

## **2005 Zanzibar Elections: Neither Free, Nor Fair**

by

Hassan O. Ali, November 23, 2005

On October 30, 2005, Zanzibaris went to the polls, for the third time since the 1992 re-introduction of multi-party politics in Tanzania. The elections were held to elect the Zanzibar president, members of the House of Representatives, and local councilors. As was widely expected, the elections went the way of the previous ones held in 1995 and 2000. It was fraught with serious irregularities all through – from voter registration to vote collation – too serious to make the elections neither free nor fair.

The Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC), structured with a clear intent to favor the status quo, declared Amani Abeid Karume, the presidential candidate for the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), the winner over Seif Sharif Hamad, the candidate for the strong opposition party, the Civic United Front (CUF). CCM also were declared winners in 30 House of Representatives constituencies, all in Unguja, against 19 constituencies worn by CUF – one in Unguja and the remaining in Pemba.

With emotions and anger running high among the opposition rank and file – both for the loss of the elections and the loss of hope – ZEC and its political manipulators has once again put Zanzibar in a tense five-year term.

### **Overwhelming Evidence of Vote Rigging**

Contrary to laid out procedures, the collation of polling station results at district collation centers and at the ZEC headquarters was chaotic, not transparent, and very suspicious.

Result sheets from many polling stations were not posted on the walls at the polling stations contrary to the laid out procedures.

Result sheets and polling materials from many polling stations remained with presiding officers (PO), away from any election party agents, for as long as 13 hours before they were delivered to various collation centers just a few miles away. This was similar to the disappearance of ballot boxes for days in the disputed 2000 elections, and clear evidence of possible vote-rigging.

At the collation centers, no election party agents were allowed to witness the result collation exercise. What happened during the collation process and the results that came out of it cannot escape suspicion.

Through the directive allegedly issued by the ZEC Chairman, the party agents and even party candidates were not given copies of signed collation result sheets, contrary to laid out procedures.

It was extremely strange and completely unexplainable that only photocopies of district-level collation result sheets were submitted to the ZEC headquarters for ultimate collation of the presidency results, at around 2:45pm on Tuesday, November 1, 2005 – two days after the completion of the polling exercise. Those result sheets didn't have signatures of party agents and candidates as required by the laid out procedures. To date, ZEC has refused to publish the original collation result sheets for independent scrutiny.

Evidence of cooked-up vote results is everywhere. There was substantial difference between final poll results published by ZEC and those independently obtained from individual result sheets

issued to party agents at polling stations. For example, the polling station results show that CUF's candidates had won House of Representatives seats for Tumbatu, Nungwi, Bumbwini, Bububu, Mtoni, Mwanakwerekwe, Magogoni, and Dimani constituencies in Unguja while ZEC declared CCM's candidates winners for those constituencies!

There was a strange lack of correlation between the final number of presidential and House of Representatives votes in some constituencies. Considering the fact that partisan voting is the known norm for Zanzibar, nothing other than vote-rigging could explain a difference of hundreds of votes for the candidates of the same party in presidential and House of Representatives results in some constituencies. For example, the published ZEC results for the Kwahani constituency give the CCM's presidential candidate 5,815 votes while declaring the House of Representatives candidate for CCM the winner with 7,537 votes – a whopping 1,722 vote difference!

The published ZEC results compared to the polling station results collected by party agents show a systematic transfer of around 27 votes for each polling station in Pemba, from the CUF's presidential candidate to the CCM's presidential candidate, giving the latter a total of around 3,700 votes at the expense of the former.

There was clear evidence of voter stuffing at many polling stations. Several constituencies and polling centers had final voter figures as reflected in the vote results published by ZEC, significantly higher than those provided in the permanent voter's register (PVR). For example, the results sheet for one polling station for the Uzini constituency showed 612 voters while only 350 voters were registered for that station. No wonder the Uzini constituency shows a very high voter-turnout of 95.9% which is the third highest – the top being 97.9% for the Donge constituency, and 97.7% for the Mpendae constituency – all three in Unguja. Contrast that with 69.6% voter turn-out for the Mji Mkongwe constituency which was won by CUF – the lowest for the whole of Zanzibar even after several bogus voters were bussed in to vote in that constituency from somewhere else. That points to a clear voter disenfranchisement in that CUF stronghold.

Bogus voters suspected to support CCM were bussed and defiantly guided by security forces into various polling stations to vote en mass, in broad daylight, and in clear view of party agents, international media and election observers.

In some polling centers, new polling stations were added arbitrarily in violation of the original ZEC election plans. Opposition party agents were not allowed in those new polling stations allegedly to allow for unhindered use of those stations by bogus and multiple voters in favor of CCM.

Many voters favoring CUF were not allowed to register in the PVR through dubious reasons. It's unfortunate that voter disenfranchisement didn't end with the PVR – it continued even at the last minute on the poll day.

The PVR itself was published by ZEC just a few hours before the election, providing voters with insufficient time to verify their names and to remedy any wrongful exclusion. As a result, opposition voters were turned away in large numbers at some polling stations resulting in uncharacteristic low voter turnouts, as low as 69.6% in the Mji Mkongwe constituency – well below the average of 91.4% for Unguja and 93.1% for Pemba.

