

## Key Issues Regarding the Zimbabwean General Election on 30 July 2018

There are fears that the elections are a **foregone conclusion** as the Zanu PF/military alliance will not allow Emerson Mnangagwa to lose his first election. In recent years this alliance has become increasingly sophisticated at manipulating state institutions and official processes, and as a result it has relied less on overt violence. Furthermore, the opposition is characterised by divisions and even some violence, which plays into the hands of the current leadership.

There has not been a **full harmonisation** between the Constitution adopted in 2013 and a number of laws. In particular, the Public Order and Security Bill (POSA), the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (CODE) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), which have been used to prevent the opposition from organising and unduly limit civil society activity, remain on the statute book.

The **electoral roll** has been compiled with approximately 5.3 million names. It is not possible to compare this electoral roll with the electoral roll of 2013 as the latter was never published. The Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) has refused to allow a comprehensive audit of the roll by an independent entity. However, the electoral roll is open to inspection. Some opposition politicians have noted a suspicious number of centenarians on it. Concerns have also been raised regarding the security of data gathered through the voter registration process.

**Ballot papers** are a highly controversial subject. The government rejected calls for an open tender for the procurement of ballot papers. The latest reports suggest that ZEC will allow political parties to observe the printing of ballot papers but it will not permit independent verification of the distribution of ballot papers. ZEC has long been accused of lacking transparency and possessing a pro-Zanu PF bias.

The location of **polling stations** is another important issue. There are fears that they will not be fairly distributed or properly staffed to support vulnerable voters (e.g. people with disabilities, older people, illiterate people, etc.) in opposition strongholds.

Currently, only Zanu PF has access to **state broadcasting media**. In addition, the coverage of the opposition by state media has been negative and unbalanced.

For at least a year ACTSA's partners have said that Zanu PF activists in rural areas have been **intimidating** people, telling citizens that their vote will not be secret. Moreover, since the announcement of the elections, the government has reportedly deployed around 5000 (plain-clothed) soldiers in rural areas, and some traditional leaders aligned with Zanu PF have allegedly called on people to vote Zanu PF or face the threat of eviction from their homes.

The **diaspora** will not be able to vote. While it is true that the Constitution does not provide for a diaspora vote, there is a strong feeling that this represents an unjust deprivation of a political right, and thus the Constitution could and should have been amended earlier this year.

Many Zimbabwean civil society activists are **very concerned** that the international community is ignoring their views as it is too focused on engaging the new government.

Free and fair elections are extremely important. But such elections on their own will **not solve** Zimbabwe's problems – that will require legitimate, inclusive and effective governance that is focused on ensuring that Zimbabwe meets the Sustainable Development Goals as well as its wider international human rights obligations.

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