



**2023 HARMONISED ELECTION
POLLING DAY HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT
0600hrs-1000hrs
23 AUGUST 2023**

1.0 Introduction

This report captures human rights developments on Election Day (23 August 2023) from 0600hrs to 1000hrs. The emerging issues have been identified by accredited Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) short-term observers deployed in various polling stations. Some of the information contained in this report is derived from verified media reports, information from members of the Forum and updates from the broader civil society.

2.0 Highlights from 0600hrs-1000hrs

- Delayed Opening of polling stations
- Absence of voters roll outside polling stations
- Absence of voting material in various polling stations
- Missing Candidates on ballot papers
- Voter Intimidation
- Confusion at polling stations as voters cannot identify polling stations

3.0 Emerging Issues

3.1 Delayed Opening of polling stations

Across the country, reports have been verified of the late opening of polling stations, which were supposed to start receiving voters by 0700hrs. In the examples cited below, some of the polling stations only opened up to voters as late as 0935hrs. Voters lamented the lack of satisfactory communication from polling agents and even from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) itself. According to the communication shared by ZEC, the delays resulted from the late disbursement of voting materials. Harare is the most affected province with only 23% of polling stations opening on time.

Although ZEC has stipulated that polling stations should open for 12 hours, the delays in the opening of polling stations will have a ripple effect on vote counting, tabulation and transmission to the national centre. The Forum urges ZEC to communicate these potential delays to citizens as a mechanism to ensure citizens remain calm, as a lesson learnt from the 2018 election.

The following examples verified by the Forum serve to show the extent and magnitude of the problem

- Hatfield Ward 22 Caledon Center local authority ballot papers arrived at 0820hrs and the polling station opened at 0920hrs.
- At Harlingbury Primary School by 0704hrs, local authority ballot papers had not yet been received.
- As of 0720hrs voting had not yet started at Prospect Primary School in Waterfalls Harare due to lack of ink, voting only started at 0935hrs.

- As of 0823 at Avondale Primary School voting had not yet started. ZEC Presiding Officer addressed voters saying that they will start counting the 12 hours from the time they eventually start.
- At Mount Pleasant High School voting had not started at 0829 hrs.
- Voting at Wonders Junior School, Gletwyn Harare, voting started at 0829hrs due to a delay in receiving local authority ballot papers.
- Voting had not yet started in Chitungwiza North as of 0829hrs due to a lack of local authority ballot papers.
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- As of 0830hrs, Lord Malvern Polling station in Waterfalls Harare had not yet opened for voting. The polling station opened at around 0852hrs.
- As of 0830hrs voting had not yet started at Maranatha school (ward 16) as local authority ballot papers arrived late.
- As of 0830hrs, Amavene Primary School polling station in Bulawayo was not yet opened due to local authority ballot papers still yet to arrive
- As of 0835hrs Warren Park 1 and 2 polling stations had not yet started voting and no reason had been given by ZEC
- As at 0803hrs Ward 4 Bulawayo Metropolitan Polling station opened. The delay was due to the late arrival of local authority ballot papers
- As of 0851hrs, in Gokwe Central Mafungautsi Extension Ward 6, that's when the polling station was opened
- As of 0900hrs voting had not yet begun at Hellenic Primary School in Harare due to the absence of ballot papers.
- As of 0905hrs at Waterfalls Prospect in Harare, people have not yet voted
- As of 0909hrs voting had not yet begun in Glenview due to a lack of local authority ballot papers.
- Voting had not yet begun as of 0910hrs in most parts of Chitungwiza South due to a lack of local authority ballot papers.
- As of 0910hrs, voting had not yet begun at polling stations like Njube Hall, Lutheran, Mtshede Primary School under Entumbabe Njube Constituency in Bulawayo as ballot papers were yet to arrive
- As of 0910hrs at Kuwadzana High School, there were still no local authority ballot papers and voters were seen leaving the polling station without voting
- As of 0913hrs voting had not yet begun at Raylton Sports Club in Mutare Central and the reason is the absence of ballot papers
- As of 0924hrs at Nkulumane Hall Sokusile in Bulawayo, the polling station had not yet been opened due to the absence of local authority ballot papers

3.2 Voter's Roll Issues

Concerns have also arisen with regard to the voter's roll. Voters have faced challenges including:

- Some polling stations only received a copy of the voters roll early morning on polling day, this was the case in Sunningdale, Harare.
- Voters who transferred their names to new polling stations as a result of relocation, could not find their names at the polling station, despite the ZEC short code *265# showing that their transfers were successful. However, on polling day the short code is not functioning. Such an incident was recorded at Moffat Primary School Polling Station in Sunningdale Constituency.

