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2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

MOZAMBIQUE POLITICAL PROCESS BULLETIN

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Editor's view:

Decentralised control and intimidation

This election was different. Frelimo always calls on its members to win "at all costs", but having reported on all of Mozambique's multiparty elections, this one feels the first general election in which Frelimo exerted power in an organised but decentralised way.

Reports from observers and correspondents at polling station level showed a new mood of petty control. Polling station presidents insisted that observers must stand or could not stay in the polling station for more than 30 minutes, or refused to admit them for claimed irregularities. This came on top of the refusal at district and provincial level to issue thousands of credentials to independent observers and party delegates (poll watchers), while issuing thousands of credentials to previously unknown Frelimo groups such as the CNJ (National Youth Council) and SIM - in some cases without even names of the observers on the credential. Many of these "observers" appeared to be local Frelimo officials, and correspondents reported incidents when these "observers" were giving instructions to polling station staff.

Observers or party delegates who raised questions were sometimes challenged by polling station staff, a Frelimo delegate, or a Frelimo-linked observer; sometimes this expanded into a challenge by several people who appeared to know each other. Police were called or the polling station president threatened to call the police, as we report in the news below. For the observer, this was clearly intimidating - although there were rarely direct threats. Many individual observers or opposition party delegates felt too intimidated to comment or criticise. This climate of coordination, control and intimidation was reported by observers

District elections results are now being announced and being posted twice a day on <https://www.cipeleicoes.org/>

and correspondents in many places, and this was new in this election.

This climate of control and intimidation created space for small scale misconduct on a greater level than reported in the past. Known Frelimo voters were not being required to put their fingers in the indelible ink or only inking the fingertip. More cases of people with extra ballot papers have been noted - people actually caught, or several ballots folded together found in the ballot box during the count. Observers reported a widespread disregard for the rules during the count. Results sheets (editais) were not posted outside the polling stations as required by law. Staff were seen writing editais outside the polling station and even in the back of trucks carrying them to district headquarters. Observers commented on how common it was that bags of ballot papers were not sealed.

Mozambique's electoral operations are now totally politicised. At the demand of Renamo over the past decade, there are party representatives on all elections commissions and in all STAEs, because Renamo believed that more people watching would prevent fraud. But it has had the opposite effect. Party seats are granted in proportion to the number of seats in parliament,

and civil society seats on elections commissions are, in practice, granted to people from party aligned civil society groups in the same proportion. This gives Frelimo a majority on all elections commissions. In past elections, the National Elections Commission (CNE) tried to be balanced and relatively neutral, but in municipal elections last year and national elections this year the CNE voted along party lines. This passed down the hierarchy, so provincial and district commissions and STAEs were Frelimo dominated, and they used their power to refuse credentials to independent observers and to place party people on polling station staffs.

Two events consolidated this sense of control and intimidation. In Gaza the election commission registered more than 300,000 more voters than there are voting age adults, according to the 2017 population census. When the head of the National Statistics Institute refused to bend the census to match the registration, he was forced to resign by President Filipe Nyusi. It was a clear message of Frelimo control. Then 8 days before the vote, a police death squad gunned down the head of independent civil society observation in Gaza on a Xai-Xai street in broad daylight. It was a clear message of intimidation of independent observation.

Frelimo has always been highly decentralised. The message from the top is simply "we must win at all costs" and it is left to local people to decide what to do and how to do it. And as local elections showed, this is interpreted differently in each place. But the difference this time was an apparent second message from the top urging better organisation at local level and actually demonstrating that Frelimo was in control of the elections.

Frelimo is winning by a large margin, and decentralised decision-making and action makes it very difficult to assess how important is the misconduct. But the European Union yesterday correctly noted the "unlevel playing field" and the "climate of fear". The new show of control and intimidation undoubtedly played an important role in the landslide.

Joseph Hanlon

Renamo Women's League leader killed

Renamo Women's League President in Zumbo, Tete, Babula Jeque and her husband João Fenhane, were shot dead by strangers on the morning of 14 October.

