



**2023 HARMONISED ELECTION
POLLING DAY HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT
1000hrs-1200hrs
23 AUGUST 2023**

1.0 Introduction

This report captures human rights developments on Election Day (23 August 2023) from 1000hrs to 1200hrs. 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 1000hrs -1200hrs

- Delayed Opening of polling stations
- Voters Roll Issues
- Absence of voting material in various polling stations
- Ballot paper anomalies
- Voter Intimidation

3.0 Human Rights Violations at a Glance

The Forum has documented the following cases of human rights violations from 0600hrs to 1200hrs on polling day (23 August 2023):

- It is alleged that the Forever Associates of Zimbabwe (FAZ) assaulted a polling officer in Makoni District, Mutare with clenched fists. It is alleged that FAZ mistook him for a CCC polling agent. The polling officer sustained injuries to his face.
- Reports from Chipinge, Wedza, Murehwa, Mwenezi, Makoni, Guruve and Chivi allege that FAZ and traditional leaders have set up “post-election survey desks” outside the designated 300m parameter from polling stations where they are registering everyone going to vote and threatening to track them down after elections. Police officers at Chivi refused to take up the case alleging that “*there is nothing wrong with the practice.*”

4.0 Emerging Issues

4.1 Delayed Opening of polling stations

The delays in the opening of polling stations cited in the Forum’s first edition of the *Polling Day Human Rights Alerts*, have continued until midday. Multiple polling stations remain closed, casting doubt over the justification issued by ZEC through a statement published at 1035hrs. The election management body cited the late deployment of election material due to delays in the printing of ballot papers arising from protracted court challenges. The most affected areas are Bulawayo and Harare with 75% of polling stations in Bulawayo and only 23% of polling stations in Harare having opened on time. In response to

these delays, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), a member of the Forum dispatched a letter to ZEC at 0930hrs requesting ZEC to direct constituency election officers under whose constituencies voting has been delayed to take note of the provisions of the Electoral Act and adjust the voting times accordingly.

The Forum has noted that as of now, most of the delays in the opening of polling stations are persisting in urban areas and cities, whilst in the rural constituencies reports received indicated undisturbed and smooth polling, with most polling stations having opened promptly at 0700hrs. Furthermore, the Forum has noted that the electorate in urban areas is becoming frustrated and some have even left polling stations without voting. Some examples of this include:

- Voters are yet to vote in Ward 7 at Sheni Primary School and Rujeko Primary School in Mutare as of 1100hrs. it was reported that there was a mix-up of ballot papers with those destined for Chipinge.
- In Unit J Chitungwiza voting had not begun as of 1032hrs due to lack of local authority ballot papers.
- Voting is yet to begin at Hatcliffe 1 Primary School in Harare but voters are now restless as they do not believe that the ballot papers will arrive.
- As of 1056hrs, voting had not yet commenced at Chembira Primary School in Glen Norah Harare.
- Belgravia polling station in Harare opened at 1047hrs almost 2 and a half hours late.
- Warren Park 4 Primary School in Harare has not yet opened the polling station as of 1020hrs.
- Open Space Zengeza 4 Shopping Centre polling station has not yet been opened as at 1123hrs
- Budiriro 2 Primary School as of 1139hrs voting had not yet begun.
- Voting had not yet begun at Budiriro 2 Primary School as of 1153hrs. ZEC officials said they had not yet received local authority ballot papers.
- In Cold Comfort, Harare the polling station has not yet been opened.
- At Ingwengwe Primary School in Bulawayo, the electorate has not yet voted as of 1159hrs due to local authority ballot papers not having arrived. Some voters have gone home.

4.2 Voter's Roll Issues

Reports of inconsistencies around the voters roll continue to be received. Voters are unable to find their names in the voters roll as evidenced by reports coming from Ramrij polling station in Nkulumane 10 Bulawayo and Fundo Primary School in Kuwadzana Phase 3 Harare. In verified incidences, 16 voters were not found on the voters roll despite using the same polling stations in 2018. In another incident documented at Ramrij polling station in Bulawayo, the voter discovered almost 30 minutes later that she had been transferred to Nkulumane 10 Munyoro polling station after dialing though prior notification of this transfer had not been given. An 86-year-old woman highlighted that she had previously inspected the voters roll at the inspection phase and her name was captured under Christ the King Polling Station. However, upon her arrival today, she could not find her name. She also failed to get assistance from ZEC officials at the polling station. She had no choice but to go back home without voting.

