

## Summary

In July and August 2023, electoral violence has risen sharply in Zimbabwe as the nation prepares for the general elections of August 23. Although violent incidents mostly occur between members of ruling party ZANU-PF and the opposition party CCC, violent protests pose a significant risk to bystanders. Violence is expected to reach a peak after the elections, as the results might be contested by the losing party.

## Recent events and developments

On August 3, 2023, members of ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) ambushed and stoned members of opposition party Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) in Harare. <sup>1</sup> CCC-supporter was killed, and several others were injured. On July 25, an explosive device was thrown at the home of a CCC parliamentary candidate. The majority of attacks have been perpetrated by ZANU-PF-supporters against CCC followers. However, instances of CCC supporters engaging in aggression towards ZANU-PF followers have also been observed. Whereas some assaults were targeted, others were opportunistic in nature. These took place both in Harare as well as in rural areas. These violent episodes have taken place despite calls by the incumbent President Emmerson Mnangagwa, from ZANU-PF, and the CCC-leader Nelson Chamisa to hold peaceful elections. Furthermore, on June 22, the CCC claimed that Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) is assisting ZANU-PF in committing election fraud, thereby suggesting that they will not recognize the elections as free and fair.

## Impact assessment

In previous years, electoral violence followed similar patterns to the events of the past months. This suggests that violent incidents in the lead-up to the general elections in August 23 2023 are highly likely to continue nationwide, especially in urban areas. Those attacks will mostly target members of the two main political parties due to broad popular discontent with the economic and political situation.

After the results are announced, violence and demonstrations are expected to crescendo if citizens contest the outcome. National polls have not predicted a clear winner, suggesting that the elections could go into a runoff. This scenario would likely further increase tensions, similar to past events. In the unrest following the 2018 general elections, security forces opened fire to disperse protesters, killing 6. Bystanders caught up in large-scale protests can become collateral targets in case of escalation. Since most attacks are aimed at party members, there is a risk in wearing clothing associated with either party.

## Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure all employees travelling to Zimbabwe undertake a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Advise staff to avoid campaign stands and political party infrastructure, as well as voting stations and demonstrations of any kind.
- Advise staff to avoid expressing their personal views on the political situation known both in present and via social media, as well as avoid wearing clothing in colours affiliated with ZANU-PF or CCC.
- Continuously monitor local news and liaise with local partners to stay up to date with any developments in the place of operations.

## Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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