

# ZBC blocks MDC election adverts

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The state-owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) is reported to have refused to air two campaign ads, with electoral messages from Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his wife, less than a week before crucial elections are held in the country.



According to the MDC-T, "sources" at the ZBC said senior management "felt that the messages on the adverts were too powerful" and would be difficult for ZANU-PF to match them. The ZBC was "now waiting for ZANU PF to make counter adverts from Robert Mugabe and his wife Grace" before screening both adverts.

The MDC-T said their adverts featured Tsvangirai and his wife appealing to Zimbabweans to shun violence and ensure that voting next week proceeded smoothly. They also laid out Tsvangirai's post-election plan.

A party official said the adverts had already been paid for in full and ZBC was in violation of the Electoral Act, which "guides political advertising during elections".

The state broadcaster has not only been airing Mugabe's rallies live on ZTV, but they have also intensified their campaign against Tsvangirai and his MDC-T party.

The ZBC has continued to serve as a mouthpiece for ZANU PF and Mugabe, ignoring electoral laws and media reforms that were agreed to by all parties in the coalition government.

## Abuses have not gone unnoticed

These abuses have not gone unnoticed by international media outlets, with many quoting the absence of media freedom as one of the reforms that were promised but sabotaged by Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

The Economist, a globally respected monthly, wrote: "The media are partial to ZANU PF and have worked hard in recent years to smear its opponents. The state broadcaster is running ZANU PF attack ads focusing on Tsvangirai's rather tangled love life, which depict him as a foolish and heartless womanizer."

Although many viewers abandoned ZBC radio and TV broadcasts long ago, opting for alternatives available through satellite decoders, many poor and rural communities still rely on the state broadcaster for news.

## **Last of a dying breed of dictators**

Mugabe's violent and oppressive tactics may have helped him stay in power for 33 years so far, but in this media-sawy era of Facebook and Twitter, information has become readily available and Mugabe may be the last of a dying breed of dictators that kept the masses in the dark.

The MDC-T adverts blocked from broadcast can be viewed on the party's website at [www.mdc.co.zw](http://www.mdc.co.zw) and its [Facebook page](#).

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