



2009 Elections



Mozambique political process bulletin

Number 19
23 October 2009

www.elections2009.cip.org.mz

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Published by CIP, Centro de Integridade Pública and AWEPA, the European Parliamentarians for Africa
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400 registration posts will not have polling stations

People are supposed to be able to vote in the same place as they register, but there will be no polling stations at the location of about 400 of this year's registration posts. Of these, 250 are in four districts in Niassa – Cuamba, Mecanhelas, Metarica and Nipepe. This means some people will have to walk many hours extra and may have trouble even finding their polling station.

The law says that polling stations must be in the same place as registration whenever possible, but also calls for the use of better buildings, such as new schools, when this is possible. Thus not having a polling station at the registration point is not illegal. But it will cause serious problems for some voters.

In Niassa, some of the changes are large. According to STAE lists, Etatara in Cuamba district, Niassa, had 31 registration posts but will only have 15 polling stations. Ntsaca in Mecanhelas district had 65 registration posts but will have only 42 polling stations. Local journalists say voters already had to walk up to two hours to reach registration posts, and will now have to walk three to five hours to reach a polling station.

CNE and STAE have said nothing about not having polling stations at these locations, and have not said how voters will be informed. Indeed, our estimate of 400 is based on a laborious comparison of lists of polling stations with lists of registration posts. This is made more difficult because there is no accurate list of polling stations. Both published lists have gaps. For example, in Tete the entire districts of Cahora Bassa, Changara, Chifunde, Chiúta, Macanga and Mágoe are missing, as is Sango in Niassa.

Adriano Nuvunga

Police fined for election crimes

Two police have been fined by the court in Murrupula, Nampula, for damaging Renamo election material, confirmed António de Oliveira Maneque, Nampula provincial police head of public relations.

The two policemen had been sent to ensure security during the campaign in an area of tension, but instead of carrying out their professional responsibilities, they opted to pull down Renamo posters, Maneque said.

And in Nacarôa, Nampula, a policeman has been suspended for putting up Frelimo posters.

Renamo members freed

Ten Renamo supporters were free by the Angoche district court because of lack of proof. They had been detained and charged with assault, destroying Frelimo campaign material, and assaulting the police station to try to free other detained Renamo members. The group includes party agents Aide Mecussirima Chande and Macie Molide, and the group was still in jail when Renamo head Afonso Dhlakama passed through Angoche.

But the court also issued formal charges against Renamo members Ussene Age, Alimo Carlos and Carlos Augusto.

Meanwhile, the election campaign remains calm and quiet, with parties concentrating on training their polling station agents.

Governor tells civil servants to vote Frelimo

Health and education staff in Maxixe, Inhambane, were called to a meeting with provincial governor Francisco José Meque yesterday, 22 October. But the main message of the meeting turned out to be an appeal for vote for Frelimo. Many people left their workplaces to attend, and there were large queues at the local health post as patients waited to see the smaller number of medical staff on duty.

Collecting voters cards in Ribáué

Passing themselves off as election staff, claiming to be members of STAE (Secretariado Técnico da Administração Eleitoral), at least ten people have this week been running an intense campaign to collect voters cards in Ribáué, according to a report in *Wamphula Fax* (21 October) and confirmed by our journalist there.

At least 100 cards have been collected, mainly from Renamo members in Nacocola, Nipopuene, Chíca and Ratane. The reason for the card collection is not clear, but Renamo district agent Flores Victor Armando argues that it is a campaign to keep Renamo supporters from voting.

Comment

CNE needs to show 'we have nothing to hide'

With less than a week to go before the election, the National Elections Commission is obviously under huge pressure. But the CNE has had several years to prepare, and this is Mozambique's 7th multi-party election, so there should be few surprises.

But one result of the pressure has been to reduce the already tiny flow of information. Except for brief news items, nothing has been posted on the CNE website in more than a month. There are still no lists of candidates and no information on recent CNE decisions. There is still no complete and correct list of polling stations – the list published in *Notícias* has many errors and the list on the website also has mistakes.

In some ways, it seems that secrecy is increasing. In an article below, we note that in setting the number of parliament (AR) seats, the CNE was forced to violate a law, because the law is wrong. The same thing happened in 1999, and the CNE in that year explained why it had to act and why it made its decision. This year, the CNE has never even said that it had to violate the law, nor explained how it responded, so is less transparent than the CNE a decade ago.

In the article above, we note that the CNE appears to have decided not to have polling stations in some places where there was registration. Again, there has been no statement and no explanation.

These decisions may be sensible and correct, but we do not even know, officially, that the decisions have been taken. We must compare the few lists published to look for changes.

In recent days the CNE has been accused of favouring some small parties and making life difficult for others. We try to be serious journalists and investigate such allegations, but we cannot, because the CNE keeps secret most the relevant documents. CNE documents released by the parties and reported by the Constitutional Council appear to show major discrepancies and errors, but there is no way to check. All we can do is report the claims.

Members of the CNE are honourable people working hard to ensure a good election. But they are asking us to trust them to take decisions, without any reports or explanations. That trust must be constantly earned and renewed, most importantly by showing the public the details of decisions to show that they have been correct. But this is not happening.

And we know that, acting in secret, the CNE has made mistakes and wrong decisions. The Constitutional Council has repeatedly criticised the CNE. For example, in the local elections last year, the CNE, acting in secret and without explanation, changed the results for Milange. The CC said the CNE was wrong, and changed the results back.

After six elections, we know that in the tabulation phase, errors in polling station editais and many other problems must be resolved. The CNE must make choices and decisions – that is its job. But those choices and decisions cannot be kept secret. Lack of transparency and lack of information breeds distrust.

The voters of Milange have never had any explanation of why their results were changed twice. The voters of Nampula in this election have never been told that they have one less AR seat than specified in the law, nor have they been told why. Voters in Niassa have not been told why they will not have some polling stations. What possible reason can the CNE have to keep this information secret?

In his 6 October interview with *Notícias* CNE President João Leopoldo da Costa said “we have nothing to hide”. If so, why is so much still hidden?

How the CNE responds

When the law is wrong

but does not tell anyone

The number of parliament (AR) seats assigned by the National Elections Commission (CNE) to various provinces does not follow the law – and cannot follow the law, because the election law contains an arithmetic mistake, and has done so for many years. The response of the CNE appears sensible, but it has not publicly said what it did.

The election law 7/2007 article 159 sets out how the number of AR seats are to be assigned to the 11 provincial constituencies. There are 248 seats for Mozambique, so article 159 says divide the total number of voters by 248, which gives a number of voters per seat, and then divide the number of voters in each province by this number, to calculate the number of seats. First take the whole number of seats. Second, look at the remainder, and if it is more than half, add another seat.

The only problem is that the total may not equal 248. This is the reason that elsewhere in the electoral law they use the much more complex d'Hondt method to allocate seats. This error has been in every electoral law since 1994, and gave a wrong answer this year and in 1999.

The table below gives the calculation this year:

	Voters	Voters / 39 579	Whole number of seats	More than half → extra seat	Total seats
Niassa	544 770	13.764	13	1	14
Cabo Delgado	888 197	22.441	22		22
Nampula	1 801 249	45.510	45	1	46
Zambézia	1 770 910	44.744	44	1	45
Tete	796 257	20.118	20		20
Manica	648 969	16.397	16		16
Sofala	772 630	19.521	19	1	20
Inhambane	641 387	16.205	16		16
Gaza	639 658	16.162	16		16
Maputo Prov.	616 208	15.569	15	1	16
Maputo-Cidade	695 354	17.569	17	1	18
Total	9 815 589				249

Voters per seat 39 579

There are 9 815 589 voters and 248 seats, so that means 39 579 voters for each seat. The third column shows the result when the voters in each province are divided by the 39 579 voters per seat. First, we allocate the whole numbers of seats. Then we take the remainder and if it is more than half, assign a seat. So for Niassa, the result is 13.764 seats, which means the whole number is 13 seats, and the 0.764 left is more than half, so it receives another seat. By contrast, Cabo Delgado with a quotient of 22.441 receives its 22 seats, but the 0.441 remaining is less than half, so it gains no extra seat.

But following the law means that 249 seats are assigned instead of 248. Something similar happened in 1999, when this system also assigned 249 seats. So the law is wrong – it has an arithmetic error. The method established in the law gives an impossible answer.

So the CNE has to find a way to correct the error. In this case, it must take one seat away. But how?

The CNE took the seat away from Nampula, which will have 45 seats in the AR instead of the 46 according to the law. But why was that choice made? Did the CNE simply decide to take the seat away from the largest province? That is possible.

An alternative reason would be to look closely at the remainders. Nampula has the smallest, 0.510 which is just over half. Sofala is next, with 0.521. So that could also be a reason to choose Nampula.

In 1999 the CNE has the same problem and used the second method, again taking a seat from the province with the remainder closest to half, which in 1999 was also Nampula. In that year, the CNE announced what it had done and gave an explanation. However, the current CNE is more secretive. Its announcement of seats does not say that it could not follow the law, and so does not say how it resolved the problem.

The CNE never said Nampula lost a seat, nor did it explain why.

Polling station staff strike for better conditions

About 1150 polling station staff being trained in 11 classes in Sofala went on strike on 20 October to demand better food from the CFM guest house where they are staying. They said they had only been fed cabbage and rice for the first week.

The strike occurred when Sofala STAE head Chimoio Sousa was visiting the training. The boycott lasted several hours and ended when STAE promised better and more varied food. The trainees then returned to their classes.

Campaign summary

Incidents reported by our 100 journalists.

Violence

Manhiça, Maputo Province: The trial of seven Frelimo supporters accused of assaulting MDM members on 30 September has been adjourned by Judge Josué Matsinhe to await medical reports.

Machanga, Sofala: Renamo supporters joined an MDM parade on 21 October and then used a sound system and singing and dancing to break up the march. The Renamo supporters were then stoned by MDM reporters, resulting in some injuries.

Use of state cars by Frelimo

Mabalane, Gaza: White MMQ 55-80 Land Cruiser and green Toyota 2.8 belonging to the Limpopo National Park. Education white MMS 14-06 Nissan Hardbody. Rural Hospital MMR 60-76 white Nissan. District administration MMR 34-55 black double cabin Ford Ranger. Fisheries Ministry MMJ 63-66 blue Toyota. Ministry of Science and Technology red MMJ 92-97 double cabin. Ministry of Agriculture MMF 95-18.

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