



Statement on Violence in Bikita West 18 January 2017

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) condemns in the strongest of terms the electoral violence that is taking place in Bikita West ahead of the parliamentary by-elections due on 21 January 2017. The escalating violence in Bikita West serves no purpose other than intimidating citizens in a bid to discourage them from exercising their right to participate in elections.

The Forum has verified reports on the assault of the National Constitutional Assembly candidate for Bikita West parliamentary by-election, Madock Chivasa, and his election agent, Thomas Mudzamiri. The two were severely assaulted by ZANU PF supporters. Although the incident was reported at Bikita police station no arrests have been made so far.

The Forum urges Zimbabwe Republic police to institute professional and competent investigations in line with their mandate to ensure justice takes its course and Zimbabwean citizens enjoy their political rights. The Electoral Act provides that *"Immediately after an election is called, the Commissioner-General of Police, in consultation with the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, shall establish one or more special police units to investigate cases of politically-motivated violence and intimidation arising from the election."*

Further, the Forum implores all contesting parties to respect the rights of citizens who are constitutionally entitled by Section 67 (1) (b) to have a right to make political choices freely. Subsection 2 further states that every Zimbabwean citizen has the right (a) to form, to join and to participate in the activities of a political party or organisation of their choice and (b) to campaign freely and peacefully for a political party and cause. Therefore no political party must be allowed to resort to using violence to achieve political objectives.

The Forum further calls upon the government to ensure that human rights of all individuals are protected and respected by warranting that freedom of movement, assembly, association and expression are respected, particularly in the context of political rallies and meetings.