party and probably buy time to refine their machinations to yet again 'steal the peoples' votes in the so called run-off.

*** CWS has launched an appeal for Zimbabwe. Donations can be sent to PO Box 22652, Christchurch**