



Zimbabwe Election Support Network

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Press Statement

Violence, apathy mar weekend elections

Violence and intimidation resurfaced in this weekend's elections with MDC candidates and polling agents being assaulted by suspected ZANU PF supporters at Chana Polling Station in Kwekwe and some voters being denied access to some polling stations.

Kwekwe was the worst affected area. At St Martins in Amaveni, ZANU PF youth were singing and playing drums near the polling station. ZESN supervisors spoke to police who said they could not do anything because the youth were not in the 100m stipulated radius. At Dambudzo Hall in Ward 4, suspected youth militia blocked the entrance to the polling station and voters were being screened by the youth. Police were called in but the youth resumed their illegal activities after the police had left. However ZESN accredited observers were allowed into the station.

The MDC mayoral candidate for Kwekwe, Dr. Henry Madzorera's car was attacked by suspected ruling party youth as he left Chana Polling Station in the company of his polling agent Blessing Chebundo. Chebundo is the MDC Member of Parliament for Kwekwe.

While ZESN congratulates voters in most areas for having remained peaceful during the two-day polling period, we however condemn the few incidents of violence that occurred in some areas. ZESN maintains that violence in any form in elections negates the ideals of a free and fair contest.

In Bulawayo, ZESN accredited observers noted with concern the sale of maize near polling stations. This was happening at three polling stations, viz, Senzangakhona Primary School (Emganwini), Emakhandeni Hall and Hugh Beddle Primary School (Saucetown). The sale of maize near polling stations amounts to vote-buying and is therefore unacceptable.

ZESN notes that voter turnout remained low in most areas including Bulawayo and Harare Central. We urge the electorate to continue exercising their right to self-determination by participating in electoral processes. ZESN believes that democracy requires participation and cautions that voter apathy threatens to erode this fundamental principle.

Ends.

Signed:

Dr. R. Matchaba-Hove
ZESN NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON