

Mozambique political process bulletin

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High turnout with long queues remaining at 11 am

Our journalists throughout the country report a high turnout today and that at 11 am most polling stations still had long queues, often more than 50 people. Most polling stations opened on time at 7 am or soon after. More than 80 of our journalists who are within mobile telephone range reported this morning.

Polling stations in a number of areas have not opened because register books were missing, including Meconta and Namialo, Nampula, and Machanga, Sofala. In Manjacaze, Gaza, and Moatize, Tete, some polling stations opened late.

Many of our correspondents report a wide variation in the length of queues, which means a large differences in the speed with which people can vote, and the systems being used by polling station staff. In general, the new procedures seem to be working, with a polling station staff member outside the classroom door with a copy of the register finding the name of the person on this list. The voter is told their sequence number, which they tell to the mesa secretary, making it easier to find and tick off their name on the official register.



But the variation was shown at the school in Unidade 18 in Maputo, where polling stations in some classrooms ran smoothly, while 0145 was in confusion with poorly organised queues and arguments at the door about who was next, which further delayed the voting. Eventually a policeman intervened and is shown in the photo on the first page, helping to sort out the queue as voters continue to argue about who was next.

Similarly in Beira, 009 Palmeiras had to close for 15 minutes because of trouble in the queue; police intervened. There are other reports of queue confusion and temporary closures in Quissico, Inhambane (0911) and Pemba Metuge (1050 and 1051)

Other than disorganisation in queues and a few polling stations lacking register books, our journalists have reported few other problems. In Chibuto, Gaza, in Chimundzo (polling stations 902 and 261) the neighbourhood secretary and a community leader were standing at the polling station door, pointing to the middle position on the sample ballot paper to tell people to vote for Armando Guebuza.

From CNE president

Strong reminders to polling station staff to be non-party & reject self interest

“We particularly appeal to polling station staff to act in an exemplary manner,” declared the National Elections Commission (CNE) in a nationally broadcast statement read out yesterday by President João Leopoldo da Costa.

One-third of the statement was addressed to polling station staff, and was again taking a strong line to try to prevent the ballot box stuffing and other illegal actions in past elections by a few polling station staff.

The statement continues that staff “must be conscious that in this process they will interact with citizens of different political sensibilities and thus we appeal again for professionalism.”

“Independent of your individual political convictions, your interests and perceptions, we appeal to you to act with total denial of self interest”, the statement concludes.

The hard line builds on the polling station staff manual and the code of conduct for election staff, which stress that individuals can be jailed for electoral offenses such as ballot box stuffing or refusing to accept a written protest from a party delegate.

Count is open

The CNE statement goes on to stress that in the interests of “transparency and justice” district and provincial election commissions are again being told that “party delegates and national and international observers can watch the counting of votes.”

CNE issues instructions on bad cards and register errors

Instructions to polling stations on how to deal with problems in voters cards and the register books were issued by the CNE of Saturday 24 October and posted on its website yesterday. (Deliberação n.º 71/CNE/2009 posted on <http://www.stae.org.mz/pages/cne/deliberacoes.php>).

In two decisions they have taken a hard line which may exclude some voters.

Voters not in the register cannot vote, even if they have a voters card. There are no exceptions, except those set out in law – journalists, polling station staff, etc.

Voters cards without photos have already caused some polemic, and the CNE has decided the if the voter's card has no photo, the voter must present some other form of photo ID such as a work or student card.

But for minor errors, the CNE was more inclusive. Voters with minor errors on their cards – no stamp, no registration post signature, no fingerprint, or with the registration number not visible – can vote as usual, as long as they are in the register book.

COMMENT: The CNE has opted to not allow people to vote if there is any doubt about their eligibility. Renamo in at least two press conferences has shown voters cards without photos, and said this would allow people to vote falsely. This decision prevents that, by forcing people to have another photo-ID card. But it could exclude some rural people for whom the voters card is the only ID card.

Similarly, the decision on names not on the register is a response to opposition fears of false voters cards. But it may also cut the other way. MDM says it fears that some of its supporters have been intentionally left off registers, and now will not be allowed to vote even if they do have a card. *jh*

- The CNE has finally posted on its website its detailed and important instructions for polling day and for the counting process at all levels. It is Deliberação n.º 69/CNE/2009 de 27 de Setembro (Directiva do sufrágio e apuramento dos resultados). It also is posted on <http://www.stae.org.mz/pages/cne/deliberacoes.php>

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