

2013 Local Elections



Mozambique political process bulletin

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Despite the spectre of war

Local elections campaign begins Tuesday

The official local election campaign begins Tuesday 5 November and ends Sunday 17 November, two days before the voting for mayors and assemblies in 53 municipalities on Wednesday 20 November.

Despite a fear of return to war triggered by military actions in Sofala and Nampula provinces, the National Elections Commission (CNE) says everything is ready for the start of the campaign.

Political activity and campaigning is permitted at any time, but the official campaign period gives candidates, parties and citizens' lists extra rights to put up posters and hold meetings and marches. During the official campaign, state institutions and state-owned media, as well as private owners of meeting halls, must give equal treatment to all parties and lists. A detailed election manual, in Portuguese, *Por Eleições Transparentes, Livres e Justas*, is available on bit.ly/183rYfQ.

Although parties and candidates receive public funding in national elections, this does not happen in municipal elections, and candidates must organise their own resources.

Material will be distributed 6 days before polling

Voting material are now being produced in South Africa for 4,214 polling stations in 893 voting centres, typically schools. CNE President Abdul Carimo promised that all materials would be in the municipalities six days before voting. It is one of a series of actions taken by the CNE to smooth the electoral processes and do fewer things at the last minute.

However, four years after the 2009 election, the CNE still does not have a functioning website, and has never produced the detailed results of the 2008 and 2009 elections. Results from 2003 and 2004 were distributed on cd before the 2009 elections, but four years has not been enough for the CNE and STAE this time.

CNE guarantees to punish anyone who 'stains' the electoral process

The CNE will not accept any attempt to "stain the electoral process", said CNE president Abdul Carimo, and he promised severe punishments for any violations.

At a press conference in Maputo Thursday, he admitted that in 2009 there were problems with polling station staff who committed fraud and were not punished. "The time will be different", he said, and CNE is watching for fraud.

In the past there were examples of ballot box stuffing and invalidating opposition ballot papers. "Polling station staff cannot repeat what has happened in the past. This year we will prosecute and punish." And he reminded journalists that the CNE now contains both a judge and a public prosecutor who can carry out those actions.

Fingerprints will be used to prosecute anyone registering twice

When people registered between 25 May and 23 July, they provided their fingerprints. The registration system has software which compares fingerprints and identifies people who have registered more than once.

Registering more than once is a crime punishable by a fine of between two and three times the national minimum wage.

A less sophisticated fingerprint comparison system was used in 2008 and 2009, and some people who registered more than once were excluded. No one was prosecuted and STAE refused to say how many multiple registrations were identified.

Fingerprints are already being checked and CNE head Carimo said some multiple registrations had been identified and would be prosecuted. The most extreme case so far is someone who registered four times, he said, and he is being pursued and the CNE will ask for "exemplary punishment."

New code stresses polling stations must accept protests

In the past, polling station staff fell into a "habit" of not accepting protests and complaints from parties, admitted CNE President Abdul Carimo. He knows this first hand, because he was previously head of the civil society Electoral Observatory.

This year, polling station staff have been trained that they must accept formal protests and complaints, and this has been included in a special Code of Conduct for staff.

Carimo says there was a problem in the past that police, polling station staff, and political party delegates had a poor understanding of the electoral law. To resolve this, three Codes of Conduct have been written – for polling stations staff, for police, and for political parties, candidates, and party representatives in polling stations. It is hoped these will serve as guides, and reduce the number of problems.

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