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## **Election season gathers momentum in Zimbabwe**

### ***Сезон виборів у Зімбабве набирає оберті***

*Міністр юстиції та законодавства Зімбабве З. Зіямбі повідомив журналістам, що президентські вибори відбудуться десь між 26 липня та 26 серпня 2023 р. Чинний президент країни Еммерсон Дамбудзо Мнангагва балотуватиметься на другий та останній термін, як того вимагає Конституція. Останні вибори в липні 2018 року були оскаржені після того, як Е. Мнангагва отримав незначну більшість, випередивши свого суперника Нельсона Чамісу з Альянсу MDC. Перемога Е. Мнангагви з результатом 50,8 % була відзначена міжнародними спостерігачами як нечесна. Результати були заперечені в суді, але безрезультатно. Цього разу, Е. Мнангагва пригрозив, що не запрошуватиме «ворожі» країни для спостереження за опитуваннями. У Н. Чаміси буде другий шанс стати президентом, і, згідно з різними опитуваннями, він, як і раніше, залишається головним суперником Е. Мнангагви. Згідно з опитуваннями, проведеним лондонською стратегічною групою SABI, Н. Чаміса може перемогти на виборах, набравши 53 % голосів. Для його перемоги мають бути рівні умови, такі як неупереджена виборча комісія Зімбабве, свобода преси, відсутність залякування виборців чи насильства, і армія не повинна бути залучена до цивільного процесу.*

<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/election-season-gathers-momentum-in-zimbabwe-20230404>

Zimbabwe's legal affairs minister says the election date should be set between 26 July and 26 August.

Zanu PF, CCC and fringe parties are in the process of selecting candidates for the general elections.

President Mnangagwa threatened not to invite "hostile" international observers.

The general election season is upon Zimbabwe, with both Zanu PF and its biggest challenger, Citizen's Coalition for Change (CCC), in the process of electing candidates.

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), though, wants the elections delayed.

On Sunday, Zimbabwe's Justice and Legal Affairs Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi told journalists the elections would be sometime between 26 July and 26 August.

"The next step that awaits the electorate is the announcement of the election date, through a proclamation by His Excellency, President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Mnangagwa will seek a second, and last, term as the Constitution dictates.

The last elections in July 2018, the first without the late Robert Mugabe on the ballot paper, were disputed after Mnangagwa secured a slim majority ahead of his rival, Nelson Chamisa, of the MDC Alliance.

Mnangagwa's 50.8% victory was flagged as not free and fair by international observers.

The results were challenged in court, but failed.

This time, despite a hot and cold charm offensive for international re-engagement with the West, Mnangagwa threatened that he would not invite "hostile" countries to observe the polls.

Zimbabwe's main opposition party leader Nelson Cha

Zimbabwe's main opposition party leader Nelson Chamisa of the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC).

AFP JEKESAI NJIKIZANA / AFP

"The time will soon come when we will not accept that condescending and even racist view of a pecking order when it comes to measuring electoral democracy unfolding in our sovereign countries. We shall be insisting on the principle of reciprocity when it comes to the practice of international election observation," he said.

Zanu PF getting ready

The ruling party this week endorsed candidates selected through its primary election cycle.

In some instances, some candidates were disqualified for allegedly having criminal records, or other party violations, and replaced with handpicked candidates.

Zanu PF traditionally enters elections with a show of deep pockets, although in some cases the party was accused of using state resources.

A Zanu PF official, speaking to News24 on condition of anonymity, said the party was in the process of receiving more than 500 twin-cab vehicles to be distributed to party members, who are campaigning for constituency seats, as well as for the presidency, for Mnangagwa.

The party is also procuring campaign material, such as T-shirts and caps from China.

The brief is clear: "We have to strengthen support in our traditional strongholds because new voters in these areas belong to us. In areas that belong to the opposition, we have to also wrestle for votes," said the source.

While the presidential race was a close call in 2018, Zanu PF enjoyed a majority in Parliament, with 145 seats out of 210.

CCC to select candidates

Chamisa will have a second shot at the presidency and, according to various polls, he's still Mnangagwa's biggest challenger.

Some of the polls, such as the one by the London-based SABI Strategy Group, say Chamisa could win the election with 53% of the vote.

For a Chamisa victory, there should be a level playing field, such as an impartial Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, press freedom, no voter intimidation or violence, and the army should not be involved in the civilian process.

But growing displeasure about CCC's running of local authorities in cities could contribute to a decline in support.

Chamisa said the selection of candidates, which is expected to start on Wednesday, will be "selected on merit, integrity, dignity, suitability and accountability. Citizens prefer representatives who are visible, accessible and available".

This means CCC will not have a primary election system, like Zanu PF.

Those who get to represent CCC will be chosen by "a rigorous vetting panel".

CCC might face a hurdle financially after only Zanu PF and the MDC, led by Douglas Mwonzora, received government funds under the Political Parties Finance Act.

Election delay court challenge

Mwonzora, of the MDC, for the greater part of the term, has been mounting challenges against Chamisa.

He recalled a majority of the MPs elected under the MDC Alliance ticket, in which Chamisa was the presidential candidate.

This he did after taking over leadership of the MDC from Thokozani Khupe.

Khupe was initially disgruntled by how Chamisa usurped power in the MDC after the death of Morgan Tsvangirai. Hence, she filed against Chamisa's legitimacy in court.

But, having lost to Mwonzora, she's since joined the CCC, leaving Mwonzora with the MDC.

With a history of court appeals, Mwonzora's latest is to have elections delayed because of a disputed delimitation report, which set new boundaries for constituencies.

He said:

This application does not seek to avoid elections. Rather it seeks to make sure that free, fair and credible elections are held, using the correct delimitation report.

He added that if polls went ahead under the current report, there was room for a court challenge against the election outcome, which would force a re-run.

Fringe parties

In the last election, there were 23 political parties, including Zanu PF and the CCC, vying for the presidency.

Most of the parties didn't have much ground support - but, after the polls, they formed the Political Actors Dialogue (Polad), which Mnangagwa presented as the voice of the opposition.

They were given cars and state perks, such as diplomatic passports and allowances, and others now have farms.

Critics viewed it as Mnangagwa's ploy to sanitise his legitimacy by appearing as an inclusive leader.

Chamisa refused to join Polad.

Going into the next elections, if one was to challenge for the presidency, they should be in a position to pay a non-refundable fee of R360 000.

Many Polad members don't have the capacity to raise this money and are planning on having a coalition in place.

"We want to pull together. Under the newly formed Zimbabwe Coalition for Peace and Development, six parties that are in the Polad are in the process of coming up with candidates. We will select candidates based on consensus and we will select candidates with the best chance to win.

"We know that, as coalition partners, we can find each other using dialogue to come up with the best team to represent the coalition," Trust Chikohora, the outfit's leader, told [Newzimbabwe.com](http://Newzimbabwe.com), a local media outlet.

Newcomer Robert Chapman, of the Democratic Union of Zimbabwe, is going around the country campaigning. He is yet to talk about his candidates.