

## Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis (CPRA) –Pretoria



### CPRA Daily Briefings

**Week 36**

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The **CPRA Daily Briefings** are held weekday mornings in the CPRA Pretoria's Situation Room and the Briefing Notes are the minutes of this meeting during which each regional expert of the Programme reports on the latest human security developments in his/her region, followed by general discussions around the table. An intern then compiles a summary of the meeting, which is reviewed by the respective researchers, and a senior researcher edits the report and provides quality control before returning it to the intern to prepare it for dispatch to the mailing list to which you have subscribed.

#### **CPRA-Pretoria research team**

Dr David Zounmenou (W. Africa)  
Mr Andrew Atta-Asamoah (E. Africa & the Horn)  
Ms Dimpho Motsamai (S. Africa)  
Dr Gwinyayi A. Dzinesa (S. Africa)  
Ms Naomi Kok (Intern)  
Ms Tarryn Warries (Intern)

**Today's Briefings**  
**Compilation**  
Ms Naomi Kok

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## **Summary of Briefings**

### **Southern Africa**

#### **Angola: opposition questions election outcome**

When the ruling Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), in power since Angola gained independence from Portugal in 1975, emerged as the winner in the 31 August elections, it came as no surprise. The MPLA emerged with 72 per cent of the votes while the main opposition, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), won 19 per cent. This represented a loss of 10 per cent and a gain of 9 per cent respectively since the 2008 polls. The new opposition coalition Broad Convergence for Angola's Salvation-Electoral Coalition (CASA-CE) managed to get 6 per cent of the votes.

As early as June, UNITA started voicing its concerns over the legitimacy of the electoral process to the National Electoral Commission (CNE). These were regarding the state of the voters' roll, the accommodation of the diaspora vote and the questionable independence and authority of the CNE itself. On Tuesday 11 September, UNITA launched a complaint with the CNE challenging the MPLA's landslide victory. According to UNITA, the 31 August elections took place in contravention to Angola's electoral laws, as it believed that the voters' roll had been manipulated. It also alleged that opposition parties did not have equal access to the media and that over a third of voters could not cast their votes.

It may seem strange that UNITA launched this complaint with the CNE, given that it is also accusing the CNE of manipulating the electoral process and outcome. However, according to the electoral law, all complaints of this nature must first be presented to the CNE before appeals can be made to the Constitutional Court. UNITA is not likely to make much progress with the Constitutional Court either, as President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, of the ruling MPLA, is responsible for appointing the judges. In addition to this, most regional and international observers declared the 31 August elections to have been free and fair, despite their problematic accreditation, and late and sparse deployment.

The fact that this situation leaves UNITA leader Isaias Samakuva with nowhere to go to complain about the state of Angola's electoral system raises serious questions over the role of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU). It also highlights that SADC should consider giving its Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) a more comprehensive

mandate. At the moment, the SEAC can only advise SADC member states on how to conduct elections and not enforce harmonisation with regional principles. Given the tainted election history of many SADC member states, particularly Zimbabwe, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is clear that the SEAC will need to do more than give advice.

There is concern that the growing trend of apathetic responses to fraudulent elections on the African continent is now taking hold of its international partners. The number of illegitimate elections and accompanying human rights violations seems to be on the increase, while well-structured responses are in short supply. This trend shows that elections can be extremely dangerous particularly when being conducted in a fragile context. While it is true that elections may be considered a tool to manage social conflict in a civilised way, they also have the potential to inflame tensions based on structural inequalities. Even so, certain donors insist on elections as a condition for their continued support. Others use the fact that there have been elections as a reason to pull out peace support missions. This reasoning contributes to the proliferation of flawed elections, as the fact that elections were held is often seen as good enough in itself, leading to flaws being deliberately overlooked.

This trend of having elections where legitimacy is considered a negotiable factor is dangerous and damaging to the state institutions and the social fabric of the countries where they take place. The situation requires ethical responses not only from African leaders but also from the international community as a whole.

**End**