



ISS/APFO PUBLIC FORUM

THE STATE OF HUMAN SECURITY IN AFRICA: ZIMBABWE

CONCEPT NOTE

The main threat to Zimbabwe's human security currently is the failure to resolve the current political impasse and the worsening economic situation. According to official results eventually released by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) on 2nd May 2008, Morgan Tsvangirai of MDC won Zimbabwe's March 29th presidential election with 47.9% of the total votes, compared to 43.2% for the President Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF. As neither got an absolute majority, a second round run-off is to be held.

It is worth noting that the presidential results were announced more than a month later and the second round should legally have taken place three weeks after that announcement. However, as a result of the state exerting its control over ZEC, the run-off has been delayed until June 27th 2008, and Mugabe is more confident that he can win through a combination of rigging and intimidation¹. Initial parliamentary results gave MDC a majority, but many of these seats are being contested in a judicial system perceived to be partial to the incumbent party.

Political violence as observed in Zimbabwe has been the culmination of structural dynamics in the country's recent history. Since the beginning of the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme towards the end of 1999 and the controversial 2000 parliamentary and March 2002 presidential elections, the political climate has remained tense and intensely polarized.

The Zimbabwe economy has as a result of the above dynamics spiralled down. The downturn is expected to intensify in 2008 and the real GDP may contract by 6.2%. With a consideration of the impending international food crisis, not to mention Zimbabwe's own perennial food and foreign exchange shortages, the increasing devaluation of the currency and the money supply caused by the government's spending have continued to drive inflation to record highs which surpassed 100,000% in January 2008 (EUI).

Unlike many other African countries which have suffered from the destructive effects of ethnic tensions, Zimbabwe has experienced very little ethnic polarization among the various ethnic and racial groups that make up Zimbabwe. However, there have been certain areas of discordance. The charges of racial and ethnic prejudice, favouritism

and marginalization have often gained renewed potency during periods of economic and political turbulence, and have often been mobilised by politicians for political gain. Voting patterns in post-independent Zimbabwe have tended to reflect ethnic relations among the various groups in the country. While ethnic and racial relations among Zimbabwe's population groups have sometimes not been harmonious, there has been no open conflict or ethnically inspired violenceⁱⁱ.

As much as democratic and political processes may not be generalised, the Zimbabwe experience will open up the discussion of the forum on a comparative reflection of Kenya's experience of its own political process. The discourse will therefore follow up with a critical analysis of Kenya's political dispensation leading to the 2007 elections and post election transition period. Structural underpinnings of Kenya's democratic transition will be discussed.

It is with this backdrop that Zimbabwe's political-social and political-economic situation will be discussed. The structural continuum towards its democratic closure will be investigated.

ⁱ Economist Intelligence Unit (EUI), *Zimbabwe Country Report, May 2008*, p.9.

ⁱⁱ See *Country Profile; Zimbabwe* in, The Institute for Security Studies, ISS, Web, <http://www.issafrica.org>