- Some voters could not find their names on the voters roll despite having confirmation messages from ZEC of their polling stations. The Forum verified these incidents at Avondale Primary School, Chigovanyika Polling station in Chitungwiza and Moffat Primary School in Sunningdale Constituency. Other verified examples include Harare West Open Space Football Ground there are 9 polling stations and voters were running around trying to identify their exact polling stations. Despite this glaring anomaly, voters have not been adequately assisted by polling officers to assist them in identifying their polling stations, at one of the polling stations, the ZEC official simply responded “.....the system is down.”

3.3 Absence of voting material in various polling stations

Perhaps the most worrisome trend for this election has been the mass shortage of voting materials nationally. Ballot papers for local authority and ink have been the most elusive voting materials reported nationally. In other instances, polling agents from political parties have highlighted that the voter's roll supplied to the polling stations has been incomplete and not in alphabetical order. A detailed synopsis of areas of concern is outlined in the table below¹:

Voting Material	Areas
Local Authority ballot papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuwadzana West • Marlborough High School (Only 9 out of 14 local authority ballot books were available at. Observers were informed that the rest will come to the polling station later. They are not in chronological sequence) • Seke Teachers College, Harare • Highfields East polling station in Harare • Avondale Primary School, Harare • Happy Day Infant ward 6 Cowdray Park polling station in Bulawayo • Mount Pleasant High School, Harare • Chitungwiza North • Glen View South, Harare • Groombridge Primary School • Ward 4 Bulawayo Metropolitan Polling Station • Raylton Sports Club in Mutare Central • Nkulumane Hall Sokusile in Bulawayo • Hellenic Primary School in Harare
indelible ink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospect Primary School, Waterfalls
Postal Ballots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of postal ballots not tallying with the voters roll in Sunningdale, Harare as one polling station received 5 postal ballots but only 3 voters on the roll voted through the postal ballot.

3.4 Missing Candidates on ballot papers

¹ The cited cases are examples of verified incidences by the Forum, the list is not exhaustive.

Three CCC aspiring candidates for Marondera Central Local Authority are missing from the ballot papers. They are Dominic Matangira (ward 7), Bornface Tagwireti (ward 3) and Thomson Magaluwa (ward 10). Of concern is that all the above mentioned wards have CCC double candidates and the “illegal candidates” names are also missing from the ballot papers. It is indeed curious that nominated candidate names are missing from the ballot papers and will negatively impact both the voters and the candidates.

In a similar case in Bulawayo Central (ward 1) local authority aspirant candidate for CCC, Sheperd Sithole is missing from the ballot paper

3.5 Voter Intimidation

The Forum has received widespread cases of voter intimidation. Some of the confirmed cases are outlined below:

- As at 0850hrs Forum received an alert that in Kotwa, Mashonaland East Kraal, village heads were reportedly leading their villagers to vote at polling stations.
- At Gokwe Central Mafungautsi Extension Ward 6, some ZANU-PF supporters were wearing party regalia standing at least 100 meters from the polling station. The police however dispersed them. FAZ members with jackets inscribed election observers at the back arrived at the polling station at 0851hrs and had a brief chat with the ZEC Presiding Officer.
- In Nketa Constituency Ward 26, ZANU-PF youths as at 0854hrs mounted two separate desks about 500 meters away from the polling station. They are seen luring voters to register their names before and after voting at their desks. The desk is called ZANU-PF Exit Poll Survey. They communicated that they were asked to keep the register by their leaders. The same desks have been mounted in Crowhill, Harare in Knowe Norton.
- In Masvingo North Ward 1 in Zimuto Chinyan’anya Village, ZANU-PF has set desks near every polling station and is recording names and instructing voters to vote and bring serial numbers of their ballot papers.
- In Masvingo Urban Rujeko Ward 7, a car was seen stationed at house number 7411 Chiteza Street. Unknown people have a ZEC voters roll and are ticking the names of people who have voted.

4.0 Conclusion

Generally, the environment is peaceful so far except for instances of intimidation. Delays in the opening of various polling stations have forced some voters to leave without voting. The Forum will continue to monitor the rest of the election and publish a full report on the human rights situation.