

# 2014 National Elections



## Mozambique political process bulletin



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**COLLECTIVE ACTION:** This newsletter is based on reports from 150 journalists in nearly every district, working together to give the most up to date coverage of the election. We are also working with the Community Radios Forum (FORCOM) and the Human Rights League.

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## Requalification of nulos continues

The National Elections Commission (CNE) continued this morning checking the estimated 700,000 invalid ballot papers (nulos). The process began on Thursday and they hope to finish today.

The final election results must be announced by Thursday evening. Results must then be confirmed by the Constitutional Council, which has no deadline but can be expected to rule in December.

The electoral law says that a ballot paper is valid if the intent of the voter is clear. Ballots with marks for two or more candidates or with words written on them are invalid. Many are obviously invalid, for example with Xs in the boxes for all three presidential candidates. But the decision is not always obvious - many illiterate voters use a fingerprint. How do you treat the ballot if the fingerprint runs into an adjoining box, or if ink from the finger gets on the ballot paper when the voter folds it to put in the ballot box?

The requalification of the nulos is taking place in two large rooms in the STAE headquarters with large teams from CNE and STAE. (See photo above) There has been some training and people work in pairs, so every ballot paper is checked twice.

In the requalification that we watched, the decisions seemed consistent and correct. Often there was a discussion between the pair - for example, how was the finger put on the paper and did the print go too far into another box.

Requalification this year is much more accepting than in the past. Intent of voter is taking precedence and small extraneous ink marks are being ignored.

## **Nulos fraud down**

Looking at the nulos requalification and at the PVT, we think that there is still considerable misconduct with polling station staff (MMVs- membros das mesas de voto) making some opposition votes invalid. It is still significant, involving at least 3.55% of polling stations, but less common than in the 2009 national election.

We did see evidence of two kinds of fraud. In the past, there have been serious problems with MMVs putting an extra ink mark on a set of votes for the opposition, to make them invalid. To prevent this, the law was changed to prohibit any form of ink in the polling station. But it is still occurring.

On Sunday evening in the requalification of Zambézia votes for parliament (Assembleia da República) we saw a series of ballot papers with an X in the box for Renamo and a fingerprint in the box for Frelimo, but with each of the fingerprints in precisely the same place on the ballot paper. This has been the most common way to invalidate ballot papers. During the count, when no one is looking, an MMV goes to the pile of opposition votes on the floor and quickly adds a fingerprint to a whole group. Because it is done quickly to a group of papers, the fingerprint is similar and in the same place on each ballot paper. The nulos are all kept together in the same order as they pass from polling station to CNE, so it is obvious during requalification that there is an identical fingerprint on a series of ballot papers. We were not allowed to take a photo of these ballot papers, even though the law allows journalists to take photographs.

The second kind of fraud also occurs during the count. As ballot papers are counted, they are put in separate piles for each candidate, which are usually on the floor. Late at night in the dark, sometimes valid votes for the opposition are simply put into the pile of invalid votes and not counted, and we saw some cases of this during the requalification. But in the requalification, these are accepted as valid and counted, so the attempted fraud fails.

In 2004 there were 3.9% nulos for president before requalification, and in 2009 this jumped to 4.5% because of increased fraud. For this election the PVT found only 3.55% invalid votes. In 2009 the PVT found 6% of polling stations with nulos over 10%, compared to only 4.5% this year.

This suggests that the law changes are having an effect, and that the amount of fraud with respect to nullos is reduced. Furthermore, from watching the requalification, we think that less of the fraud is from extra fingerprints and more from ballot papers in wrong piles.

**COMMENT:** Why would an MMV move ballot papers from the opposition pile to the nullos pile, probably knowing that that the votes will be accepted by the CNE? One explanation is that it looks good for Frelimo on the polling station edital and district edital, and no one locally knows that the excluded opposition votes were included later. *jh*

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**A detailed report on the 2009 elections is available, in two parts, on**  
<http://bit.ly/MozElec2009-1a> and <http://bit.ly/MozElec2009-2>

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The Portuguese edition of the Bulletin is more detailed, and can be read on  
<http://www.cip.org.mz/election2013/> Portuguese Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CIP.Eleicoes>  
Some English bulletins cover two Portuguese bulletins and have a double number.

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