



## 2023 HARMONISED ELECTION POLLING DAY HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

1200hrs-1600hrs

23 AUGUST 2023

### 1.0 Introduction

This report captures human rights developments on Election Day (23 August 2023) from 1200hrs to 1600hrs. 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 in this report is derived from verified media reports, from members of the Forum and updates from the broader civil society.

### 2.0 Highlights from 1200hrs -1600hrs

- Delayed Opening of polling stations - update
- Voters Roll Issues
- Absence of voting material in various polling stations
- Running out of voting material
- Ballot paper anomalies
- Voter Intimidation
- Arbitrary Arrests
- Interference with Observer Work
- Distribution of fake flyers

### 4.0 Emerging Issues

#### 4.1 Delayed Opening of polling stations - update

The atmosphere at most polling stations particularly in Harare and Bulawayo, remains tense as the electorate grows impatient with the seemingly intractable delays to voting. As a result, the SADC EOM Head expressed concern over ZEC delays in opening polling stations nationwide. Dr Nevers Mumba also communicated that the ballot papers should have been at the polling stations ahead of time. He also emphasised that this requirement is a constitutional provision. ZEC had assured the mission that voting material would be available in all polling stations way ahead of the morning of polling day. Between 1200hrs to 1600hrs, the following polling stations were yet to open as verified by the Forum:

Polling station	Status
Charamba polling station ward 9, Nyanga South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is one of the first polling stations in a rural constituency that has delayed opening. The police station delayed opening due to the delays in the delivery of local authority ballot papers.</li></ul>
Maranatha Secondary School in Harare West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As of 1334hrs, Polling Station had not yet opened its doors to voters.</li></ul>

Bulawayo Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was no official update on the closure of the police station.</li> </ul>
Waterfalls Uplands Shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around 1212hrs ZEC officials at the polling station announced they would extend voting time by only 40 minutes. This is contrary to what ZEC had committed in its published statement to extend voting times by the delayed time.</li> </ul>
Haig Park Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting had not yet started as of 1438hrs, and there was no update from ZEC officials to explain the delays. ZEC officials locked themselves inside because the place had become volatile.</li> </ul>
Sanganai inn in Tynwald Harare West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polling station was closed due to the absence of ballot papers.</li> </ul>
Western Triangle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polling station was closed due to the absence of ballot papers.</li> </ul>
Chipembere Primary School in Highfield Constituency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polling station was closed due to the absence of ballot papers.</li> </ul>
Kambuzuma High 1 and Kurai Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polling station was closed due to the absence of ballot papers.</li> </ul>
Warren Park 1 and ward 15 in Harare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polling station was closed due to the absence of ballot papers as at 1510hrs</li> </ul>
Burnside Garage, Ward 4 in Bulawayo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAZ officials were manning the polling station. They were reported by voters to police.</li> </ul>
ward 7 Dangamvura,in Mutare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voters started going home without voting as of 1456hrs. The ZEC Presiding officer at Beithall Chido Chisedze said that the ballot papers were coming from Harare.</li> </ul>
Ward 14 at Rukudzo Primary School in Kambuzuma, Harare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The polling station was closed due to the absence of ballot papers.</li> </ul>
Budiriro 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballot papers arrived at around 1453hrs. In Budiriro 2, Harare there were still no ballot papers as of 1500hrs.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Budiriro South, ward 33.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At Budiriro 1 Primary School voting had not yet begun as at 1532hrs</li> </ul>
Chitubu Poling Station, Glen Norah, Cold Comfort Primary School, Kambuzuma and various other centres in and around Harare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting had not started by 6 PM because voting material had not been delivered by ZEC</li> </ul>

Emanating from the systematic delays in opening of polling stations, Forum member, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights ( ZLHR) has written to ZEC to “*immediately and within one hour to deliver complete sets of ballot papers and ensure that voting commences in all outstanding polling stations.*” Updates on the outcome of the request to ZEC will be provided in due course.

#### **4.2 Voter's Roll Issues - update**

Updates on concerns around the voters' roll continue to be reported to the Forum. The latest update relates to citizens who have previously voted but failed to locate their names on the voters' roll. Examples of reported cases include:

- In Gwanda Tshitauze Ward 7, Bigboy Maphosa failed to locate his name at four polling stations in the ward. His name does not appear on the voters' roll despite him being a

registered voter as confirmed by his biometric voter registration slip. ZEC officials failed to advise him on the way forward and rather sent him on a wild goose chase.

- A citizen in Mbare failed to vote because her name was not reflected on the voters' roll although she is a third-time voter.
- In Gwanda Urban aspiring candidates for Ward 6 reported that over 16 people could not find their names on the voters' roll, their names were found in the next constituency in Gwanda North.

