

MAKANDAY

weekly

TRUSTED. BOLD. INDEPENDENT



28TH- 3RD SEPTEMBER 2026



ISSUE. NO 0053

Journalists Saw a Peaceful Vote. Then the Counting Changed

Story on page 2



Counting the Cost of Zambia's 2026 Election: **Who Killed Sakala?**



Story on page 4

OPINION: Jesus, Politics and Zambia's Dirty Cup

Story on page 9

Journalists Saw a Peaceful Vote. Then the Counting Changed

Journalists reporting across Zambia described a largely peaceful vote that became more difficult to scrutinise once counting and totalling began. Their accounts of suspended counting, restricted access and questions over some figures echo concerns subsequently raised by independent election monitors about the official result that gave President Hakainde Hichilema 60.5% of the vote.

From page 1
By Charles Mafa

Zambia’s election delivered a clear winner. President Hakainde Hichilema was re-elected for a second five-year term with 60.5% of the vote, comfortably ahead of his closest challenger, Brian Mundubile, who secured 37.9%.

But for journalists reporting from different parts of the country, some of the most difficult moments came after voters had cast their ballots.

Reporters interviewed by MakaanDay described voting as largely peaceful in the areas they covered. Several said that changed during the counting, totalling and announcement of results, when some encountered restrictions on access, difficulties obtaining information and growing tensions following the nationwide suspension of counting on 14 August.

Their accounts do not establish what happened nationally. But taken together, they repeatedly point to the same stage of the electoral process: what happened to the vote after polling ended.

Ordered to stop recording

In Ndola, the administrative capital of Copperbelt Province, a journalist covering his first election said access to information varied considerably between election centres. At some, officials readily answered questions. At others, obtaining information was difficult.

At one totalling centre, he said a combined team of security personnel, including police officers and soldiers, ordered journalists to stop recording after tensions arose over the submission of presidential results.

He alleged that one journalist’s device was seized, footage deleted and the reporter ordered to leave.

The same reporter encountered another problem earlier in the day: voters struggling to locate their names at polling stations.

He said the problem was particularly difficult for people who could not read and who, at some centres, relied on fellow voters or police officers for assistance.

One woman told him she had arrived at around 06:00 but, three hours later, had still not found her name or voted. The journalist left without knowing whether she eventually cast her ballot.

A peaceful vote, then counting stopped

In Petauke Central in Eastern Province, another first-time election reporter described voting as calm, with rival candidates greeting each other as they moved between polling centres.

“The environment was calm,” she said.

But the nationwide suspension of counting and the announcement of results on 14 August caused concern among those at the centres, although the journalist said the situation remained peaceful.

In Chingola on the Copperbelt, a journalist who had also covered the 2021 election said voting was more peaceful this time and reporters were generally able to work freely.

That changed when counting was suspended.

She said journalists and other groups present were told to leave, while election officials and a church representative remained.

“Why would they suspend the counting of ballots?” she asked.

She said this differed from her experience in 2021, when journalists had been able to observe counting throughout.

“Protect our vote”

Further north, in Kawambwa and Pambashe constituencies in Luapula Province, another journalist said the suspension had more serious consequences.

Opposition supporters who believed their candidates were leading

became suspicious and vowed to remain and “protect our vote”, she said.

Tensions escalated, shops closed and security personnel intervened. The journalist said some political supporters threw stones at police officers and soldiers, while reporters were accused of spreading false information and helping others to “rig elections”.

“When the situation became very hostile, that’s when we left,” she said.

The journalist also said some election officials became reluctant to provide information, at times making it difficult for reporters to obtain even basic figures such as the number of registered voters.

The accounts differ in detail and severity. But the recurring concern was not primarily about voting itself. It was about what happened afterwards, as ballots were counted, totalled and results announced.

“So, where did it come from?”

In Solwezi, North-Western Province, a journalist who had also covered the 2021 election initially noticed something different: fewer voters.

“There was voter apathy,” he said. “People didn’t turn out in numbers compared to how it was in 2021.”

His concern deepened when he heard the numbers being announced.

He recalled a returning officer saying about 29,900 people had voted, before later encountering a figure of more than 50,000 in relation to the presidential vote.

“So, where did it come from?” he asked.

It is an observation that subsequently became more significant.

An independent assessment by the Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) identified

Solwezi among a number of constituencies where its estimates differed substantially from the official figures.

And its broader analysis raised a much bigger question about the presidential result: Hichilema won, CCMG concluded, but it estimated that he won by considerably less than the official 60.5%

What the independent count found

CCMG, a coalition of faith-based organisations, deployed 1,500 observers to a nationally representative sample of polling stations covering every province, district and constituency.

Using a method known as Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT), it compared results independently recorded at sampled polling stations with the presidential outcome.

CCMG estimated Hichilema’s share at 56%, with a margin of error of 1.7 percentage points, putting its expected range between 54.3% and 57.7%.

The official Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) result of 60.5% fell outside that range.

For Mundubile, CCMG estimated 42.3%, also with a margin of error of 1.7 percentage points. His official result of 37.9% was below the expected range.

CCMG was nevertheless unequivocal about the winner: its independent analysis showed that Hichilema received the most votes and crossed the 50% threshold required to avoid a run-off.

The question raised by its findings was therefore not whether Hichilema won, but whether the official figures accurately reflected the scale of his victory.

CCMG identified 30 constituencies where official turnout was significantly higher than its estimates. It said votes had been added in those constituencies,

Journalists Saw a Peaceful Vote. Then the Counting Changed cont...

“artificially increasing turnout and undermining the integrity of the process”.

In Solwezi Central, where the MakaanDay journalist had questioned the figures he encountered, CCMG estimated turnout at 47%, plus or minus three percentage points. ECZ’s official turnout was 88.86%.

In Solwezi North, CCMG estimated turnout at 46%, plus or minus four percentage points, compared with an official figure of 93%.

CCMG said the differences went beyond statistical estimates.

It compared results recorded by its observers at 24 sampled polling stations with figures subsequently recorded at constituency tally centres. All candidate figures matched at 13 stations, but CCMG reported differences in UPND figures at 10.

At Lumpuma Primary School-02 in Lufwanyama East, for example, CCMG said its observer recorded 186 presidential votes for UPND at the polling station. The tally-centre figure was 486.

At Chantete Primary School-01, it reported a change from 198 to 376, while at Chibanga Primary School-01 the figure went from 158 to 258.

CCMG has called on ECZ to publish constituency records and images of results forms from all 13,529 polling stations so the figures can be independently checked.

EU observers saw problems after the suspension

The experiences described by journalists also intersect with observations by the European Union Election Observation Mission.

ECZ suspended counting and the announcement of results nationwide for six hours on 14 August, citing violence against election staff and reports of ballot box theft.

EU observers were monitoring tabulation at 64 totalling centres.

Before the suspension, they assessed tabulation as “very good” in 43% of their observations, with party agents and citizen observers present at almost all centres.

After counting resumed, the EU mission said the “overall conduct of tabulation deteriorated significantly”.

Its observers reported delays in recording announced results on tally sheets and discrepancies between some figures on paper and those entered into the digital results system.

The EU mission said digital and paper figures corresponded in all its observations before the suspension. Afterwards, that fell to 81%.

It also reported extended breaks in almost half its observations, with returning officers appearing to wait for instructions from ECZ headquarters before announcing results, as well as a heavier military presence that some interlocutors found intimidating.

The mission also received reports of attacks on some totalling centres.

Its findings were preliminary, and the EU EOM stressed that critical stages of the electoral process, including the adjudication of petitions, were still outstanding when its assessment was issued.

But its observations are significant when placed alongside what MakaanDay’s journalists independently described in Ndola, Chingola, Petauke, Kawambwa, Pambashe and Solwezi.

A clear winner, unanswered questions

Mundubile has rejected the presidential result and said he intends to challenge it in court, alleging voting irregularities.

The dispute has unfolded against a tense post-election security backdrop. Former minister and opposition MP Mutotwe Kafwaya was killed during a security raid on a Lusaka property linked to Mundubile a day after the election.

Police said Kafwaya was fatally wounded after officers encountered gunfire and returned fire during an operation in which 11 people were arrested.

Authorities have accused Mundubile’s National Reconciliation Party for Unity and Prosperity (NRPUP) of involvement in “insurgency” and “militia activity”

and of storing high-grade weapons — allegations Mundubile has rejected as “total fabrications”. He has since gone into hiding.

None of the accounts gathered by MakaanDay establishes that problems identified at individual centres determined the national result. CCMG’s own analysis concludes that Hichilema won the election and crossed the threshold required for a first-round victory.

What remains in question is the accuracy and transparency of the figures that produced the official 60.5%.

Both CCMG and the EU mission have called for greater transparency.

The EU mission noted that ECZ did not publish disaggregated polling-station results and called for “maximal transparency”. CCMG has called for the publication of constituency records and images of results forms from every polling station.

MakaanDay has put the concerns raised in this report to the Electoral Commission of Zambia and invited it to respond.

The commission was asked to explain why a nationwide suspension of counting was necessary and what safeguards were in place during the interruption. MakaanDay also sought its response to CCMG’s findings in the 30 constituencies, including the specific discrepancies it identified between polling-station and tally-centre figures, as well as the concerns raised by EU observers about tabulation after counting resumed.

MakaanDay also asked whether ECZ would publish presidential results broken down by polling station, together with signed results forms and constituency records, to allow the figures to be independently scrutinised.

At the time of publication, ECZ had not responded.

Inside Russia’s Push for an ‘Equal Partnership’ With Africa

Moscow says it wants an “equal partnership” with Africa as it invites journalists to see Russia firsthand.

During a media programme organised by the African Initiative News Agency in Moscow, Russia, the agency’s Editor-in-Chief, Artem Kureev, told MakaanDay’s Gibson Zulu that Russia was seeking to expand its partnerships with African countries, including Zambia.

Kureev said Moscow was interested in strengthening cooperation across sectors including infrastructure, energy, mining, defence and education, as part of what he described as Russia’s commitment to building an “equal partnership” with Africa.

<https://youtu.be/QtF9eB1tqnY?si=sEw2iOr9NYICNdT3>



Counting the Cost of Zambia’s 2026 Election: Who Killed Sakala?

Stanley Sakala was killed at an independent parliamentary candidate’s campaign base weeks before Zambia voted. The election has since been held, winners declared and campaigns packed away. But nearly two months after his throat was cut, police have made no arrests and say they have no links to his killer.

By Mavis Muchiya in Mazabuka, Southern Province

Zambia’s 2026 general election produced winners and losers. In southern province, it also left behind an unexplained killing.

Sakala, a 31-year-old mechanic from Lusaka, was found dead at the campaign base of independent parliamentary candidate Confucius Mweene in Chivuna, Magoye East Constituency, on the night of June 29. His throat had been cut.

Nearly two months later, no one has been arrested for his murder and police say they have yet to establish a link to whoever killed him.

“As the police, we are still investigating the case. Despite intensifying our investigations, we haven’t had links to this murder case,” Southern Province Police Commissioner Moono Namalongo said on August 24. “We haven’t arrested anyone yet. The young man we arrested was later released after some interviews.”

The election that brought Sakala to Chivuna in Mazabuka district has since come and gone. Mweene lost the Magoye East parliamentary race to UPND candidate Mweemba Malambo. But the killing that interrupted that campaign remains unresolved.

Screams from a campaign base

Sakala had travelled from Lusaka to Chivuna to work on vehicles belonging to Mweene’s family during the campaign.

Mweene said Sakala was a longtime family mechanic, not his driver as had been widely reported on social media, and had been in Chivuna for only about three weeks when he was killed.

At around 23:00 hours on June 29, Mweene said his daughter telephoned him after hearing what sounded like a struggle inside Sakala’s room.

“I advised her not to open the door but wait,” he said.

Mweene then contacted a police officer who lived some distance away

and arranged transport for him. When the officer arrived and the room was opened, Sakala was found lying in a pool of blood with his throat cut

Two weeks later, when MakanDay visited the campaign base, traces of dried blood were still visible on the floor and mattress in the room where Sakala was killed. The room had largely been left untouched as police continued their investigations.

Was Sakala the target?

What remains unknown is why Sakala was killed — and whether he was even the intended target. Mweene believes the killing may have been connected to him.

“I feel this murder was targeted at me. Sakala was only about three weeks old here,” he said.

There is, however, no evidence establishing that the killing was politically motivated or that Mweene was the intended target.

Sakala was killed at the campaign base of a parliamentary candidate in the middle of an election campaign, circumstances that inevitably raised questions about a possible political connection.

