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The machines did not break down, they were manipulated

According to an investigation undertaken by the Bulletin “CIP Eleicoes”, there are few real mechanical failures, and most of the alleged problems are caused, intentionally, by brigade members to avoid registering members of the opposition parties.

A specialist in “Mobiles ID” (as the computers used in the registration are known) says that the level of breakdowns reported in these elections has never occurred in any other country. It is strange that the problems reported by the supervisors were not communicated to the Lexton/Artes Graficas consortium, which has technical staff to repair breakdowns. This sharpens suspicions that the equipment was manipulated for political purposes.

For example, there were supposedly major problems in taking photographs and recording fingerprints. Failures in capturing images and fingerprints do happen, but they are to do with the quality of the light, and the possible shine on the face of the voter, because it is greasy. The same happens with the fingerprints, when the fingers are damp or oily. But when the digital capture fails, the mobiles have a system of manual capture. The two systems cannot fail at the same time. So, in the event of failure in the automatic capture, resort to the manual system is recommended. Furthermore, the brigades were instructed that, in the event of failing to capture images, the voter should be asked to wipe his face with a cloth or towel, or even with his hands, as a solution.

What happened is that the brigade members did not resort to manual capture of images, nor did they recommend to voters that they pass a cloth or towel over their faces to wipe away the shine from their skin.

The investigation by the Bulletin “CIP Eleicoes” shows that the mobiles present few problems and none of them are related to what has always been reported. The most common problems with these machines concern overheating, or factory defects, or then software or hardware problems. All these cases amount to less than 1%. That is, they are insignificant. According to the specialist, if the problem

is a software breakdown, repairs are carried out in minutes or hours, and never take a day, contrary to what has been reported. If it is a hardware problem, there is a guarantee of immediate replacement.

So the problems presented by the supervisors during the voter registration have nothing to do with the problems that are common in this type of technology. Many of these problems can only occur in situations of bad connections, or by disconnecting the cables, deliberately or by mistake. The specialist we have been citing adds that no problem can take more than a day to be solved. He found it strange that there are breakdowns that last for weeks.

The Bulletin “CIP Eleicoes” knows that STAE-Central and STAE in Maputo City and Matola have equipment in reserve, to deal with breakdowns at any point. In fact, the extra Mobiles were distributed just in the last two weeks to the northern and central provinces. There were 42 extra Mobiles in all.

The argument presented by STAE in Tete that some machines presented pictures of hyenas is, for the specialist, an example of exaggeration in the manipulation of equipment. According to him, in none of the 161 countries where they are used do the machines show pictures of animals.

The messages of “Supervisores Beira”: the example of manipulating the machines

The explanation of the Specialist in Mobiles ID is consistent with the messages exchanged in the WhatsApp group “Supervisores Beira”, and with the cases of Ribaué and Matola. The techniques which we shall reveal below could be fundamental for preventing the registration of citizens in the areas of influence of the opposition on Friday and Saturday (2 and 3 June).

The WhatsApp messages between the supervisors and the STAE Beira District Director allow us to conclude that many of the breakdowns are manipulated, because the pattern of the type of breakdowns revealed is the same. For example, supervisor Linete asks her colleagues to standardize the techniques for manipulating the machines. She asks them to follow the technique she is using to inform undocumented voters that “the machine does not recognize witnesses and personal notes (cedulas), it’s the system of the machines”, and not her. Then the voter has no choice but to give up, aware that “the problem is the machine”, and not the supervisor.

Another supervisor explains another technique used: “at the end of the registration of each citizen, the computer first asks to record it. At the end of the recording, the next step is printing, which is just clicking twice on the image in the corner”. He does not explain what happens then, after the double click, but certainly it’s a technique that benefits Frelimo, because in the following comment Supervisor Jose recognizes that “his suggestion is good and thanks to this double click we are reaching a hundred or so (voters)”.

