

Violence and the case for Legitimate elections in Zimbabwe

Social networks have become the new platform for Zimbabweans domiciled in various countries around the world to pool their thoughts, opinions and arguments together as the quest for a new Zimbabwe narrative slowly begins to take shape. Zimbabwe is a country which many consider to be between a rock and a hard place. Some of us see different, depending on which side of the political divide one is compelled to argue from. Zimbabweans hold different views as to the source of our problems and the route we need to follow in order to solve our problems and hopefully agree on new Zimbabwe narrative or dream as it were. Of the many subjects that are debated on the social networks, the most controversial is the one of elections under the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the much talked about demand for security sector reforms by the MDC-T party led by Morgan Tsvangirayi.

The issue of elections in Zimbabwe takes centre stage because they will ultimately determine which political party forms the next government in Zimbabwe and why. The ZANU PF party led by President Robert Mugabe wants the elections to be held this year, 2011, hence the demand for the need to speedily conclude the issue of the Constitutional referendum.

On the other hand the Morgan Tsvangirayi MDC-T wants the elections held either next year, 2012 or beyond. Amongst their numerous demands is the call for a free and free poll. Their demand for a free and fair poll is premised on the argument that the ZANU PF party led by President Robert Mugabe uses violence and coercion in order to determine the outcome of elections. And it is their contention that the 2008 elections were won by Morgan Tsvangirayi and because of the violence the election results failed to translate into political power in order for him to form a government.

The key issue that we need to interrogate fairly is the issue of violence, its source and its implications on a fair and credible poll. It is the issue of violence with regard to our elections to be held either this year, next year or when ever that we need to address for us to fully appreciate the legitimacy and the full import of a real and credible election. My argument in this regard will be premised on the fact that the biggest form of violence ever perpetrated on a people was when with the stroke of a pen the United States of America enacted ZIDERA in 2001 followed closely by its allies in Europe. Lest we forget these economic sanctions became a reality when the MDC-T political party went on a world wide campaign to have Zimbabwe sanctioned.

The impacts of the economic sanctions were and still are the biggest form of violence to have ever hit Zimbabweans. The impact of this violence played itself out during the cholera epidemic, the death of thousands due to HIV complications when the Zimbabwe government failed to provide the necessary imported medication to its citizens. The violence played itself out when inflation reached unprecedented levels. This saw many Zimbabweans loosing their life savings as the value was eaten way by inflation. Whilst not condoning the political violence that happened in the 2008 elections caused by both political parties, it is my humble submission that the economic, political and psychological violence cause by the MDC-T instigate western sanctions on Zimbabweans over the last ten years makes the 2008 election violence seem like child's play. In other words, comparatively the violence caused by the sanctions have left Zimbabweans more battered compared to the once off clashes that happened at election time.

The fundamental question that we need to ask ourselves now is, how can we justify a credible, free and fair election in Zimbabwe whilst the sanctions are in place? For Zimbabwe to have a real and credible election we need to address the issue of the political,

economic and social violence that have been perpetrated on the people of Zimbabwe by the economic sanctions of the west.

The Morgan led MDC-T has been calling for the reform of the army, intelligence, the Police and the prison services as a fundamental requirement for Zimbabwe to hold a free and credible poll. Their argument is that the security apparatus is partisan and hence they will make power transfer impossible in the event that Morgan Tsvangirayi wins the polls. My take on this matter is different. What would make the transfer of power to Morgan Tsvangirayi and his MDC-T party impossible in the event of an MDC –T electoral victory is the fact that any election held in Zimbabwe with the sanctions still in place, its outcome will not represent the true aspirations of the Zimbabwean people, sanction free aspirations. It is my belief that the impacts of the economic sanctions by western powers at the behest of the MDC-T outfit are the biggest form of violence on Zimbabweans from external forces.

The lifting of the economic sanctions on Zimbabwe is the barest minimum requirement if we are to ever have a free and credible poll. All this pussy footing about security sector reform and the drafting of a new constitution will not lead us to the Promised Land. The violent assault on Zimbabweans through economic sanctions continues to play itself out in institutions like the Kimberley Processes. Whilst the chair, Congo in this rotation has authorized Zimbabwe to sell its diamonds internationally, the same countries that have sanctioned Zimbabwe continue to make sure by whatever cruel means necessary that Zimbabweans should not climb out of the sanctions hole that they have dug up for them. So how is Zimbabwe supposed to have free and credible elections with this economic assault taking place?

It is a truism that the economic sanctions on Zimbabwe were put in place primarily to weaken the ZANU PF led Zimbabwe government and instigate the citizens of Zimbabwe to turn against its elected leadership. The general idea was to have Morgan and his MDC-T party takeover the reins of power as soon as the people of Zimbabwe, impacted by economic sanctions overthrew the Robert Mugabe administration.

The 2008 election were held in this deeply polarized environment, were sanctions having wreaked havoc on the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans proceeded to stamp their effect on the electoral outcome. Most Zimbabweans voted on empty stomachs. Donor funds fed citizens at MDC-T political rallies compelling many Zimbabweans to trade their vote for food. To this day Zimbabweans are so polarized and continue to be and hence finding a common Zimbabwe narrative will be next to impossible in a country where the sanctions are the determinative factor in everyday life.

Everyday shortages of basic services like water and electricity continue to hound Zimbabweans as the government of national unity that includes the Morgan Tsvangirayi MDC-T fails to call off the hounds of sanctions they invited onto the country. It is this environment that we are being compelled to go for elections, a sanctioned environment. It is perfectly obvious that this environment has been created to bring about only one outcome only. That outcome of an MDC-T electoral victory.

It is the understanding of this sanctioned environment and its attendant effect on the election outcome by our war veterans, army commanders and captains that has compelled them to openly declare that they will not respect an election outcome won by Morgan Tsvangirayi. How can they? It would be morally indefensible for the Zimbabwean security forces to allow the

transfer of power to a Morgan Tsvangirayi administration if he should ever win an election with sanctions in place. They have a moral duty to defend the aspirations of the Zimbabwean people's right to self determination. And those aspirations must be sanction free aspirations to hold free and fair elections without any form of external or internal influence.

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