

2019 General Elections - 81

Mozambique Political Process Bulletin

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EU hits "unlevel playing field" and "climate of fear" in harsh statement

"An unlevel playing field was evident throughout the campaign," said the European Union Observation Mission in an unusually harsh interim statement this afternoon. "The ruling party dominated the campaign in all provinces and benefited from the advantages of incumbency, including unjustified use of state resources, and more police escorts and media coverage than opponents."

"Frelimo received the largest share of [public media] coverage, often in an uncritical tone," the EU noted. "The President of the Republic was often shown or mentioned in his official capacity, promoting projects and giving speeches."

"Limitations of freedom of assembly and movement of opposition parties were often reported."

The EU mission also highlighted the general lack of trust. "A lack of public trust was observed in the impartiality of the national police forces, who were often perceived as more supportive of the ruling party and not managing properly the election related incidents and complaints. ... The murder of a prominent national observer by members of the national police force had the effect of exacerbating an already existing climate of fear and self-censorship prevalent in Mozambican society."

The CNE and STAE were a particular target of criticism, and the EU cited the "lack of confidence that the electoral administration (CNE and STAE) and the judiciary were independent and free from political influence. ... The CNE missed important legal deadlines, including the late disbursement of public campaign financing to political parties. ... There was also poor public communication by electoral authorities to keep all political parties and the public informed."

The EU was also critical of some parts of the voting and counting process. The EU "observed four cases of ballot box stuffing in Sofala and Manica. The absence of national observers in almost half of polling stations did not contribute to the transparency of the process." And results sheets (editais) were not posted at 14 observed polling stations, as required by law.

Arson in Angoche

The car and residence of the Chief of the Namaponda administrative post, Angoche, Nampula, were set on fire on election day, 15 October, by people who alleged that secret ballot boxes were hidden there. The vehicle had been used to carry ballot boxes to the local STAE headquarters.

Also in Namaponda, two Frelimo secretaries' houses were burned down in Corona and two annexed rooms of the Namaripe primary school erected with local material were set on fire.

Paying staff to allow stuffing

In Morrumbala district, Zambezia, Frelimo gave money to the polling station members to facilitate ballot box stuffing. The day before voting, polling station presidents were summoned at the locality government office in the middle of the night and given envelopes containing 20,000 meticaís (\$325) to distribute to polling station staff to manipulate the results, several people who received money told our correspondents.

In Milange, Zambezia, a hundred observers from the unknown SIM (yes) group took advantage of special voting rights to vote several times - which requires the collaboration of polling station staff to not require them to put their fingers in the indelible ink.

At Mongue, Milange, an observer was surprised trying to introduce 15 votes into the ballot box, infuriating the population. Police were called in to intervene, but the alleged observer fled.

Tried for ballot box stuffing in Tete

Five polling station members (MMV's) are on trial in the Mutarara district court. Most are presidents and vice president, accused by Renamo of providing additional ballot papers to voters identified as members of Frelimo. The cases were reported at Inhangoma at polling stations at three primary schools - Cachaco, 1st May and Mapulangos. While the trial is taking place, dozens of Renamo members are waiting outside the courtroom for the final verdict.

Renamo boycott not total

Renamo ordered its party delegates (poll watchers) to boycott the district tabulations. Our correspondents report Renamo absent in most districts and present in some districts, including Beira, Dondo and Matola.

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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> The LSE archive now has detailed 2013 and 2014 results, by polling station.

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