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Election campaign calm, orderly, and materially poor

Report of the first week of the campaign for the 19 November local elections, by CIP (Centro de Integridade Pública), as published in *Savana*, 14.11.08

A calm and orderly atmosphere in nearly all municipalities characterised the first week of the 2008 municipal election campaign. In Tete caravans of campaign cars of the two major parties, Frelimo and Renamo, passed on the same avenue peacefully, each giving space to the other to pass. To be sure, there were occurrences of violence in Beira – involving supporters of the Renamo candidate Manuel Pereira and the independent candidate Deviz Simango – and Dondo – involving Frelimo and Renamo. In these and other municipalities, the various parties, notably Frelimo and Renamo, allege that their campaign posters have been vandalised secretly at night by youths instigated by the other side. With rare exceptions, no campaign has proven these allegations, although there have been some arrests.

In contrast to 1998 and 2003, when the electoral campaigns were dominated by national political issues, these elections have been dominated by local issues such as improving rubbish collection, hygiene conditions in markets, access roads, and urban transport systems. Some candidates even promise to lower the prices of food in the market and expand access to universities. However, it is rare for candidates to raise the question about income to pay for these promises.

Various campaigning styles have become apparent. Grand caravans of cars, marches down the main streets, and big meetings are carried out mainly by Frelimo, Renamo and the Beira independent candidate Deviz Simango. All candidates talk about their door-to-door canvassing, but again Frelimo, Renamo and Deviz Simango are more visible, also going into the markets to appeal for votes from traders and shoppers.

For many small extra-parliamentary parties, “door-to-door campaigning” means just a period of reflection in which they do nothing, and use the phrase as an excuse to journalists for their electoral silence. But for others, it means walking long distances to various neighbourhoods and markets to contract voters.

Although at a lower level than in 2003, Frelimo is continuing to use state resources for its campaign. Members of the central, provincial and district governments are

reinforcing the campaigns of Frelimo candidates in all municipalities and – as well as being absent from their jobs – are using cars, motorcycles, fuel, and per-diems of the state for electoral campaigns. Frelimo is also posting election posters in the buildings of state institutions.

In contrast to past elections, these have been more frugal, without the traditional distribution of t-shirts, caps and capulanas which came showering down at rallies and parades. The partial exception has been Frelimo, which has better organisation and more money, as well as privileged access to state resources. Other parties, such as PDD, had given out caps and shirts in 2004. The overall impression is that the civility and orderly conduct of this campaign has some connection to the fact that the parties are not being financed this year by the state through CNE/STAE.

This report is a short summary of the daily reports of our 50 journalists in the 43 municipalities. In addition to this, CIP has two telephone lines (829 865 659 and 843 865 659), open 24 hours a day, for our “citizen correspondents” to send text messages (SMS) giving their points of view about the election campaign.

Centro de Integridade Pública

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