

## **ROHR Harare Demonstration on Friday 12th July 2013**

Written by Administrator  
Thursday, 18 July 2013 16:42 -

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### **ROHR Harare Demonstration on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

#### **Report from the organiser, James Ndoro**

A group of 102 Zimbabweans, mostly young people and those registered as aliens, gathered in Mabvuku at 10 am. They were driven to Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) offices on Jason Moyo Avenue where they mounted a demonstration starting at 12.30 pm. They were pressing for right to vote and demanding a free and fair vote in the forthcoming election. ZEC officials were able to see the banners that were clear on the reasons for the demonstration. After visiting the ZEC the demonstrators went to Home Affairs Ministry hoping to present themselves to co-Ministers of Home Affairs Theresa Makone and Kembo Mohadi. They were both not in residence. The organisers handed over the petition to the ministers' representatives.

The demonstration ended around 2 pm. There was a lot of media coverage with the country's biggest daily giving the story front page coverage. Activity spokesperson, Kimberley Nyatsanga held interviews with Studio 7 based in Washington, Radio VOP, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and Star FM. He also spoke to Newsday and the Daily News.

The demonstration was organised by James Ndoro. It was sponsored by the Restoration of Human Rights (ROHR) Zimbabwe UK Chapter as facilitated by Mr Ephraim Tapa. The venues were chosen because ZEC is the body responsible for running the election and the Ministry of Home Affairs is the ministry responsible for issuing citizenship and voter registration.

### Background

The Zimbabwe Election Commission directed mobile voter registration in the country throughout June. Each ward meant to have a station throughout the period in a bid to bring voter registration closer to the people and also to relieve pressure from the traditional voter registration centres which were usually overwhelmed. The impression given by ZEC was that each ward would enjoy the services of this facility for the whole month of June. However, at the very most, the mobile centre was in a constituency for 3 days. It should be pointed out that some constituencies have as many as 7 wards and ZEC would cherry pick two or three for to locate their centre.

ZEC also gave the impression that foreign nationals would be able to renounce their citizenship at the mobile centres and obtain Zimbabwean citizenship and the right register as voters. However, officials manning mobile centres referred aliens to the Register General's Office to renounce their citizenship first and then return to the mobile centre to register. The Register General demanded US \$5,000 for renunciation. Needless to say this is a prohibitive figure which effectively disenfranchised aliens. Aliens are saying that they have voted before without having to renounce their citizenship and that their names are appearing on the updated voter roll. They are arguing that they must be allowed to vote using the documents that they hold and that they should be deemed to have renounced their country of origin citizenship voting in the forthcoming election.

On the other hand, many young Zimbabweans have become of voting age since the last election in 2008. And given that young people constitute more than half of Zimbabwe's population, to deny them the right to vote is to deny them their present and Zimbabwe, its future. That said, hundreds of thousands of young people were closed out of the vote when voter registration closed on 9 July 2013.

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Zimbabwe has close to 4 million Zimbabweans living in the diaspora, all of whom have been denied their right to vote. This is in spite of the determinations of the Africa Court of Human Rights early this year that the Zimbabwe diaspora community be allowed to vote and the recent constitutional court ruling allowing dual citizenship. ROHR Zimbabwe felt compelled to demand the right to vote on behalf of all those who were denied their vote.

### **Proposal for way forward**

Following this success which has resulted in many people talking about the issues, other demos should be held in towns and cities like Bulawayo the second largest city in the country and Kwekwe which has a huge number of aliens because of the mines. In Harare, demonstrators should be drawn from suburbs like Rugare and Dzivarasekwa because of the number of people without the vote there.

James Ndoro, Organiser for and on behalf of ROHR Zimbabwe