

HELEN SUZMAN FOUNDATION
PRESS STATEMENT

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Major Shocks in new Opinion Survey of Zimbabwe

A new national opinion survey of Zimbabwe – the third this year carried out by the Helen Suzman Foundation with the assistance of Probe market Research (a subsidiary of Gallup International) – contains many major shocks for the embattled government of President Robert Mugabe. The survey – carried out on a large national random sample of 2,000 voters in both urban and rural areas – is summarized in a report by the Foundation’s Director, R W Johnson, *Political Opinion and the Crisis of Zimbabwe*, available either through probe in Harare or through the Helen Suzman Foundation in Johannesburg.

Among the report’s major findings:

1. The electoral register on which the June parliamentary elections were fought was wildly inaccurate and included more than 37% more voters than actually existed.
2. Of those who did not vote 20% did so not of their own volition but because their names were omitted from the register, their IDs were confiscated or out of anxiety and intimidation. More than three-quarters of these were supporters of the opposition MDC.
3. 13% admitted that instead of voting for “the party I really liked” they voted instead “to try to stop more violence and trouble”. More than 90% of these voters were MDC supporters. Had they voted for the party they preferred Zanu-PF would have lost the election heavily.
4. Zanu-PF won 48.45% of the vote in the election but its vote has since collapsed to just 13% against the MDC’s 47%.
5. The MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, now leads Robert Mugabe as the choice for next president by a margin of 41% to 15%. Samba Makoni, the new Finance Minister, takes 8% of the vote. Even on the most favourable assumptions for Zanu-PF Tsvangirai would win a presidential election today by 62% to 38%.
6. President Mugabe’s support has collapsed particularly in the capital, Harare, where only 7% now want to see him as president and among better educated voters (those with A levels and above) among whom his rating is down to 4%.
7. 49% of voters say the June elections were not free and fair due to violence and intimidation against only 43% who say they were free and fair. By 45% to 37% voters also say the elections were not fair due to vote-rigging.
8. Despite government propaganda and the farm invasions, only 6% now say that land is the most important issue – down from 9% in January/February. It has slipped from being the equal fourth most important issue to 6th place. Even among the remaining hard core Zanu-PF voters it is the most important issue for only 14% compared to 36% who nominate rising prices.
9. 81%, including 61% of Zanu-PF voters, say it is not sensible to blame the whites for the country’s problems. Only 16% say they have complete confidence or some confidence that the government is telling them the truth.
10. Whereas in Jan/Feb 61% said the police behaved well, very well or all right now only 37% do. Those saying the police behave badly or very badly have increased from 40% to 57%. Only 28% think the police are politically impartial and 65% think they are not. 26% think the army is politically impartial – but 58% say it is not.

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11. Those believing that you “have to be careful about criticizing the government because harm might come to you as a result” have increased from 68% to 74%.
12. Those who think that all big farms should be taken away from whites have fallen from 30% in Jan-Feb to 20% now. 69% think that white farmers should be left on the land or that white farmers who have left Zimbabwe should be invited back. 64% say the land invasions “have nothing to do with genuine land reform”. Only 21% think the farm invasions are justified and understandable while 70% think the war vets “are just criminals who should be charged with their crimes.”
13. Only 20% think Zanu-PF can recover, 68% say it is in decline and will soon lose power. Only 8% think the party can be reformed/renewed under its present leaders.
14. 83% regret the fact that whites are leaving Zimbabwe. 46% say it is terrible they are leaving since they have contributed a lot and belong in Zimbabwe. 85% regret the fact that blacks are leaving Zimbabwe but think it is “understandable” why they go. 50% blame the government because “they have been responsible for such people losing confidence in Zimbabwe”.
15. 78% of voters oppose President Mugabe’s plans to take over white farms, mines and factories – and only 14% support those plans. 59% say this amounts to economic suicide.
16. 64% of voters say Mugabe is the major obstacle to change and improvement in Zimbabwe (with 26% disagreeing). 74% want him to step down compared to only 19% who don’t. 56% would like to see him impeached against only 27% who wouldn’t and 51% say that even if he resigns he should be put on trial for the crimes alleged against him. 24% say he should be offered immunity from prosecution in return for his resignation.

Harare, 25 October 2000