There was evidence of names missing in many polling centers. For example, at the Amani constituency, all the voters with names starting with "S" could not find their names in the posted voter's list and were not allowed to vote.

Some voters were astonished when they went to their respective polling stations with their polling cards only to be told that the records indicated that they had already voted. This shows a serious flaw in the usage of the voter's record. It seems that some CCM supporters were allowed to vote multiple times using other voter's names even with their thumbs already marked with the indelible ink. This irregularity was witnessed by various international reporters as well as election observers, and was duly reported in various reports.

### **The Elections Aftermath**

Soon after the elections, Zanzibaris waited eagerly for the results. When the results came out in a couple of days, the shockwaves were all over Zanzibar. The opposition's fears came true. The vote results came out completely different from the figures tallied by the opposition poll agents.

CUF supporters gathered peacefully at the party headquarters at Mtendeni awaiting further instructions from their leaders. Security forces, from police to paramilitary engaged in a campaign of intimidating the CUF supporters and subjected them to undue brutality. This was all witnessed and reported by various international media and election observers. Pictures of brutality meted out to the CUF supporters were all over the media outlets and the Internet. Pictures of police brutality were shown on all major foreign media websites like CNN, BBC, Associated Press, and Reuters.

The security forces dispersed CUF supporters using water cannons and teargas and they put them under siege around the confines of the CUF headquarters. The siege left the supporters, who were fasting in the last days of the holy month of Ramadhan, with little food and drink options to break their fasts with. The siege only ended after the intervention of the United Nations. When it was all over, a number of CUF supporters had been hospitalized after sustaining serious injuries and those that were overcome by the teargas. A total of 421 used teargas shells were collected after the exercise, in a small area consisting of small children and elderly people. It was such an inhumane campaign considering the fact that the gathering was all peaceful.

Violence and human rights violations were also reported in Pemba in the Wete and Micheweni districts. It was reported that KMKM (anti-smuggling unit of Zanzibar) and JKU (national service) forces arbitrarily beat people, harassed some of them sexually, and ransacked their homes. One death was reported at Wete where a young man was shot dead by KMKM forces and one JKU officer was attacked by unknown people and found dead at Piki. Following the attack on the JKU officer, JKU forces went to Piki and beat people arbitrarily and stole valuables from their homes. Many Piki residents fled and stayed in bushes for days. Some of them took refuge in Mombasa, Kenya. When top district CUF leaders went to Piki to investigate the situation they were also severely beaten by JKU forces to the extent that one of them was unconscious for many hours and had to be sent to the Muhimbili referral hospital in Dar es Salaam for further treatment.

### **The Fears**

The people of Zanzibar have been very patient so far. However, to many of them, it's now clear that CCM is not prepared to relinquish power through democratic means. Many have lost hope and harbor deep resentments against the Tanzanian and Zanzibar governments. To them, it's unthinkable to succumb to economic, social, and political hardship for another period of five years. That situation creates a fertile ground for violence.

The politically active youth in Zanzibar are an easy target for the masterminds of global terrorism. When ordinary human efforts fail, people tend to fall back to more traditional and spiritual alternatives. It would not be unthinkable that some Zanzibaris could be successfully convinced that the change in Zanzibar requires a militant alternative.

The emergence of news of several cakes baked in Zanzibar that turned out with mysterious Quranic inscriptions soon after the election results were announced, and the way those news were held with utmost seriousness, attests to the fact that we're dealing with a very serious situation.

The opposition believes that the Zanzibar elections of October 30, 2005 were rigged. They know that they would need the Tanzanian Union elections of December 14, 2005 to prove their case, and the ruling party and its governments are well aware of that. Once beaten, twice shy. The opposition will be even more vigilant during those elections and for sure the security situation will be tenuous in Zanzibar and even in the Mainland Tanzania. It's feared that the heavy-handedness by police will continue and this time around the opposition supporters might fight back in defiance of their own leaders whom they already render lame and indecisive.

The CCM vote-rigging in Zanzibar points to a much bigger problem. It does seem that CCM is not prepared at all to lose power and wishes that Tanzania remains a de facto one-party state. The CCM one-party mentality monster can rear its head in future when incumbency is challenged seriously in the Mainland to cause more serious confrontation and instability over there too. That shouldn't be desirable for a country held with huge hopes by donors.

### **Recommendations**

1. All interested in democratic development in Zanzibar should intervene immediately to win over the hearts of Zanzibari people who are hungry for democracy and for positive changes to their lives. They should insist on the Zanzibar and Tanzanian governments to respect the will of the people of Zanzibar by conducting free and fair elections.
2. An independent investigation team should be formed to investigate and report on the conduct of the Zanzibar elections of October 30, 2005 and especially on the result collation exercise. This would help defuse the prevailing tensions and clear up the distrust on the election process.
3. The international community should send more election observers to Zanzibar for the December 14, 2005 Union elections. The observers should use the experience of the October 30, 2005 to help report on the re-emergence of any shortcomings of the previous exercise.
4. The donor community and all those interested in the development of democracy in Zanzibar should immediately issue statements declaring their stand on the Zanzibar elections of October 30, 2005, and request the Tanzanian government to remedy the situation for the forthcoming December 14, 2005 Union elections.

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