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CIP Opinion

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AR should not squeeze small parties and citizens' lists

In a parliament (AR) debate tomorrow, it is proposed that small parties and citizens' lists pay the price for delays to the electoral registration. The law is already very strict. Lists of candidates must include enough people to fill all municipal assembly seats, plus a few supplementary candidates. And each candidate must present a notarised copy of their identify card, a notarised copy of their voters card, and an official copy of their criminal record. In smaller municipalities, it is difficult to obtain these in just a few days.

But the law being considered by the AR says that the National Elections Commission (CNE) must publish the number of municipal assembly seats just five days before candidates must be submitted. This means parties and citizens' lists must do all the preparation for more candidates than they need, because five days is not enough time, especially to obtain the criminal record certificate.


The number of assembly seats is based on the number of registered voters in the municipality, but the CNE is not required to publish that number until it is too late to be useful for the parties.

There is only one solution. Registration books are on display for inspection for five days after the end of the registration. Parties must go to each registration post and count the number of books, to estimate the number of people registered and thus guess the number of assembly seats. This is possible for the bigger parties who have a good local organisation, but much harder for small parties and citizens' lists.

In many democracies local elections give a voice to local people to debate local issues. In Mozambique small parties and citizens' list have been elected to many municipal assemblies. By requiring full candidates lists and too many documents, the law already puts small parties and citizens' lists at a disadvantage. The AR is being asked to make it almost impossible for small parties and citizens lists, because they must prepare without knowing how many candidates they need.

The AR should change the proposal, and require the CNE to publish the numbers of assembly seats 45 days before candidates must be submitted, instead of just five days as proposed.

Elections cannot just be free and fair for the biggest parties who have seats in the AR and can vote on the proposed new law. The AR should not make it almost impossible for small parties and citizens' list to contest the election. Require that the number of seats be announced early enough to allow candidates to get their documents.

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