#### **4.3 The absence of voting material in polling stations – update**

The absence of voting materials in polling stations, particularly, ballot papers for local authorities remains a cause for concern. In particular, before the polling day, ZEC is on record advising international observers that they had finalised the printing of ballot papers. Moreover, MDC T candidate Douglas Mwonzora's withdrawal from the election was rejected by ZEC on the basis that they had already finalised the printing of ballot papers. It is therefore a precarious case for ZEC to turn around and claim that printing of ballot papers had not been finalised as of today. Some examples of areas in which the absence of voting materials affected elections include:

Missing voter material	Area
Unavailability of local authority ballot papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulawayo Central</li> <li>• Western Triangle, Kurai Primary School in Dzivarasekwa</li> <li>• Nkulumane Engen Garage, Bulawayo</li> <li>• Kuwadzana East Ward 37 Harare (Voting was stopped at 1336hrs as all polling stations had exhausted the local authority ballot papers.)</li> <li>• Chipembere Primary School at Highfield Constituency</li> <li>• Maranatha High School</li> <li>• Warren Park and Wesley</li> <li>• Marondera (Ballot papers ran out at some polling stations)</li> <li>• Harare South, Ward 12</li> </ul>

The absence of voting materials negatively affected the voting patterns of the electorate. Some of the voters returned home, particularly as a result of the lack of adequate communication by ZEC officials. The uncertainty was overwhelming and resulted in voter apathy. In one case in Warren Park, an elderly man collapsed at around 11 AM and was taken to a private medical facility, in Belvedere where he was pronounced dead on arrival. He could have died directly as a result of protracted waiting times. Given that most polling stations are not disability-friendly, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) also faced challenges waiting in long queues.

#### **4.4 Ballot Paper Anomalies**

Several anomalies in relation to ballot papers have also been reported. The anomalies relate mostly to the structure of the ballot papers. For example:

- In Ward 25 St Andrews after 10 people had voted, it was realized that the local authority representative of ZANU-PF's face was on the CCC slot and vice versa. Voting was forced to stop at 1248hrs.
- In Buhera South Ngoma Polling Station, ZEC officials stopped the election after realizing that the pictures of candidates on the ballot paper were misplaced. A ZANU-PF candidate's picture was on the CCC roll.
- Buhera RDC, Ward 8 there was a mix-up on the local authority ballot paper as the faces of candidates were not tallying with the political party logo.

#### ***4.5 Voter Intimidation***

Voter intimidation in the guise of an "exit-poll survey" by the ZANU-PF affiliated Forever Associates of Zimbabwe (FAZ). It is alleged that the exit poll survey desks are placed strategically outside of the 300-metre radius of polling stations and are manned by individuals who solicit personal details of voters. Such instances have been recorded in the areas below:

- A video recording emerged of a CCC aspiring member of parliament, Trust Manjengwa confronting FAZ officials. One of the FAZ members is a former local authority representative. They were taking details of voters out of a polling station in Zaka West. Manjengwa was reassuring the voters that they should refuse to be intimidated and must exercise their right to vote.
- In Zulangubo Polling station in Binga at 1247hrs, the community came together and destroyed the FAZ desk outside the polling station and later on alerted the police of the presence of FAZ.
- At a polling station in Nketa Constituency, Bulawayo, citizens reported the presence of unknown persons quizzing voters. They are suspected to be FAZ officials
- At Emganwini Secondary School polling station, FAZ members were seen within 300m of the polling station touting for voters to come and have their details recorded.
- At Ruwa Primary School in Harare, police were dispatched outside the polling station as some unidentified polling agents were recording the names of people leaving the polling station. The culprits disappeared when the police arrived.
- At Norton, FAZ members were approaching voters asking for their details.
- A ZEC presiding officer in Umguza was threatened by FAZ officials claiming that they were from the President's office.
- Outside Hillside Teachers College in Bulawayo FAZ officials had set up the Exit Survey desk. After complaints from voters, the police moved them.
- Aspiring CCC candidate for Mutare Central Brian James was chased away from the polling station by suspected ZANU-PF supporters at Sakubva Beit Hall after voting.
- At 1525hrs voting was temporarily stopped in Zvishavane rural at Nyama Business Centre, Ward 6, after opposition CCC candidate for Zvishavane Ngezi constituency Leopold Mudisi complained about ZANU-PF and FAZ's attempts to influence voting by taking down names of voters' details before they cast their votes, claiming it was an exit poll survey. The incident was confirmed to The NewsHawks by polling station presiding officer Tafadzwa Muronde.

#### ***4.6 Arbitrary Arrests***

- The Forum received an alert that Ward 9 Victoria Falls aspiring local authority representative Mutunzi Mpofo and his driver Freddy Macala were arrested at 1500hrs for confronting FAZ officials. The FAZ officials were intimidating voters close to the polling

station in Ward 9. As a result, CCC members gathered outside the Victoria Falls polling station demanding the release of the aspiring councillor and his driver.

#### 4.7 Distribution of illegal flyers

Voters woke up to see fake flyers scattered on roads and around polling stations reportedly by CCC leader Nelson Chamisa calling people to boycott the polls because they were already rigged.

#### 4.8 ***Interference with Observer Work***

- The Forum received disturbing news at 1525hrs that a local observer from Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) was physically assaulted at a polling station in Gutu West Constituency. The Forum is in the process of verifying the identity of the victim and also the perpetrators. In a related incident, the Forum verified a case in Ward 12 Stoneridge DDF in Harare of reports from local observers who were forced to remove their identity tags by members of the public for “security reasons.” The local observers fled the polling station fearing for their lives.

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