

WTPZ Brief: Threats of violence

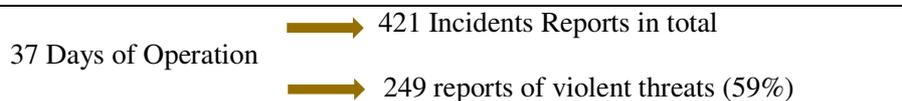
Pre-election: May 30 – 5 July, 2018

Report Date: 9 July, 2018

Introduction

Zimbabwe’s electoral history has been marked by violence, abductions and intimidation. We the People Zimbabwe (WTPZ) has set up a structure of peace monitors, in which **7,000+** citizen monitors across every province in the country are currently tracking and reporting incidents in their communities through the WTPZ call center. This report is an analysis of these incidents over 5 weeks.

Since 30 May, 2018, WTPZ has received reports of human rights and election related offences. These include assaults, people being forced to attend party gatherings and vote-buying. Overall, the most frequently occurring violation has been “threats of violence”.



Reports that citizens are being threatened have been consistent in nature, widespread and appear to be increasing as the number of reports to the call center increase.

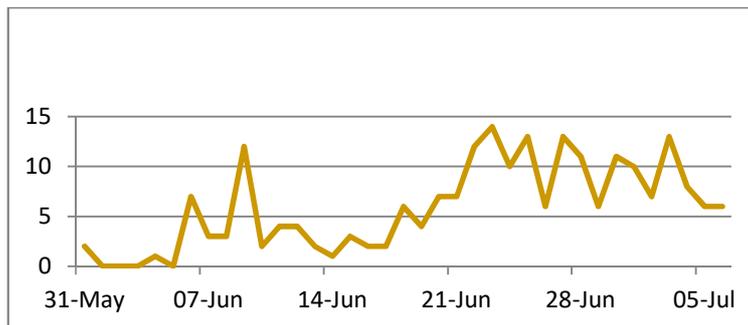


Figure 1: Incidents involving threats of violence

Who is threatening people?

People in or contesting for power such as councilors, sitting MPs, MP candidates and village heads tend to be the ones issuing threats. They often send ZANU-PF party members and youth to spread messages of intimidation. In rural areas, citizens are threatened at public gatherings; rallies and meetings which they are often forced or coerced into attending either for their own safety or in order to receive agricultural inputs. There are also reports of named candidates threatening violence as they campaign door to door.

What are perpetrators saying?

There are four consistent and recurring messages of intimidation:

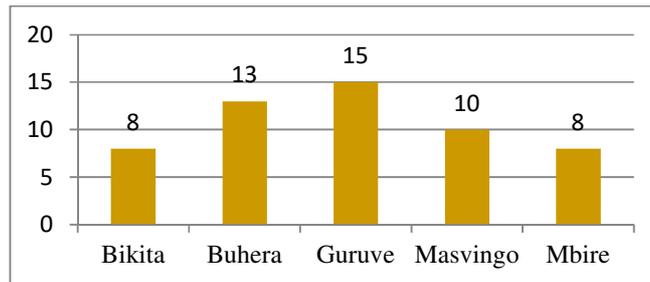
- There will be violence if ZANU-PF does not win in this community. These threats often include claims that soldiers who are already visible within communities will come after citizens;
- There will be violence if ZANU-PF does not win the election outright, necessitating a “run-off”;
- This violence will be of the 2008 re-run nature and scale; and



- This violence will be targeted: people who did not vote for ZANU-PF will be identified by registration slip numbers and faces on the voter's roll.

Where is intimidation happening?

While every province in the country has been affected, there are hotspots of intimidation that have emerged in the last month:



What are the implications?

Evidence from WTPZ reports and field outreach indicates that areas where an atmosphere of intimidation is building are also likely to be areas where violence will erupt. There have already been reports received of violence in high intimidation areas, namely Guruve, Mbire and Buhera.

"....ZANU-PF councillors are threatening to beat up people in Mbire and cut off their hands if they don't vote for ZANU-PF". Mbire, 6 July, 2018

Conclusion

Citizen monitors have observed the following urgent issues:

1. Intimidation in rural areas is widespread, consistent and increasing;
2. The nature of intimidation affects livelihoods: people are unable to access aid and inputs, or are forced to attend rallies and meetings under threat of violence;
3. There is a psychological impact. Threats linked to 2008 are particularly concerning considering that many perpetrators of violence during 2008 acted with impunity, and still live amongst victims. This may affect how past victims and those who fear becoming victims participate in political activities including voting; and
4. There is growing evidence of a link between intimidation growing in a community and acts of violence occurring. Intimidation likely creates a tense atmosphere which is a threat to peace.

"...during an argument ZANU-PF youths promised they would be back to deal with him. They returned the following morning and burnt down his house". Guruve, 7 July, 2018

What can be done about it?

It is against this backdrop of intimidation and threats that the fairness of the election process must be assessed. With these levels of intimidation, a growing number of citizens across the country are in fact not free to choose whom they wish to elect into office on July 30th or which party they would like to show support.

WTPZ is advising those who have been threatened to report perpetrators to the police. Human rights lawyers will be engaged where victims are unable or fail to resolve issues through police. Finally, partners across the human rights and elections observations sector are being alerted to these findings, in order to ensure a sector-wide response.