

# Namibia prepares for Africa's first e-vote

November 26 2014, by Andrew Beatty

---



Namibians queue in earlier polls. The country is expected to hold Africa's first electronic ballot on Friday

Namibia will vote in Africa's first electronic ballot Friday, a general election that will usher in a new president and quotas to put more women in government.

Opposition parties had launched an 11th-hour challenge to the use of the Indian-made e-voting machines, claiming the lack of a paper trail could open the door to vote rigging.

But the Windhoek High Court dismissed the application on Wednesday, leaving the door open for the election to go ahead as planned.

Namibians will choose 96 members of the national assembly and one of nine presidential candidates, ranging from the left-wing Economic Freedom Fighters to the white minority Republican Party.

Around 1.2 million Namibians are eligible to cast their ballots at nearly 4,000 electronic voting stations across the vast desert nation.

But there is only one likely winner.

Current Prime Minister Hage Geingob of the ruling SWAPO party has run on a platform of "peace, stability and prosperity" and is sure to become the new president.

The South West Africa People's Organisation was forged from the embers of the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggle and has won every election since Namibia's independence from South Africa in 1990.

"I was born SWAPO," said Hosea, a Windhoek student who vowed to vote for the centre-left party of liberation.

According to pollsters, the party remains hugely popular.

The question will be whether discontent over social and economic issues will eat into SWAPO's support, eroding its 75 percent haul garnered in 2009.

## **'Look at how we live'**

Single mother of four Gredula Nashima, 39, said she will vote for SWAPO again this time, but wants to see change.



A Namibian Herero woman prepares her vote the old fashioned way at the Ovanduvongwe

Sitting in the dirt outside her zinc panel shack by a pile of bones, she talks about unemployment, poor housing and a lack of electricity as she artfully, but violently butchers cows heads with an axe.

Hacking and smashing at the skulls, she renders the meat to small strips that are hung on a clothesline to be dried and sold, or made into "kapana"—slices of grilled meat. The leftover bones are sold to a fertiliser company.

"We want to see our leader, whoever will be in the seat, to look at our

living conditions, our roads are not tarred, but we also want help for those who have their own businesses," she said.

Like many Namibians she remains sceptical about opposition parties and their motives.

"I don't know their intentions and their objectives. If I did know I would be with them," she said.

The opposition had called for the election to be delayed until February.

But Windhoek High Court acting judge Kobus Miller rejected their application, saying he he was not satisfied with their case, although he conceded that voting has two components: voting and verification.

## **Big tent party**

Like many of Africa's liberation movements, SWAPO has become a big-tent party that spans the political spectrum and often seems more involved with intra-party politics than voters.

Supporters say that allows for continuity, but critics say it brings stasis.

A recent Afrobarometer poll showed nearly two thirds of voters believe the government is doing a bad job creating jobs, fighting corruption and improving living standards for the poor.



Namibian Ruling party South West Africa People Organization (SWAPO) supporters cheer during the last General Election campaign rally on November 22, 2014 at the Sam Nujoma stadium in Windhoek

Economic growth is forecast at around four percent for this year, yet one in four people is out of work, according to the government's narrow definition.

The economy remains dependent on diamond and uranium mining.

Party acolytes are widely seen hogging government tenders and providing "jobs for comrades".

Wealth inequalities are stark.

Adri van Tonder, an elegantly dressed non-nonsense Windhoek car dealer, says business is great.



Namibian opposition party Democratic Turnhalle Alliance presidential candidate McHenry Venaani(C) during the last General Election campaign rally on November 22, 2014 in Windhoek

"It's crazy, if dealers say it is not busy then they are just being lazy."

Van Tonder said she sells small cars to people working in mining and other industries, but top dollars come from "people from the ministries"—the government elite who buy the sleekest German sedans.

In a bid to be more in touch with voters SWAPO has vowed to put half of party and parliamentary posts in the hands of women.

The party has launched a "zebra" parliamentary list—one man, one woman—to make sure half of parliamentarians are women.

But facing a backlash from sitting male MPs, parliament has also expanded the number of seats to 96 under a constitutional amendment.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Namibia prepares for Africa's first e-vote (2014, November 26) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-11-namibia-africa-e-vote.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.