



## **SAPSN STATEMENT ON THE AFTERMATH OF MALAWI'S MAY 21 TRIPARTITE ELECTIONS**

Civil society organisations under the banner of Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) condemns in strongest terms the violence that ensued in the aftermath of Malawi's May 21 Tripartite Elections. This followed vote rigging allegations made by members of the opposition parties who contested the results which declared the Progressive Democratic Party's candidate Arthur Peter Mutharika as a winner. SAPSN is greatly worried that, as in other cases witnessed in the region, the state responded violently to the protesters with the police firing teargas on the peaceful demonstrators.

SAPSN condemns the crackdown on the opposition protesters by the state which turned peaceful protests into violent clashes between the police and demonstrators. The state attacks on protestors is in violation of the **SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections** particularly Article 4 of the Treaty which stipulates that "human rights, democracy and the rule of law" are principles guiding the acts of SADC members. It is worrisome that the wave of state crackdown on election protestors is sweeping across Southern Africa as this was also witnessed in Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the country's 2018 harmonised elections.

Just like in the case of Zimbabwe, Malawian protestors clashed with the police following contested election results. It is therefore clear that elections in most parts of the Southern African region are marred by a lot of irregularities with the election processes not informed by democratic principles of fairness and lack of respect for citizens' rights. The use of live ammunition to control protests has become a security threat to citizens who experience acts of violence from the people who are meant to protect them and safeguard their rights. SADC's failure to investigate and take necessary measures to ensure that citizens' rights across the region are respected is worrisome.

Dismissal of the protests as illegal by the incoming Malawi President is regrettable given that SADC member states are guided by the SADC principle to promote the development of democratic institutions and practices within the territories of State Parties and encourage the observance of universal human rights as provided for in the Charter and Conventions of the Organization of African Unity [African Union] and the United Nations. The indifference and silence of the SADC body negates the core purpose of the regional bloc. It defeats the aspirations of "African solutions to African problems." Therefore, SADC's failure to take decisive action into the region's election processes to ensure that democracy is entrenched is a cause for concern.

SAPSN therefore recommends that the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community, Dr Hage Geingob investigate into the political and democratic state of affairs in Malawi to ensure that citizens' rights are protected. In addition, the SADC Chair must set up a taskforce to investigate the region's elections conduct to ensure that democratic values are entrenched and respected.

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