

Zimbabwe: Kenyans Call and Solidarity With Country

Fahamu (Oxford)

4, April 2008: The People of Kenya, individually and through various civil society organizations grouped under the National Civil society Congress and Kenyans for Peace with Truth and Justice (KPTJ), are deeply concerned by the pace at which the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has been announcing results from the elections.

We applaud the people of Zimbabwe for being patient, yet very alert and vigilant to avoid the manipulation of results. We call on them to remain united, engage the state in a constructive manner, and avoid acts that violate the rights of any fellow citizen.

Civil society leaders in Kenya, having learnt our lessons during our last election, last week delivered a message to the parties and the civil society formations in Zimbabwe, to totally seal loopholes at the command center in Harare to ensure that the vote of every Zimbabwean counts equally.

Over the past year, Kenyan civil society organizations and political parties (through the Center for Multi Party Democracy (CMD) have worked closely with the people of Zimbabwe in their tortuous search for a new, democratic, prosperous Zimbabwe - the Zimbabwe they want. Representatives of Kenyan civil society organizations have been involved in constructive discussions and advocacy aimed at guaranteeing a framework for a free, fair and credible election that was finally carried out on Saturday, March 29, 2008.

This election was expected to be epic. Not only because it is historic and supremely positioned to demarcate Zimbabwe's future from her past, but also because it was a complex and momentous exercise that had to deliver civic councillors, Members of Parliament, Senators, and a President for Zimbabwe, all through the markings of a single pen at a polling centre.

We identify with the positions and calls made yesterday April 2, 2008 by the civil society groups in Zimbabwe organized for this election under the Umbrella of the Zimbabwe Elections Support Network (ZESN) . We now send out the following unequivocal messages:

We regret that the SADC mediation process for Zimbabwe was so poorly handled; it did not deliver a new democratic constitutional order and establish a credible electoral process.

We regret that the people of Zimbabwe had to conduct these elections amidst an inflation rate of over 100,000%, with the rate of unemployment standing at over 80% and with nearly 5,000,000 of their nationals residing outside their country. They deserve a better country and we pledge to support them while, alongside us in Kenya, they struggle to reconstruct, reform and reconcile Zimbabwe. Kenyans demand that ZEC announces the results of the Presidential vote immediately without further delay, to avoid a situation where the country may degenerate into chaos, triggered by the fear that ZEC is manipulating or tampering with the Presidential elections results.

That the international community offers the people of Zimbabwe solidarity at this moment of great need.

That SADC and the African Union take the lead in facilitating a smooth and peaceful transition in Zimbabwe. They must urge Mugabe NOT to tamper with the election results.

That SADC should review their statement that concluded that elections were free and fair while closing their ears to the significance of the undemocratic practices of the ZANU-PF regime. These include the stranglehold monopoly of the media by ZANU, the criminal intimidation of the masses by the security forces, and the declaration by Robert Mugabe that votes that were to be cast for the opposition were wasted votes as he planned to retain power.

We in Kenya know too well, and indeed witnessed while on the ground in Zimbabwe, that both the political environment and the administration of the elections did not facilitate free and fair elections. The media was monopolized by ZANU-PF. Restrictive laws such as Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Access to Information and Protection to Privacy Act were applied severally.

Administratively, the voters roll was not in order. There were high counts of ghost voters on electoral rolls. Distribution of polling stations and involvement of the police officers in the polling stations contravened terms agreed at the SADC Mediation process, chaired by President Thabo Mbeki.

We demand that the security forces not interfere with the sovereign will of the people, and that African Union and SADC standards on democratic governance be applied fully. We wish to inform the security forces that as Africans, Kenyans are of the view that Zimbabwe is too important to be left to Zimbabweans alone. Our position is that "an injury to one of us is an injury to all of us"!

As we issue this statement, there is a heavy presence of (anti) riot police and army troops in the streets of Harare and Bulawayo. Combined with the delay in announcing votes, this could provoke serious civil unrest and even anarchy. We call upon Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai to submit to sovereign will of the people when a credible result is finally delivered by the ZEC.

We propose that the people of Zimbabwe, immediately after this nervous transition convene an African Conference on Zimbabwe. As Kenyans, we shall engage upon their invitation and urge our government to fully support the democratic re-emergence of Zimbabwe from the brink of collapse and destruction. We look forward to addressing jointly our shared agenda of reconstruction, reform and reconstruction. Kenya and Zimbabwe must regain their rightful places of leaders of the continent's struggles for democratic development and Human development.

Kenyans For Peace With Truth and Justice (KPTJ) and the National Civil Society Congress (NCSC)

Signed

The National Civil Society Congress

Africa Centre for Open Governance (AfriCOG)

Awaaz

Bunge la Mwananchi

Centre for Law and Research International (CLARION)

Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD)

Centre for Rights, Education and Awareness for Women (CREAW)

The Cradle-the Childrens Foundation

Constitution and Reform Education Consortium (CRECO)

East African Law Society (EALS)

Fahamu

Haki Focus

Hema la Katiba

Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU)

Innovative Lawyering

Institute for Education in Democracy (IED)

International Commission of Jurists (ICJ-Kenya)

International Centre for Policy and Conflict

Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)

Kenya Leadership Institute (KLI)

Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR)

Kituo cha Sheria

RECESSPA

Law Society of Kenya (LSK)

MARS Group Kenya

Muslim Human Rights Forum

National Convention Executive Council (NCEC)

Society for International Development (SID)

The 4 Cs

Urgent Action Fund (UAF)-Africa

Youth Agenda