Jeque was riding a motorcycle with her husband in the direction of Muze and Zambue to leave credentials and copies the electoral register with

Renamo delegates. The couple was ambushed in the locality of Ntongue, report our correspondents.

This is the tenth murder recorded since the election campaign began. During this period, 47 people died in the country as a result of accidents in connection with the event.

EU observers expelled from Milange count

At least four observers, two local and two from the European Union, were expelled from the room where the district polling results were being tabulated in Milange, Zambezia. The observers had been in the STAE Chief Operating Officer's office from yesterday morning (17 October) watching the tabulations. But around 6 pm they were forced to leave by STAE District Director Barressone Augusto, who told observers "The law does not allow the count to be done in the presence of observers. I ask you to leave because we want to work!", our correspondents report. A half hour later, the STAEs director called EU observers and informed them that they could return to the room where the count was taking place.

According to Article 263 (c) of Law No 3/2019 of 31 May, observers are entitled to "observe subsequent electoral processes at all levels, including data collection, centralization and tabulation of electoral results" at district, city, province and central level.

Protests in district counting creates confusion in Maputo

The provincial party agent for New Democracy, (ND) Francisca Noronha, had her phone confiscated and the police person on duty was called, after she protested during the district tabulation of the votes in Kamavota district, Maputo. ND national representative Quitéria Gurengane told the Bulletin that the confusion arose following the district committee's refusal to provide a complaint form, minutes and results sheets. They refused to allow the protest to be filmed and refused to receive a protest, ND said. But the case was eventually resolved.

Guirengane also reported cases of electoral wrongdoing during the tabulation in the polling stations. "There are a number of cases where the number of votes for a candidate is higher than the number of voters," she said. "And we have recorded cases where our votes written on the blackboard in the classroom are not in the final results (edital), she added.

US questions integrity of election, and sees Gaza ghosts vote

"US Embassy election observers witnessed a number of irregularities and vulnerabilities during the voting and the first stages of the tabulation process. For example, at numerous polling stations in Gaza our teams noted low turnout through mid-afternoon, but results sheets posted and visible by October 16 indicated close to 100% turnout – results that would have required, in the final hours of the day, a rate of voter processing of such extraordinary alacrity that it strains credulity," said the United States embassy in a statement issued this afternoon. In other words, the Gaza ghosts voted.

"Our observers throughout the country noted the lack of rigor applied to the district-level tabulation process, in stark contrast to the structured and deliberate voting process which was generally observed at polling stations on election day. U.S. observers consistently reported the absence of any evident chain of custody for voting materials during the transfer from polling stations to district tabulation centers, making it difficult to confirm the integrity of vote tally documents. US Embassy observers also reported disorganization and a lack of oversight in the tabulation process. They saw unsealed bags holding voting materials exposed and seemingly uncontrolled, with election officials handling voting materials without the presence of party representatives or independent domestic observers. These examples raise questions about the integrity of these procedures and their vulnerability to possible fraudulent acts."

"The US Embassy has significant concerns regarding problems and irregularities that may impact perceptions of the integrity of the electoral process, beginning with the discrepancies that have been identified between the voter registration and census results in some areas, most notably in the provinces of Gaza and Zambezia. Several incidents of serious violence and intimidation, including the assassination of a civil society leader in the run-up to election day, were disturbing and may have contributed to public doubts about a safe and fair election environment. The inability of many reputable independent domestic observer organizations to obtain credentials also raised transparency concerns. Additionally, the late release of campaign funding placed smaller political parties at a significant disadvantage."

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Detailed coverage 2019 national elections is again being provided by the *Mozambique Political Process Bulletin*, which has covered all of Mozambique's multi-party elections. We will have a large team of local journalists throughout the country, ensuring that our reports are accurate and verified.

The elections newsletter is also in Portuguese; para subscrever <http://eepurl.com/gnZXPz>

The newsletters covering the 2018 local elections are on <http://bit.ly/LocEI2018>

Newsletters from 2013 local elections and 2014 national elections are on <http://bit.ly/2H066Kg>


There are two archives of historic elections data, at IESE on <http://www.iese.ac.mz/eleicoes-resultados/> and at London School of Economics on <http://bit.ly/MozEIData>

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