

Calm and peace urged as Tanzania approaches its General Elections

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By Elias Mhegera – Tanzanians have been reminded to maintain peace and tranquility during the forthcoming General Elections. The call was part of the deliberations during two days symposia Thursday 13th and 14th August, that were organised by the Civic Education Teachers Association (CETA) in collaboration with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS).



University students

The occasion took place at the National Museum Hall in Dar es Salaam on Thursday and Friday last week. Delivering a lecture on the principals of free and fair elections, Fr. Dr. Charles Kitima who is lecturer in Human Rights and International Law at the St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), said that democratic governance needs a long term investment.

He was proud that while standing as vice chancellor of SAUT in Mwanza one of his students became a legislator also as the youngest of all, and that is none other than Felix Mkosamali, legislator for Muhambwe in Kigoma region.



Fr. Charles Kitima

Fr. Kitima counseled Tanzanians to continue efforts that were introduced by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere the Founding Father of the Nation. He cherished efforts to galvanize Tanzanians regardless of their tribal and religions differences. "While we take things for granted we should know that some people toiled before bringing this nation to what it is today, let us maintain this spirit," said Kitima. He also reminded that tertiary education means that one has been groomed for social transformations.

He recalled that in 1956 Nyerere was fined after he was charged in the court of law by the colonial Government. He also reminded that given the ongoing tranquility in Tanzania, efforts should be made to maintain it so that the transformation becomes a smooth process rather than abruptly which can create chaos.

“It was due to this cherished value that Tanzania became a host of many liberation movements, if we fail to accept our differences and forego selfishness, our nation will crumble,” he warned. He reminded that many countries have fallen into intra-conflicts due to the fact that leaders have failed to maintain equal distribution of resources.



He criticized the common trend of ignoring the constitution and instead elections are manipulated to either further party interests or even those of individuals well hidden in their parties. The don challenged that inclusiveness of elections means all prospective voter must be involved.

High Table

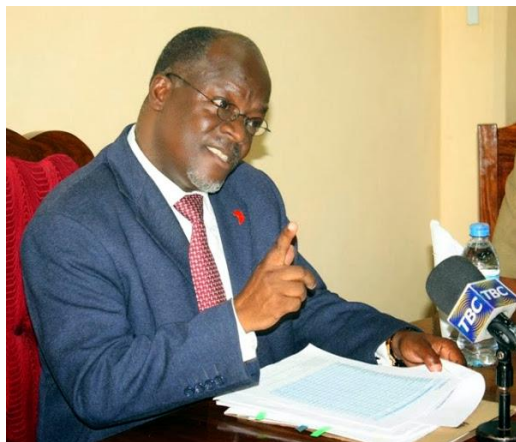
“It is through openness, accountability and complying with international standards, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, as well as Article 21 (1) and (2) of the Tanzanian Constitution provides for every citizen for the right to participate in the electoral process,” commented Kitima.



Secondary school Students

During the question and answers session it was learnt that due to mixing up issues some students will not be able to vote. From the University of Dar es Salaam was Mgeri Ikungura, a second year BSc (Education) student who said that it has been a common practice that confusions are created to students probably in attempt so that they will not vote.

For his part Godwin Johnson said the Police Force is another player in Tanzania's elections whereby it has always been the case of harassing people whenever it seems the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) is about to lose an election, whether it is in the constituency or presidential candidature.



Presidential aspirant Dr. John Magufuli

He counseled fellow students that their solidarity would yield better results if they stop to complain and form a team so that they charge the National Electoral Commission (NEC). It is their belief that there will be a closure during the election period so as to deny students a voting right.

Francis Mwita from the College of Business Education is worried that some military camps are used to manipulate votes and that is why it has been ordered that some registrations be conducted in military camps.

Jacqueline Maisana from the Institute of Financial Management said even students in tertiary institutions are part and parcel of the political game because they are manipulated by some politicians generally students are not comfortable with what is going on with students.

They also predict of elections full of violence this year because even in the CCM itself preliminary elections were characterized by complains of corruption. Students decried what they termed as double standards by the Police Force, and therefore called for a need to get rid of such electoral nuisances.

But the general conclusion one can draw out of the two sessions are that secondary students who will be voting for the first time during the

forthcoming General Elections are not yet decided to whom they are going to vote for, while a good number of their counterpart from tertiary institutions are pro-opposition.



Presidential aspirant Edward Lowassa (UKAWA)

The strongest candidate from the camp is the former Premier Edward Lowassa who resigned from his post on February 7, 2008 after he was implicated in a power generators importation scam generally known as Richmond Scandal. He has since pleaded that he is innocent and the outgoing President Jakaya Kikwete was informed from stage one to the end of what was happening.

Mr. Lowassa will be contesting through a ticket of four parties alliance the National Convention for Construction and Reforms (NCCR-Mageuzi), Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), the Civic United Front (CUF) and the National League for Democracy (NLD) their alliance is popularly known in its UKAWA, reflecting their initial zeal of getting a people's constitution (Umoja wa Katiba ya Wananchi).

The alliance was formed in Dodoma, Tanzania's capitol during the formulation of the new constitution, the aim being to counter the CCM's monopoly through the 'tyranny of numbers', in the Constituent Assembly.



Humphrey Polepole

One indication of this stance is how one Humphrey Polepole a former member of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) faced stiff challenges due to his open support to the CCM candidate Dr. John Magufuli the Minister for Works, in the social media in separate several occasions.

"I have a democratic right to say I support which candidate, you have such a right as well, I am surprised that you are trying to deny me this right," defended Polepole rather angrily after one student had confronted him that he is a CCM propagandist.

Source: Shout-Africa; <http://www.shout-africa.com/politics/calm-and-peace-urged-as-tanzania-approaches-its-general-elections/>