

2013 Local Elections



Mozambique political process bulletin



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16 towns to watch

Based on past voting records as well as the quality of current candidates, we think there are 16 of the 53 municipalities where the opposition has a chance to do well in elections on Wednesday. Of those, 12 are existing municipalities and four are new this year.

The existing municipalities are:

Beira (Sofala)
Quelimane (Zambézia)
Nacala-Porto (Nampula)
Nampula
Chimoio (Manica)
Gurué (Zambézia)
Marromeu (Sofala)
Monapo (Nampula)
Mocímboa da Praia (Cabo Delgado)
Ilha de Moçambique (Nampula)
Angoche (Nampula)
Alto Moloqué (Zambézia)

and the four new ones:

Nhamatanda (Sofala)
Maganja (Zambézia)
Nhamayabué (Tete)
Mandimba (Niassa)Comment

Comment

Crossing a line

In all elections the party in power has an advantage. For example, it is the season and the rains that determine the launch of the agricultural campaign – but coming at the time of the election campaign gives Frelimo leaders useful extra publicity.

The electoral law has been written in a way that tries to maintain a balance, and in two ways the

governing party appears to have crossed the line between fairness and imbalance.

The law requires that state-owned media such as *Notícias* "must give a non-discriminatory journalistic treatment to the various candidates." The law does not demand absolute equality and allows journalistic independence.

This year, *Notícias* appears to have crossed the line to imbalance. In the three days Thursday-Saturday, page 2 has been used for interviews with experts and prominent people who all write positively about Frelimo. One headline says "Frelimo's platform reflects the aspirations of the people". Others put stress on the importance of experience, which points to the party in power. On the two pages (6-7) devoted to the campaign, the biggest pictures and biggest headlines are for Frelimo. On Saturday on page 7, the two prominent articles about MDM were both negative – a claimed attack and claim that an MDM candidate named Mondlane was not in the family of Eduardo Mondlane. Both are journalistically legitimate, but similar negative articles have not been published about Frelimo. There are articles and photos about MDM and various citizens' lists, so the opposition is not excluded. In past election campaigns, *Notícias* had been careful to maintain a balance, but in the most recent three days, it has failed to maintain "a non-discriminatory journalistic treatment."

Similarly, there have been complaints from teachers and other civil servants about being called to Frelimo political meetings during working hours, as they were in Maputo and Inhambane on Thursday. Maputo teachers complained that although they were supposed to be marking exams, their heads of schools urged them to attend. If your boss says "this is a political meeting so you do not have to attend, but I would really appreciate it if you did", there are few people who are looking for promotion who would say no. Again, a line has been crossed to the side of imbalance and unfairness.

Mozambique's electoral process remains relatively fair and balanced, but the ruling party should be careful to use its natural advantages, and not cross into imbalance and unfairness. *jh*

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Campaign ending with mix of tranquillity and violence

The campaign which ends tonight, Sunday, has been largely peaceful, with only a few incidents of violence. The worst was in Beira (See Bulletin 43, today). In Monapo, MDM has formally accused two youths, Calisto and Joaquim, of pulling down MDM posters in Nakite, and police have confirmed they are being investigated. In Gurué, Zambezia, the MDM mayor of Quealimane, has been charged with assaulting a car park guard – a charge he denies.

Our correspondents reported peaceful ends to the campaigning in several places, including Nhamayábue (Tete), Xai-Xai (Gaza), and Mandimba (Niassa). In Marromeu (Sofala) Frelimo ended in bairro 3 de Fevereiro with a *showmício*, and MDM took the opportunity of no Frelimo opponents around to post more posters..

Nacala: police say campaign positive

In Nacala, police spokesman Omar Mussa said the campaign had passed normally without major incidents. The police accompanied party caravans as they paraded around various neighbourhoods. A correspondent confirms the campaign was peaceful, but stressed the continued use of state cars.

On Sunday Frelimo splits its campaigning in two. It had its closing *showmício* (mix of show and meeting – *comício*) with mayoral candidate Rui Chong, which another group was transported in a

dozen lorries from Nacala to Nampula to support the close of the campaign there.

Meanwhile, the MDM closed its campaign in a lower key, with mayoral candidate Fátima Reane going around in a car but followed by supporters on foot or motorcycles, going from Bairro Triângulo to the baixa (downtown).

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Letter to the CNE suggesting change to nulos requalification

This is a translation of a letter sent to the National Elections Commission by Adriano Nuvunga, Executive Director of the Public Integrity Centre (Centro de Integridade Pública, CIP), publisher of this newsletter.

Small change in procedure could catch fraud

One of the most egregious example of fraud has been the invalidation of ballot papers for the opposition, done by polling station staff. In the past, CNE procedures have made it impossible to prosecute the perpetrators. We would like to propose a small change in the way the CNE considers invalid ballot papers (nulos) that would resolve this problem.

The fraud is done during the count, when a person in the polling station adds a fingerprint for another candidate to the ballot paper. This has been the most common method of invalidating ballot papers. The ballot paper then shows an X for one candidate and a fingerprint for another, making it invalid.

Often this is done by just one person who invalidates many ballot papers.

A change in the law this year prohibiting ink in the polling station during the count will reduce this problem, but not eliminate it.

All nulos (invalid ballot papers) are sent to Maputo to be checked by the CNE, and this could provide an opportunity to catch this fraud and prosecute the perpetrators. Present CNE procedures do not permit this, but only a minor change is needed to catch these people.

Nulos are sent to Maputo because polling station staff are often too rigid in interpreting the rules, and the CNE considers many to be valid and adds them to the results.

The nulos from each polling station (assembleia de voto) arrive in Maputo in a separate sealed plastic bag. Before reconsideration, the CNE opens all the bags and puts together all the nulos from a district. For requalification, this is correct, because all that matters is the total requalified votes for the entire municipality.

But where ballot papers have been intentionally invalidated, it is often obvious. There is a fingerprint or other mark in the same place in a series of ballot papers. But when this is noticed by CNE members requalifying the ballot papers, it is no longer possible to identify the polling station, so it is impossible to prosecute this misconduct.

We propose that instead of putting together all the nulos for a district or municipality, that they are kept separate by polling station. When a CNE member feels there is an indication that a group of ballot papers have been invalidated in the same way, the nulos from that polling station would be set aside and the local STAE and CNE would be asked to investigate. Where there is a clear extra fingerprint, this would identify the person who committed the fraud.

We hope that this small change would allow some cases of fraud to be prosecuted.

Adriano Nuvunga, Executive Director of the Public Integrity Centre, 13 November 2013

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