A campaign disrupted

For Mweene, Sakala’s murder became part of the story of an election he eventually lost. He said his campaign was suspended for more than 30 days following the killing, disrupting his ability to reach voters during a critical period.

“We lost a lot of time because of what happened. It affected our ability to reach out to the people and continue campaigning as we had planned.”

Mweene eventually lost Magoye East to Malambo.

Whether the disruption caused his defeat cannot be established. But Sakala’s killing had brought political activity at his campaign base to a standstill.

Fear, but few answers

When MakanDay visited the nearby community two weeks after the killing, residents were reluctant to discuss

what had happened. Some refused to speak altogether.

One woman, speaking anonymously, said residents feared that whoever killed Sakala remained among them.

“We have never experienced such here, where a human being is slaughtered like a chicken. No! We are scared because the murderer is still moving about freely,” she said.

Sakala’s family has also grown reluctant to speak publicly.

“As a family, we can’t speak. We have gone mute just like government is. I can’t say anything for now,” family spokesperson Manunga Nyondwa told MakanDay on July 27.

At just 31, Mwanza has gone from entering politics at a young age to winning Chipata Central Constituency on the UPND ticket — making him one of the younger MPs entering Zambia’s National Assembly.

But how do you win an election when politics is often associated with deep pockets?

In this interview with MakanDay, Mwanza talks about what ignited his passion for politics, why he started young, and what he believes is the secret to beating money at the ballot box.

Young, elected and now facing the harder part — turning campaign promises into representation.

Police initially detained a man who had been with Sakala on the night he was killed. But police commissioner, Namalongo confirmed that the man was subsequently released after questioning.

The election ended. The mystery did not.

Sakala was buried at Mutumbi Cemetery in Lusaka on July 3. Six weeks later, Zambians went to the polls

Independent parliamentary candidate Confucius Mweene outside his campaign base in Chivuna, Magoye East Constituency, where Stanley Sakala was found killed on June 29, 2026. Photo: MakanDay/Mavis Muchiya



Can ideas beat money in politics? George Mwanza thinks so

Watch the interview and tell us. Can a strong grassroots connection really beat money in Zambian politics?

<https://youtu.be/mb6i98I0VKY?si=Ov5I75cCS014QhU->

EDITOR’S NOTE: This interview was recorded in March 2026, several months before Zambia’s 13 August general election. At the time, George Mwanza was an independent candidate for Chipata Central Constituency. He later joined the UPND and went on to win the seat on the ruling party’s ticket.

Hichilema’s mandate is real, so are the questions

Governance and rights expert Blessing Vava spent the month before Zambia’s election moving through a country preparing for one of its most consequential votes. He was struck by how quickly a complicated contest was reduced to competing absolutes: clean or stolen, democrat or dictator. He writes here, that the reality is much more nuanced than that.

Zambia’s post-election debate has collapsed two separate claims into one. The first is that Hichilema is governing as an authoritarian leader and the election shows state capture — a sweeping judgment requiring evidence of sustained institutional deterioration. The second is that constituency-level turnout data reveal localized anomalies warranting investigation — an empirical question that can be tested against the record. Treating them as one lets each side dismiss the other’s strongest point by association.

The baseline data: the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) declared Hakainde Hichilema president-elect with roughly 2.96 million votes, or 60.5%, against Brian Mundubile’s 1.85 million, or 37.9%, a margin of about 1.1 million votes. That is a substantial mandate, but it does not make every question about the results irrelevant.

Independent statistical examinations cross-referencing presidential and parliamentary tallies flagged at least 27 constituencies with presidential turnout above 80%, concentrated in Hichilema’s ruling-party strongholds, including North-Western, Western, and Southern provinces. Within a 16-constituency sample, estimated discrepancies ranged from 350,000 to 550,000 votes overall.

Two later, independent domestic exercises point the same way. The Christian Churches Monitoring Group’s (CCMG) Parallel Vote Tabulation put Hichilema at 56.0% ($\pm 1.7\%$) and Mundubile at 42.3% ($\pm 1.7\%$), confirming that he crossed the 50% threshold to win outright, while flagging 30 constituencies with results it judged artificially inflated. CCMG leadership called on ECZ to publish all 226 collation records and GEN-20 images from all 13,529 polling stations. Transparency International-Zambia’s (TI-Z) findings are also instructive: early spot-checks of 16 and 53 constituencies scored 100% and 96.9% on its Integrity Index..

Its final assessment, covering 221 of 226 constituencies, scored just 61.73%, citing process incidents in 32 named constituencies

Reassurance came first; concern came once the fuller picture was in.

The 27-constituency finding, CCMG’s 30, and TI-Z’s 32 use different methods to examine overlapping questions. That they land in roughly the same neighbourhood and provinces makes the pattern credible. What matters is the difference between “anomalies need forensic examination” and “the election was stolen.” The first is now backed by three independent sources; the second requires much more.

Hichilema is not a ‘dictator’

Hichilema cannot credibly be called a dictator on the evidence before us, despite the claims made by some concerned activists. He came to power in 2021 by defeating an incumbent in a competitive election — the outcome authoritarian systems exist to prevent — and has now won a second constitutional term, with term limits intact. Opposition parties were not banned; the main opposition, NRPUP, and the affiliated Tonse Alliance campaigned nationally, and their leaders have since taken notably different positions. Sean Tembo has conceded, Dan Pule has called for dialogue, and Brian Mundubile is reportedly pursuing legal avenues. The press, civil society, and observer groups have freely reported on and challenged the government’s conduct, including the concerns raised here.

None of that means Zambia has no democratic problems, or that the playing field was completely level. But there is a difference between institutional weakness, authoritarian tendencies, and consolidated dictatorship. A localized irregularity, even one now corroborated three ways, is a serious integrity question. It is not, however, evidence of the opposition bans, judicial capture, and disappearances that define dictatorship.

Both the opposition and state deserve scrutiny

The opposition’s conduct — until recently, that of the ruling party — is a separate factual question, not a character defense. Its leading figures are seasoned veterans of Zambia’s long-governing infrastructure who understand state machinery and the evidentiary hurdles an election petition faces. Some have amplified legitimate questions to build leverage and sustain relevance. Brian Mundubile declared victory while collation was still underway — a claim that preceded, and arguably helped trigger, attempts by aligned cadres to forcibly reclaim market spaces in urban centres. But the opposition is not a single actor: Sean Tembo conceded, Dan Pule stepped back from litigation, and lawyer Linda Kasonde has cited insufficient evidence for a citizen-led petition. Those divisions cut against any single narrative of bad faith.

