

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

VIOLENCE RECORDED DURING THE FEBRUARY 12TH PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr Kampyongo): Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to issue a ministerial statement on the violence that occurred during the Parliamentary and Local Government by-elections held in Sesheke Parliamentary Constituency and seven wards across the country. The Local Government Elections were specifically in Anoya Zulu Ward in Chililabombwe District, Munyama Ward in Kabwe District, Mkomba Ward in Lundazi District, Chidwale Ward in Katete District, Chinkutula Ward in Chifunabuli District, Nkombwa Ward in Isoka District and Sewe Mungole Ward in Chavuma District. The election period for these by elections began on 10th January, 2019, after the nominations and ended with the announcement of the election results on 13th February, 2019.

Sir, my statement seeks to set the record straight by presenting the facts surrounding the violence experienced during the by-elections in question. This is essential to allay the speculation and false information and propaganda circulated by some interest groups and stakeholders. The role of the Zambia Police Service officers, in politics in general and elections in particular, also came to the fore. I shall therefore, clearly state my Government's position on the role of the police in politics and the position of my Government on electoral violence. It is my sincere hope that this statement shall put to rest the falsehoods, propaganda and alarming statements promoted by some of our compatriots who persistently seek the involvement of foreign institutions in the politics of our country.

Mr Speaker, having stated the focus of my statement, allow me to present the violent incidents recorded by the Zambia Police Service during the just ended Parliamentary and Local Government by-elections. The violence incidents recorded by the Zambia Police Service during the January 10th to February 12th, 2019 By-election were as follows:

- (a) Arson, one incidence;

- (b) Malicious damage to property, one incidence;
- (c) Assault occasioning actual body harm, twenty-five incidences;
- (d) Possession of offensive weapons, two incidences;
- (e) Unlawful wounding, one incidence;
- (f) Threatening violence, one incidence;
- (g) Theft, two incidences
- (h) Conduct likely to cause breach of peace, one incidence; and
- (i) Police brutality on citizens

Sir, assault occasioning actual bodily harm was by far the most prevalent violence recorded at 73 per cent of all the cases reported followed by possession of offensive weapons at 7.5 per cent of the incidents reported. Malicious damage to property and theft were at 5 per cent each.

Mr Speaker, the incidents of violence were most predominant in Sesheke as it accounted for 83 per cent of all the cases recorded. This was followed by Isoka at 13 per cent of the cases. Lundazi and Chililabombwe were at 2 per cent each of violent incidents recorded by the police. It should be noted that there were no acts of violence recorded during the election periods in Chavuma, Kabwe, Katete and Chifunabuli Districts.

Sir, the majority of places that held by-elections on 12th March, 2019 therefore, passed peacefully. This is how it ought to be.

Sir, in Sesheke and Isoka, the violence was driven by people closely associated with candidates of the United Party for National Development (UPND) while some supporters of the Patriotic Front (PF) were responsible for the incidents recorded in Nkombo Ward of Lundazi. In Isoka, Lundazi and Chililabombwe, effective professional and ethical policing prevented the isolation incidents of violence from getting out of control. In Sesheke, however, neglect of duties by those

responsible for protection of lives and property and maintenance of law and order coupled with polarised political climate and fear resulted in violent incidents getting out of control.

Sir, poor policing in Sesheke was evident from failure by the police to follow up serious criminal incidents, including the case of arson in which a house was set on fire resulting in the loss of property inside and the house itself. Twenty-five cases of assault occasioning actual bodily harm were also reported. The police failed to follow up any of the criminal activities that were reported to them by taking action.

Mr Speaker, allow me to call upon all members of this august House and the country at large to condemn in strongest possible terms all acts of violence, in particular, the electoral violence, because the people of Zambia have committed themselves to democratic rule based on the people periodically and freely electing their leaders. The use of violence, intimidation and fear to ascend to elective political office is therefore, unacceptable and contrary to the tenets of democracy. What was more unacceptable was the emergence of the situation where police officers, for political expedience, abandoned and neglected their solemn duty of protecting lives and property.

Sir, allow me to appeal the members of this august House and all political leaders at all levels across the political spectrum of our country to be civil in conducting our political activities. We are all children of one household called Zambia. We owe it to our people to promote peace and national unity just as you, Mr Speaker, lamented yesterday.

Mr Speaker, my Government remains committed to consolidation of a multiparty democracy in our land. The Government is also equal to the task of eliminating violence from our political processes and elections in particular. To that end, my ministry, as one of the measures, is going to establish an inter-departmental security unit dedicated to eliminating violence in our elections. For the unit to succeed, however, the support of all political leaders and their commitment to holding peaceful and free elections would be very essential because it is us, the political players, who should be part of the solution in resolving these dangerous activities.

Sir, my Government is also committed to ensuring that the Zambia Police Service continues to be professional and ethical at all times and dedicated to the preservation of public security at all times. Police officers who are politically inclined would therefore, not be allowed to remain in the Zambia Police Service. In the Sesheke incidence, the Police Service Commission has since disciplined four officers for unprofessional conduct. In this regard, it should be noted that my Government has always condemned the involvement of police officers in politics. Accordingly, officers who professional and ethical code cannot remain in the Zambia Police Service as allowing politicians in the service could destroy it and undermine the security of the nation.

Mr Speaker, allow me to take this opportunity to also address the point of order raised by Hon. Elijah Muchima, Member of Parliament for Ikeleng'i, on his harassment by the law enforcement officers during his recent visit to his constituency. This occurred on 25th January, 2019 in Ikeleng'i Constituency and the matter was resolved amicably.

Sir, I can confirm to you, Mr Speaker, that the hon. Member managed to phone me and we had a discussion. I then requested the Commissioner of the North-Western Division to intervene in the matter and ensure that he was accorded the due respect.

Mr Speaker, I wish to inform this august House that hon. Members of Parliament are at liberty to visit their constituencies. However, to enhance personal safety, they should only notify the police when touring their constituencies. The notification is for the information of the local police command in case of any eventualities.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.