4.3 Absence of voting material in various polling stations

- As at 1032hrs voters were still waiting for local authority ballot papers at Robert Tredgold Primary School in Bulawayo.

- As of 1047hrs, voting had not yet begun at Cowdray Park Tategulu Polling station due to the absence of both the voter's roll and local authority ballot papers.
- Tempers flare at Mahatshula ZAOGA Church polling station in Bulawayo due to a late display of voters roll outside the polling station.
- Glenview North Kwayedza School had no ballot papers as of 1143hrs.
- At Warren Park 1 Primary School, only the Presidential ballot paper is available, the others are yet to be delivered. The worrying thing is whether citizens will be allowed to vote for local authority and national assembly when the ballot papers are eventually delivered.

4.4 Ballot Paper Anomalies

- Confusion emerged at 0928hrs in Dangamvura Constituency, Mutare after there was a mix-up with ballot papers for Chipinge.
- At 0956hrs CCC agents have stopped the voting process due to a mix-up in presidential and parliamentary ballot papers.
- As of 0957hrs, at Goromonzi School polling station in Mudzi South, some of the ballot papers for presidential candidates have missing serial numbers.
- In Chitungwiza Unit L, it was discovered at around 1033hrs that the polling station had received the wrong ballot papers for both parliamentarians and local authorities. They had received the ones for Gokwe.
- At Hopely 5 almost 5 people could not find their names on the voters roll as at 1146hrs
- Highfield High School 2 and Kambuzuma High 1 polling stations had not yet received ballot papers as of 1147hrs.

4.5 Voter Intimidation

- There was a FAZ desk outside Mutiunokura Primary School Polling station in Mufakose in Warren Park Constituency
- FAZ officials were organizing transport for students bused from Kwekwe who voted at Belvedere Teachers College and Louis Mountbatten School in Harare Central Constituency
- Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Information, Ndavaningi Mangwana was taking pictures of the electorate at Hellenic Primary School until voters protested. ZEC officials and police officers at the polling station looked on and did nothing.
- In Bikita, Gwariro polling station FAZ members who had illegally placed their "Exit Poll Survey" desk were beaten badly by the mob.
- FAZ desk was set up outside Haig Park Primary School in Marlberaign Harare
- At Nashville High School polling station in Gweru FAZ had erected a desk outside the polling station and were chased away by police officers.
- At Railway 26 Norton Ward 14, ZANU-PF members set up a table right outside the polling station where they are illegally taking down people's names.
- There was a confrontation between CCC polling agents and suspected members of FAZ who had set up a desk near Sadza Primary School. The agents managed to push these away and the police intervened.
- Chivi North CCC polling agents clashed with FAZ and FAZ was removed from the polling station.
- At Ramrij Polling station in Nkulumani 10 in Bulawayo two ZANU-PF marked vehicles showed up at the polling station. They were observing proceedings from their vehicles.

4.6 Misinformation posters

- In Mkoba, Gweru at around 1019hrs CCC activists went around the constituency removing posters calling for the party's supporters to boycott elections.
- Since the eve of polling day there have been numerous reports received by the Forum that there were so many misinforming posters that were thrown in so many constituencies.

5.0 Conclusion

It is now midday and there are still electorate who are reporting that they have not voted yet. This is very concerning as this will have a negative impact on citizens actively demanding their right to vote. Late opening of polling stations and ZEC's statement stating that they will review the closure of polling stations in tandem with delays. This is worrying and begs the question of how the safety of voters will be guaranteed at night. Furthermore, cases of FAZ presence at polling stations countrywide continue to increase. In some instances, citizens have confronted them to the extent that they were removed by the police. The Forum will be committed to continue monitoring the electoral environment.