State conduct deserves equal scrutiny. Cordoning off the superior courts on the final day of the election petition window was a serious disruption. Security forces blocked access, citing unspecified security concerns and creating uncertainty when contestants and citizens needed clarity. Whether electronic filing remained technically possible is not the real question; the question is whether the state did everything reasonable to guarantee access to justice. This followed the ECZ’s earlier vote-count suspension on Election Day, which left an information vacuum quickly filled by the most alarming interpretations.

Transparency and open communication are the remedy here, not government defensiveness.

How Zambia emerges stronger

If President Hichilema is as confident in his mandate as the election results suggest, the better response is to resolve the lingering questions, not dismiss them outright. First, publish complete constituency-level results and GEN-20 forms for every flagged seat.

Second, back an independent forensic review of those constituencies with opposition and civil-society observers present — prioritising evidence over accusation. Third, explain the court closures plainly: who ordered them, what security threat was cited, and whether any contestant’s filing was affected. Fourth, advance ECZ commissioner-appointment reform, where critics and observers already agree. Finally, keep the ruling party’s response to integrity questions separate from its response to the opposition. Full transparency, not rebuttal, is the strongest move.

None of this requires conceding the election was stolen. The evidence does not show that it was. The vote margin is real, and three independent sources still fall short of showing an outcome-determining problem. But that should not excuse avoiding harder questions. Zambia does not need another argument between “everything was perfect” and “everything was fraudulent.” It needs institutions confident enough to open the books and safeguard the integrity of future elections.

Indeed, the safety of Zambia’s next election depends on how confidently the current government answers present doubts about this one. A government that treats scrutiny as the price of a mandate, not a threat to manage or sidestep, will emerge stronger. And in five years, that may matter more than the size of any electoral victory.

Dr. Blessing Vava is a governance and human rights expert with nearly two decades of experience working in civil society leadership. He is currently the Executive Director of the Southern Africa Coalition for Democracy and Accountability (SACDA).

From Politics to the Medicine Supply Agency and Back Again

Victor Nyasulu’s journey has taken him from opposition politics into the UPND government, through the troubled leadership of Zambia’s medicines supply agency and into a corruption trial. Now, after another election, his story illustrates the sometimes-blurred lines between politics, public appointments and accountability in Zambia.

By Linda Soko Tembo

Nyasulu’s public life has rarely followed a straight line.

A chartered accountant by profession, he has moved between opposition politics, the ruling United Party for National Development (UPND), senior public appointments and back into opposition politics.

Along the way, he became Director General of the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency (ZAMMSA), lost that position amid turmoil at the agency and was subsequently arrested and charged over procurement decisions made during his tenure.

He denies wrongdoing and, together with three other former public officials, has pleaded not guilty to corruption-related charges arising from ZAMMSA’s 2023–2024 procurement of medicines and medical supplies.

With Zambia’s 13 August 2026 election now over, Nyasulu’s story is no longer simply about his political ambitions. It is also about the complicated intersection between politics, public appointments and accountability.

From Zambia We Want to UPND

Nyasulu’s political journey came to wider public attention in December 2020 when he joined the Zambia We Want movement.

Ahead of the 2021 general election, the movement entered into an alliance with the UPND. Under that arrangement, Nyasulu contested the Lusaka mayoral election on the UPND ticket. He came close.

Official Electoral Commission of Zambia results show that Patriotic Front candidate Chilando Chitangala won with 282,187 votes against Nyasulu’s 270,772 — a difference of 11,415 votes.

Nyasulu subsequently challenged Chitangala’s election.

After the 2021 elections, Zambia We Want left the UPND Alliance following disagreements over the implementation of alliance agreements.

Nyasulu, however, remained with the UPND.

He has explained that his decision was influenced partly by the public responsibilities he had been given by the new administration.

“I felt obligated to remain because I had been honoured by the government and entrusted with public responsibility,” Nyasulu has said.

Those appointments would eventually take him into one of Zambia’s most important — and troubled — public institutions.

Rise at ZAMMSA

In 2022, Nyasulu was appointed Commissioner at the Civil Service Commission, where he says he participated in the recruitment of more than 11,000 health workers.

His next appointment brought him closer to Zambia’s medicines supply chain.

On 17 April 2023, he was appointed Director of Finance at ZAMMSA. Within months, he rose to Acting Director General before being confirmed as Director General on 17 November 2023.

Nyasulu has defended his record at the agency, saying medicine availability improved from around 50 percent to between 78 and 80 percent during his leadership.

But his tenure coincided with serious problems at ZAMMSA.

MakanDay has previously investigated the agency’s 2023–2024 “mop-up” procurement exercise, launched to address shortages of essential medicines and medical supplies.

The procurement process, and decisions taken around it, would later become the subject of investigations and eventually criminal proceedings.

Nyasulu was removed from ZAMMSA in 2024.

His departure did not end the controversy surrounding his time at the agency.

From ZAMMSA Boss to Accused Person

Nyasulu is now standing trial before the Economic and Financial Crimes Court alongside former ZAMMSA Director of Supply Planning Nalishebo Siyandi, former Director of Procurement Habadu Nchimunya and former Ministry of Health official Dr John Kachimba.

The four have pleaded not guilty to seven corruption-related charges arising from ZAMMSA’s 2023–2024 mop-up procurement of essential medicines, medical supplies, anti-cancer medicines, adjuvants and reproductive health commodities.

The prosecution alleges, among other things, that contracts were irregularly approved, including a contract involving Lumumba Pharmaceuticals Limited despite allegations that the company submitted its bid after the invitation had closed.

Other allegations concern contracts involving Cube Pharmaceuticals, Yash Pharmaceuticals and VL Healthnet Limited.

Nyasulu and his co-accused deny the charges.

Their lawyers initially challenged the indictment, arguing that several counts were defective and failed to disclose essential ingredients of the alleged offences.

Magistrate Peter Mungala rejected that objection in June, ruling that the seven counts were sufficiently framed to inform the accused of the allegations they faced.

That ruling cleared the way for the prosecution to continue presenting its evidence.

What the Court Has Heard

The trial has since opened another window into the procurement processes that unfolded at ZAMMSA during and around Nyasulu’s tenure.

These are allegations and evidence being tested before the court. No finding of guilt has been made against Nyasulu or any of his co-accused.