The third technique is explained by Supervisor JB when he states that, after Frelimo monitors, with whom he coordinates, warn him that the greater number of voters in the queue “were not ours”, “I switched off the machine and only operated it again when the situation was benefitting us”. He recognizes that he took the decision unilaterally, which could have cost him dear. But “fortunately now we have this orientation” from the director.

Zilia Nagimo has a technique different from the other supervisors: “In our post when he is ours (referring to a voter from Frelimo) we witness in silence: the monitor and the operator or the two operators who are myself and the data input operator, so as not to flag anything up”.

The Beira STAE district director congratulates his colleagues, whom he calls “family”, because “the enemy (i.e. the opposition) is anxious, but we need to continue attacking”. He orders the supervisors only to accept witnesses and cédulas if this benefits Frelimo. In answer, JB reconfirms “so, in order to favour our own, I will resume the practice”. Supervisor JB thanked the instruction from his director and says “the endorsement (of the director) was worthwhile because, in fact, I had already determined the end of witnesses because I noted that the only ones who brought undocumented people were the MDM and Renamo monitors, and the neighbourhood, unit and block secretaries”. According to supervisor JB, the neighbourhood, unit and block secretaries “were almost camping on the outskirts of the registration post”.

He announces that, in addition to abolishing, on his own initiative, witnesses and cédulas, he took another initiative to prevent the registration of voters from the opposition – he refused to issue voter cards to individuals who were not born in Beira. He would only issue them when this benefitted Frelimo.

JB reports proudly to the group that “the enemy has now understood that in my post it’s impossible, and so the crowds have diminished”.

In another communication, JB informs the director that the crowds are shrinking because they (the opposition voters) “have understood that they will not register by these two means (witnesses and cédulas)”. He told the director “we have good information that the crowds will resume, but this time they will bring identity card receipts. So they are applying en masse for identity cards. The enemy is smart”.

Blocking opposition voters also affected Frelimo voters who were confused with opposition supporters. This worried supervisor Mateus Capondo, which led him to warn the others to step up their collaboration with the monitors from the Frelimo Party.

“There are supervisors who are turning away comrades at the registration posts because they don’t know where they come from, and also, I think, for lack of communication”, revealed Capondo who added that he had received “five comrades who came away from another post”.


Gisela Patricio confirms that “this kind of incident can happen” because “in this type of cleansing (of opposition voters) one will always escape, mainly when the supervisor does not know our (voters/comrades) in the zone where he is stationed”. She suggests that “a lot of communication with the monitor is needed and you must pay a great deal of attention”. She warns that this exercise “is not easy, but it is possible”.

Gisela Patricio invented the technique of “sleeping on the computer”. But, before explaining what this technique consists of, she says that “in the early hours” her registration post “was full of a group in our favour, but at around 14.00 the scenario changed”. From their behavior, she believed the queue was full of opposition voters. To block them, she took the following decision: “I asked the monitor to go out and check the queue to see if they were ours or not”. The monitor did as he was asked. On his return, he told the supervisor that “most of them were not ours”. This information

worried the supervisor, and as a blocking measure, she introduced her technique. “Since we still had validated documents within the room, I ordered the data input operator to sleep on the computer”. She explained that this meant “take more time to register a voter, even knowing that one or more of our own was in the queue”. At the end, she said she asked the monitor to identify “our comrades and tell them to come back tomorrow, first thing in the morning”.

She ends her message, claiming the technique was effective because “at my post many went home without registering”. She swears that, in order to help Frelimo, “I will do this as many times as necessary”.

Apart from this technique, in other posts in some districts, computer breakdowns were alleged when in fact the machines were fully operational. They were used at dead of night to register voters. The most obvious case is that of Ribaue district, in which two machines were taken from posts in the district capital in order to register people from outside the municipal area. The supervisors alleged that the two machines had broken down and the brigade spent a week without registering anybody because of the supposed mechanical breakdown. An identical scenario occurred in Matola city, where the machines were said to be out of order, but were in fact being used at night, up to about 23.00, and on several days.

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