

# ZIMBABWE: Weekly Update Monday 7 March 2011

## 1. Electoral Preparations

- Despite expectations of increased violence and intimidation, most Zimbabweans want elections held in 2011, according to a report produced by Freedom House and the Mass Public Opinion Institute this week. The report, which was launched on Friday in Johannesburg, follows a survey carried out by the two organisations with the help of South African political commentator, Susan Booysen. The survey relied on interviews with 1 200 adult Zimbabweans in all ten provinces to come to the following findings: 58% of the respondents reported that they have experienced violence and intimidation, while 89% say they do not feel free to express political views. The survey also found that 11% wanted elections immediately, while 46% chose 2011, which, according to the report, means that 57% want elections this year. 74% of those surveyed believe that fear affects how people vote and 55% stated that fear of violence makes people abstain from voting.
- With respect to political parties, the Freedom House survey shows that MDC-T has suffered a drop of support since a similar survey by the same organisation in 2009. In 2009, Freedom House's survey put the MDC support base at 55%, down in 2010 to 38%. ZANU (PF) has apparently gained 5% points from 12% to 17%. MDC-M "has effectively disappeared", according to the report, with a support base of below 1% and ZAPU also has a support base "in the sub 1% zone". Spokesperson of the MDC-T Nelson Chamisa this week dismissed the report, saying that it was produced in an environment of fear when people were not free to express themselves.
- This week the Institute of Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) also produced a report warning of a possible military coup in Zimbabwe if ZANU (PF) loses or if President Mugabe dies. In the report, SADC is urged to ensure that security sector reform is given priority.
- Meanwhile, in a statement to mark International Women's Day on Tuesday, ZimRights released a statement showing that most women fear the possibility of rape during elections,

saying

"As the country heads for the constitution referendum and presidential elections, the security of women is of major concern as most fear reliving the violations of the 2008 elections. Most women became victims of rape, torture and intimidation either for participating in politics or being married or related to men who are actively involved in politics. This has negatively affected women's participation in not only politics but in most governance processes."

## **2. International Relations**

- The European Union (EU) this week deplored the failure of the Inclusive Government to deal with the issues that gave rise to targeted measures in the first place, saying that democracy, human rights and the rule of law have not improved much since the imposition of the measures in 2002. However, the bloc has said that these measures can be reviewed any time if there appears to be improvement in the human rights situation in Zimbabwe.

"After the removal of 35 persons from the list in February 2011, the list contains 163 persons who are prevented from travelling to and accessing their assets in the EU... Also affected are the 31 companies associated with those persons targeted by the visa ban and a few controlled by State companies," the EU said in a statement.

- The EU position mirrors more or less the United States position as stated by a top official, Susan Page, this week while on a visit to Zimbabwe on Friday. Ms Page reiterated that the United States will not shift its position on targeted measures unless political violence and human rights violations cease.
- On Wednesday ZANU (PF) organized an "anti-sanctions" march in Harare, where messages denouncing the MDC, EU and the US were chanted. Civil society organisations in Zimbabwe have accused ZANU (PF) of force-marching some of those who attended to the meeting, especially members of the Apostolic Faith.

**ENDS**