The case took another turn in July when the

court allowed prosecutors to introduce previously missing pages from an internal ZAMMSA investigation report.

The defence had opposed the application, questioning why the documents had not been produced earlier and arguing that their admission during the trial could prejudice the accused.

Magistrate Mungala allowed the documents to be disclosed, while giving the defence an opportunity to examine them.

The trial is scheduled to continue on 26, 27 and 28 August 2026.

Political Fallout

Nyasulu’s troubles at ZAMMSA also became intertwined with his political journey.

He eventually left the UPND, saying he had concluded that he was no longer welcome in the ruling party.

“A political party is like a private club. If you overstay your welcome, principles demand that you leave,” he has said.

He briefly returned to Zambia We Want, where he became Chairperson for Finance, before moving to Citizen First, led by Harry Kalaba.

But that relationship did not last either.

By the period leading up to the 2026 election, Nyasulu had also left Citizen First, adding another chapter to a political journey characterised by shifting alliances. He subsequently joined the National Reconciliation Party for Unity and Prosperity (NRPUP), which until recently was a member of the Tonse Pamodzi Alliance. Within the alliance, Nyasulu served as a member of the Lusaka Province presidential campaign team.

His political difficulties have at times intersected directly with law enforcement.

Nyasulu was previously detained by police after accompanying opposition politician Brian Mundubile to the Anti-Corruption Commission for questioning. Police described his alleged

From Politics to the Medicine Supply Agency and Back Again cont..

conduct at the time as likely to cause a breach of the peace.

“My integrity has been questioned, yes. I have been arrested and bonded, but I remain innocent until proven guilty by a competent court,” he has said.

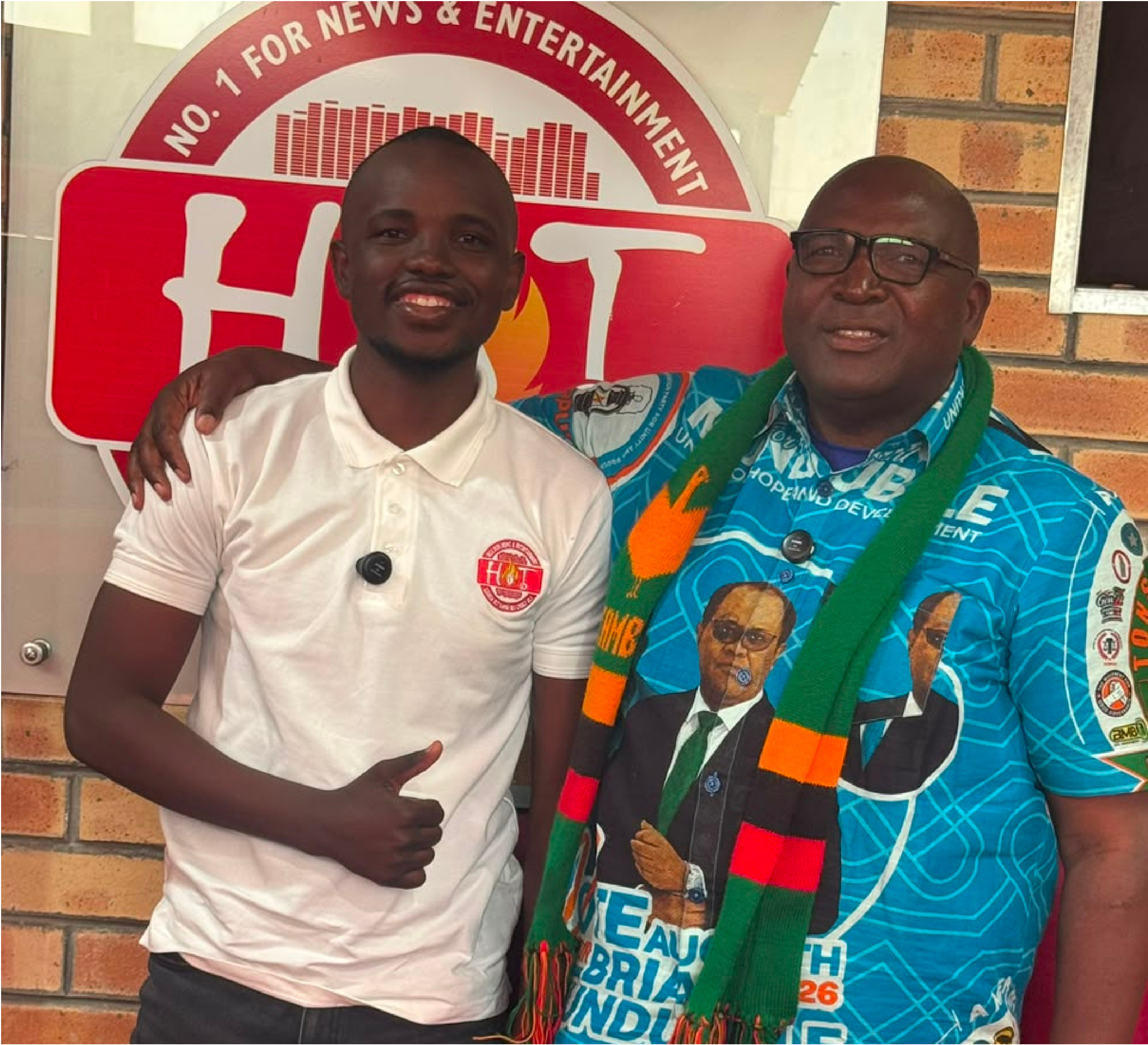
A Career at the Intersection of Politics and Public Service

Nyasulu, who previously served as Chief Financial Officer of the now-liquidated Zambian Airways and Director of Finance at the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), has consistently presented himself as a servant leader whose politics are rooted in faith, integrity and public service.

“My ideology has never changed. I believe in serving my generation with integrity,” he says.

His critics and the prosecution case now place that claim under considerable scrutiny.

But the courts, not political opponents or supporters, will ultimately determine whether the allegations arising from his tenure at ZAMMSA amount to criminal wrongdoing.



Tanzanian Driver Fined K60,000 Over China-Bound Mukwa Timber

By Gibson Zulu

A Tanzanian national has been fined K60,000 by the Isoka Magistrate Court after pleading guilty to transporting 26 cubic metres of Mukwa timber without the required Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) certificate.

According to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), Salum Yusuf, 52, was apprehended by Zambia National Service officers at the Isoka ZNS Checkpoint on July 11, 2026, while transporting the timber.

The consignment was subsequently handed over to the Forestry Department for further investigation.

The DNPW said Yusuf was the driver of the truck transporting the timber and did not have the required CITES certificate because the document had not been provided to him for the consignment.

According to a statement issued by the DNPW, Yusuf produced an export licence and accompanying documentation from the Democratic Republic of Congo indicating that the timber had been loaded in Lubumbashi and was being transported through Zambia and Tanzania, with China as its final destination.

However, he was unable to produce the required CITES certificate for the shipment.

CITES regulates international trade in certain wild animals and plants to ensure that such trade does not threaten their survival.

The DNPW said Yusuf was formally arrested on July 23 by the department, working with the Forestry Department, and charged with failing to produce a CITES certificate.

He was charged under Sections 91 and 99 of the Forest Act, as read with Statutory Instrument No. 79 relating to Zambia’s.

implementation of CITES

Yusuf appeared before Isoka Magistrate Deborah Mubanga on July 27, where he pleaded guilty and was convicted

The court sentenced him to a K60,000 fine, which was subsequently paid by a third party, allowing him to avoid the alternative sentence of nine months’ imprisonment.

Following the conviction, the State applied for the forfeiture of the timber, truck and trailer.

However, the Magistrate’s Court ordered that the timber and vehicle be returned to their rightful owners after finding that the timber had not been unlawfully obtained.

The State has since appealed the decision to the High Court and obtained a stay of execution, meaning the timber and vehicle will not be returned until the appeal is heard and determined.

Mukwa, scientifically known as *Pterocarpus angolensis*, is a valuable timber species found across southern and eastern Africa and is subject to international trade controls.

The DNPW said the commercial value of Mukwa makes it vulnerable to exploitation and warned that illegal timber trade can contribute to forest degradation, habitat loss and biodiversity decline, while depriving governments of revenue and undermining legitimate timber businesses.

The department said the case comes amid efforts by authorities to strengthen environmental crime enforcement and border controls aimed at disrupting illegal movements of timber across national borders.



OPINION: Goose with the golden eggs

Our management of rising population, an increased jobs drought, high demand for social amenities and service delivery, will be the key to our increasingly fragile peace, writes John Mukela

A week has passed since the Electoral Commission of Zambia announced the UPND’s Hakainde Hichilema as the Presidential winner of the recently concluded elections, beating the NRPUP’s Brian Mundubile.

The day after polling day on August 13, someone commented: “Yesterday looked peaceful, but wait for when they start counting...”

For a long time since I can remember, we have been sold the “story” that Zambia is a pissyful country.

Nothing to do with piss or pissing, just about us Zambians being incredibly nice, calm and polite. You could even throw in being humble if you wanted.

Against the electoral skirmishes witnessed after August 13, we have been told that whatever has happened, “it’s not like Zambians,” because we are a peaceful people.

But just how exactly does this peaceful Zambia stand up to close scrutiny?

The illusion of calm on election day was on full display, but only just, because the following afternoon, August 14, travelling from east to west, Great East Road was a sea of calm tranquility, until you approached Kabwe round-about, when suddenly, all hell broke loose.

The sea of people trooping out of town crammed every little space, all of them in a terrific rush to wherever they were heading.

Cars were jammed, traffic at a standstill. Drivers were attempting to u-turn, right in the middle of the narrow lanes, afraid to venture further through the throng of pedestrians and vehicles.

Along all of the four main highway arteries out of the city’s downtown, it was the human equivalent of the seasonal wildebeest migration in the Liuwa National Park or the Serengeti – wild, energetic and do or die.

The stampede was triggered by NRPUP Presidential candidate Mundubile’s announcement that PVT results compiled from polling stations and

totaling centres indicated that he was leading Hichilema.

In the aftermath of August 13, so much has occurred with the two main contending political parties at each others’ throat.

Most alarming is the government’s allegation of a terrorist threat and the disruption of an insurgency gathering at the Mundubile residence, resulting in the fatal shooting of ex-cabinet minister and Mundubile confidante, Mutotwe Kafwaya.

There are too many unanswered questions surrounding this sad incident, and the government version of what took place has been openly challenged by the Mundubile team.

Sensing the deteriorating situation, Patrick Kangwa, Secretary to the Cabinet, saw it fit to address the nation, urging “peace, unity and stability.”

“Government has observed with concern, that the heightened vitriol and trolling that is being exchanged between the two sides of the political divide is unhealthy. In our call to preserve the peace, unity and stability of our country, we must ensure it stops,” Kangwa said.

He condemned “in the strongest possible terms”, the “inappropriate behaviour that is slowly emerging, because it goes against our Christian values,” and negates the unity and stability that should be passed on to future generations.

Peace comes up tops in discussions about Zambia during elections, and this year was no exception.

Politicians sing the peace song all the time. Church pastors proclaim it every Sunday. The media blows the peace trumpet at any given opportunity.

Christian values, and Zambia’s declaration as a Christian nation is another staple of Zambia’s profile. Zambia, the Christian “nayshan!”

But, scratch a little at that peace image, or that Christian pose, and doubt creeps in.

In reality, is the peace for which Zambia is applauded, an illusion, a concoction?

Because during elections, there is always an unspoken but palpable underlying fear that things could escalate and blow up, and there have been several occasions when things almost did.

Miraculously, Zambia has been spared that fate, so far, I suspect not because Zambians are intrinsically peaceful, but more because we have just been lucky.

Unscrupulous leaders who understand this know that it takes very little to woo or sway a gullible crowd, voters, or youths with political messaging that incites and creates a riotous frenzy, lawlessness and chaos.

And if it serves a political end, forget how selfish the motive, why not?

Already, as noted by Patrick Kangwa, social media is fast becoming a dangerous problem, with misinformation and disinformation spiraling out of control, and desperate political actors riding it.

Zambia, the peaceful nation, should not be swallowed blindly as a guaranteed given, because Zambian elections have every possibility to regress into contested battlefields with far worse repercussions than we have so far witnessed.

Moreover, our under-development and widespread nationwide poverty, affecting urban and rural communities alike, guarantees that “peace” will become less tenable if living standards are not sufficiently improved.

Furthermore, we cannot rule out the likelihood of an increased escalation of poverty and under-development, fueled by an AI-powered technological race in the advanced states of the “first world,” leaving us moribund, despite our abundant natural wealth, at the bottom of the global economic pie – perpetual hewers of wood and drawers of water.

While politics is important, more important is Zambia’s economic production and reproduction, which in turn contribute towards Zambia’s overall development.

Voters care most about their personal financial well-being and standard of living above all other

political debates. “It’s the economy, stupid!”

Our population explosion in the coming decades, projected by the Zambia Statistical Agency to reach 40 million by 2047, will strain the economic cake, further undermining our cherished peace, if government and its politicians fail to match this increased population with economic stability.

2047 may seem far, but it’s a mere 20 years, and it is astonishing to imagine that a baby born today will be celebrating only their 74th birthday by the turn of this century in the year 2100, when Zambia’s population is projected to peak at 65 million.

At the slow rate we have progressed since 1964, how possible can we satisfy the demands of 65 million people, while continuing to remain peaceful?

Obviously, what is materially possible in the United States or Sweden cannot easily be replicated in countries where the forces of production are far less developed.

The degree to which science and technology are mainstreamed in society is very important for countries like ours, where survival is still largely pre-scientific, for example, within small-scale agriculture.

But how ready are we for this societal shift?

A cursory glance at our readiness gives little comfort.

For one, our current education system needs a complete overhaul for it to match the demands of a rapidly evolving modern economy.

At the apex of our educational system, for example, there is a glaring void in research and development in our universities.

We all know that university R&D acts as a primary engine for national progress by driving economic growth, fostering technological innovation, building a skilled workforce, and solving critical social challenges.

In Sweden for instance, Stockholm University treats PhD positions as paid employment rather

• OPINION: Goose with the golden eggs cont...

than traditional study-only scholarships, with science PhD candidates receiving fully funded four-year fixed-term contracts with a monthly salary (averaging 31,000 to 34,000 Swedish Kroner), social benefits, and no tuition fees.

On top of that, full living costs, research facility access, and medical/social benefits are covered directly by the university.

A wide range of research areas are open, such as environmental and Earth Sciences, Physics and Mathematics, Molecular Biosciences and Chemistry, Robotics, to name a few.

Economists point out for example that to absorb millions of young workers over the next decades, the focus must shift from basic headcount to value-added industries like manufacturing,

technology, and mining diversification.

A transition from government to private sector as our growth engine is key in order to buck the trend where every election cycle unravels power mercenaries of all manner and shape, with some this August, “ready to die and ready to kill” because government is the goose with the golden eggs.

Zambia needs to move away from this “get into government by hook or by crook” mindset.

Our management of rising population, an increased jobs drought especially among the increasingly vocal and social media addicted youth, high demand for social amenities and service delivery, will be the key to our increasingly fragile peace.



OPINION: Jesus, Politics and Zambia’s Dirty Cup

“Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, while inside they are full of extortion and intemperance. Blind Pharisee! Clean the inside of the cup and dish first, so that the outside may also be clean.” — Matthew 23:25–26.

If Jesus had been among Zambia’s voters on 13 August, he might have had similar words for the country’s politicians in the aftermath of the election.

The very practices that the ruling United Party for National Development (UPND) condemned while in opposition are, in many instances, the same practices it now appears to have embraced in government. The faces may have changed, but some of the conduct it once denounced has not.

And this problem goes beyond the UPND.

Too much of Zambia’s politics is about cleaning the outside of the cup while leaving the inside untouched. Parties promise change

when they are outside government, condemn the excesses of those in power and demand stronger institutions. Once the political tables turn, however, reform suddenly becomes less urgent.

Now it is the turn of some former Patriotic Front (PF) leaders and members to cry injustice and seek public sympathy. But that raises an uncomfortable question: how did those who wielded power under the PF conduct themselves when they were in government?

Did they defend the institutions they now want to protect them? Did they speak against abuses of power when those abuses affected their political opponents? Did they demand the same standards of justice, accountability and respect for rights that they are demanding today?

These questions do not excuse any injustice being committed against anyone today.

Wrongdoing does not become acceptable simply because its victim may

once have tolerated, defended or even benefited from similar conduct. The rule of law must protect everyone — including those who may have failed to defend it when they held power.

But this cycle helps explain why it is sometimes difficult for ordinary citizens to sympathise with politicians when the political tables turn against them.

Zambia cannot build a democracy on the principle that something is wrong only when it happens to us.

That is precisely the hypocrisy at the heart of Jesus’ warning, polishing the outside of the cup while refusing to confront what is inside.

Our politics is too important to be cleaned only from the outside. It needs a more fundamental overhaul.

One place to start is political party and campaign financing.

Election after election, enormous amounts of money are poured into

campaigns, yet Zambians know remarkably little about where much of that money comes from, what those financing political parties expect in return, or how those relationships may influence decisions once a party forms government

A study by [Transparency International Zambia](#), Elections and Money, provides some indication of the scale of the problem. Based on research involving more than half of Zambia’s Members of Parliament, TI-Z estimated that the average cost of winning an election in Zambia was about K3.8 million.

It also found that candidates able to spend more enjoyed greater visibility and other electoral advantages, while campaign spending varied considerably according to wealth, gender, age, location and whether a candidate belonged to the ruling or opposition party.

But perhaps the more important finding is what we still do not know.

• **OPINION: Jesus, Politics and Zambia’s Dirty Cup cont...**

TI-Z found that little information is publicly available about who finances political parties and their major contributors. Zambia therefore has a political system in which millions of kwachas can be spent seeking public office without voters necessarily knowing who supplied the money or what interests those financiers may have.

That matters because political financing is not merely an accounting issue. It goes to the heart of who ultimately exercises political power.

TI-Z warns that opaque donations can create relationships in which wealthy individuals, businesses or other interests finance politicians and later expect government contracts, licences, favourable policies or regulatory decisions in return. It identifies the risks as including an uneven electoral playing field, policy capture, erosion of public trust and weak accountability.

In other words, the question is not simply: Who won the election? It is also: Who paid to help them win, how much did they contribute, and what might they expect after the election?

This is why campaign-finance reform should concern ordinary Zambians.

Without transparency, citizens risk becoming spectators in a political contest whose most consequential relationships are formed long before polling day and remain hidden long after the ballots have been counted.

The Constitution already anticipated this problem. TI-Z notes that the 2016 amended Constitution provides for matters including the declaration of party funding and limits on campaign spending, but the legislation required to give practical effect to those provisions has not been enacted. Political party campaign financing therefore remains largely unregulated.

There is an irony here. TI-Z says 97.5 percent of the MPs it interviewed agreed that it was time to act on reform. Yet meaningful legislation has remained elusive.

We have sat in meetings where political party and campaign financing has been discussed. Yet it is difficult to find politicians willing to champion the kind of transparency that would require them to disclose who funds them, how much they receive and how that money is spent.

That reluctance should concern us.

Because unless campaign financing is addressed, Zambia can change governments and political parties without necessarily changing the system beneath them.

Election after election, citizens may continue to be called upon to choose between candidates without being given one of the most important pieces of information necessary to make that choice: who is financing them?

The ballot should not be the end of the citizen’s role in democracy. Zambians should be able to follow the money before the election, scrutinise those who finance political power and, after the election, ask whether government decisions serve the people who voted or the interests that paid.

That is what Jesus’ call of the importance of ‘cleaning the inside of the cup’ would begin to look like.



This week in the Bulletin & Record

Nadine Gordimer, 20th Nov 1923 – 13th July 2014

A personal memoir*

While this issue of The Bulletin & Record was going to press, we learned with great sadness of the death of famous South African novelist and Nobel Prize winner, Nadine Gordimer.

Gordimer’s writings became the major literary conscience of South Africa during the long years of repression of black South Africans by the system of racial governance that became known as apartheid.

She and her husband Reinhold Cassirer, who died in 2001, were occasional visitors to Ndola in the early days of Zambia’s independence, jazzy Bohemian days of political and pseudo-philosophical debate, arguments about theatre, art and music that might have been unthinkable a few years earlier. Nadine and Reinhold used to join in these somewhat pretentious verbal extravaganzas from a room in our small rented house, sandwiched between the house of Julian Elliot, architect of the Kasama Cathedral,

and that of Mick Pilcher on the other side of us. Mick is a gifted graphic designer who created the remarkable murals in the National Assembly building, although in those early days he was graphic designer of Horizon magazine for Roan Selection Trust, the mining company.

It might seem strange now, looking at the down-at-heel state of Ndola, but in those early years of independence the town seemed to us to be the centre of the universe. Zambia had just been born and the promise of the future and shedding off of the colonial past by Kenneth Kaunda and his compatriots, and the building of a new nation, gave a heady buzz to those days. The years of assumed white superiority in apartheid and then by the whites in Southern Rhodesia, leading soon after to UDI and a disastrous civil war, and coming on top of years of colonisation, had created an abyss between blacks and whites that was both futile and stupid. But in those early years in

Ndola, the liberation of independence was a liberation for all of us.

Interestingly, many years later during the darkness of apartheid, Nadine Gordimer said she had only once thought of emigrating – and it was to Zambia. “Then I discovered the truth,” she said, “which was that in Zambia I was regarded by black friends as a European, a stranger.” She said: “It is only here (in South Africa) that I can be what I am – a white African.”

There was an echo of that confusion about Europeaness in an incident in 1972 when I received a notice declaring me to be a prohibited immigrant (for what reason I still don’t know) and to report to the local immigration office. There, an official told me I had 48 hours in which to leave the country and return to my country of birth, which happened to be New Zealand. He told me I would have to return to Europe. “Why Europe?” I asked. “Well,” he said,

“you’re a European aren’t you?” I think the absurdity may have escaped him.

Gordimer was born near Springs, in Gauteng, of a Jewish Latvian father and a British mother, also Jewish. It may have been from her mother that Gordimer first became aware of the systemic injustices of South African society: her mother was always concerned about the poverty and discrimination faced by black people in South Africa and she eventually founded a crèche for black children.

More importantly perhaps, Gordimer was shocked by the events at Sharpeville on 21st March 1960, when 69 people were shot dead by police as a crowd demonstrated against the hated pass laws. Later, she became a firm friend of Nelson Mandela and in fact edited the famous speech he gave – “I am prepared to die” – at his trial in Rivonia, Johannesburg.

• Nadine Gordimer cont...

Gordimer’s writings dealt with moral and racial issues, particularly in South Africa. She became a beacon for journalists from around the world, seeking rationale explanations, they hoped, for her seemingly hopeless and intractable enmity for the rulers of white South Africa. Though I recall asking her at one stage about how revolutionary she might become, and she replied “The most revolutionary thing I could do would be to keep out of the way” – meaning, of course that the struggle for black emancipation was a struggle for the blacks to undertake on their own behalf, it was not one that whites, however sympathetic, could win for them.

A few years later I was sent on assignment to South Africa and looked up Gordimer at her home in Parktown West to interview her for an article I was writing. She took me for a walk through the family’s smallholding on the edge of Johannesburg. Meandering through the grass stalks, along dusty paths and under acacias I imagined I was at the scene of her latest book *The Conservationist*, a spellbinding tale about a man called Mehring, a businessman who owned a hobby farm in South Africa – just like the one I was walking through with the writer, who was to win the Booker Prize for this novel.

Mehring learns that a body has been found on his property, and it forces him to examine his own life and mortality. The apartheid system in “old” South Africa is crumbling. Mehring takes in this changing scene as he deals with the black workers on his farm, his activist girlfriend, his bitter ex-wife and his rebellious son. He must think hard about what he really wants out of life.

Back in my hotel room that evening I discovered, to my horror, that the day’s taping of my interview with Gordimer, had recorded not a word. The next day, shamefaced, I made my way back to her house. She was – what can I say? – surprised, but sympathetic. She sat me down, made me a cup of tea, and we went through it all again.

Her next book, *Burger’s Daughter*, described by one critic as “one of the few truly great political novels ever written”, was banned by the apartheid regime, as was the following one, *July’s People*. In all she wrote 30 books, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature among an array of major awards.

Once the ANC took power in South Africa, Gordimer was not exactly marginalized, but she was certainly in a kind of

twilight world inhabited by white anti-apartheid activists. She was lauded highly outside her country but at home she was, for a time, criticised from all sides – too beholden to the ANC, charged some, a betrayer of the revolution, according to others. She had also become a critic of Jacob Zumu, and of the apparent slow disintegration of moral certainty among the new black governing politicians.

The truths she taught us, however, are there in her books, writ large. They will live on.

* The author of this article, Vernon Wright, was publisher of *The Bulletin & Record* magazine in Lusaka.

This story was first published in the August 2014 edition of the *Bulletin and Record* magazine. May Nadine Gordimer rest in peace.

