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Human Rights Commission

Head Office

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Press Release
For Immediate Release

HRC URGES PROACTIVE, TIMELY AND TRANSPARENT DISCLOSURE OF ELECTION RESULTS

The Human Rights Commission is urging the Electoral Commission of Zambia to adopt a proactive, timely and transparent approach towards disclosure of results of the just-ended General Elections, in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Zambia and the Access to Information Act No. 24 of 2023.

The Human Rights Commission has noted with regret the escalation of violence in some parts of the country, which in turn necessitated the decision by the Electoral Commission of Zambia to momentarily suspend the counting and announcement of election results throughout the country.

The Human Rights Commission strongly condemns these reported incidents of violence against polling staff and the reported theft of marked ballot papers. Such criminal acts are unacceptable; they endanger electoral officials, compromise national security and the integrity of the entire electoral process. Ultimately, these criminal activities undermine citizens' right to participate in public affairs and elect leaders of their choice. In this vein, the Human Rights Commission reiterates its calls to law-enforcement agencies to act promptly, lawfully and impartially in investigating all reported incidents. All perpetrators of electoral and other types of violence must be held accountable in accordance with the law.

The Electoral Commission of Zambia is empowered by the provisions of the Electoral Process Act, No. 35 of 2016, to suspend counting and announcement of election results, for reasons such as protecting electoral

officials, voters and election materials from security threats. However, the Electoral Commission of Zambia must exercise all powers under the Electoral Process Act proportionately, without unjustifiably limiting any constitutional rights and freedoms, particularly the right to freedom of information.

In line with the provisions of the Access to Information Act, the Electoral Commission of Zambia is encouraged to adopt a proactive and timeous approach towards disclosing electoral information such as election results. The official disclosure of regular public updates relating to election results will ensure transparency and accountability. Prolonged information vacuums are likely to create uncertainty, fuel speculation and misinformation, heighten tensions and culminate in eroded public confidence in the electoral process. Regular, timely and transparent communication is therefore essential towards safeguarding peace, public trust and the credibility of the electoral process.

Lastly, the Human Rights Commission is urging all political parties, candidates, their supporters and all members of the general public to remain calm, reject violence, exercise restraint and allow the electoral process to proceed peacefully. This can only happen where the Electoral Commission of Zambia is given sufficient latitude to fulfil its constitutional mandate.

About the Human Rights Commission

The Human Rights Commission is an independent National Human Rights Institution established under Article 230 of the Constitution of Zambia and operationalised through the Human Rights Commission Act, No. 4 of 2024 as amended. Its mandate includes promoting and protecting human rights, investigating human rights violations and abuses, monitoring the observance of human rights and conducting human rights education. The HRC is also the oversight body under the Access to Information Act, No. 24 of 2023. For more information, visit www.hrc.org.zm.

(Original Signed)

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CHAIRPERSON

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION