



## **INCIDENCES OF VIOLENCE AND LACK OF ADHERENCE TO COVID 19 MEASURES IN THE FORTHCOMING BY ELECTIONS**

Malawi will conduct by elections in seven constituencies and two wards on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Holding of elections is one of the key pillars of any democratic country and it allows citizens to participate in the choosing of their representatives. As we get closer to the voting day, the Human Rights Commission (The Commission) has noted two issues that require immediate redress. The first one is on incidences of political violence that have taken place in some constituencies. Last week violence erupted in Nsanje Central Constituency between supporters of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Several people were reported injured.

Violence should not be allowed to play a part in any electoral event. Political violence has the potential to derail the electoral process and also to disenfranchise some voters. The Commission therefore condemns this violence in its strongest terms. We urge all political parties and their supporters to embrace peace and adopt issue-based campaign strategies. We also call upon the police to be vigilant and address issues of violence before they get out of hand. There should be no impunity for perpetrators of violence.

The other issue of concern is failure by political parties to abide by Covid- 19 Prevention measures in the conduct of their campaign meetings. The Commission has noted that parties and candidates are going about holding campaign meetings with large crowds and without any Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs). There is total disregard for observing social distancing as dictated by the National Guidelines on Prevention of Covid -19. This conduct has the potential to spike further increases in local transmissions of the Corona-Virus at a time when infections have gone down significantly. We therefore call upon all political parties and candidates to adopt protective and innovative ways of campaigning that do not put lives of Malawians at risk again.

Finally, we commend the Malawi Police Service and the Electoral Commission for taking swift action to address the issues.

Habiba Osman  
**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
**19<sup>th</sup> March 2021**