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POLITICAL VIOLENCE A HEAD OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS IN SEPTEMBER 2025 - A THREAT TO NATIONAL PEACE AND PARTICIPATORY MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY IN MALAWI: Potential for voter apathy.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Introduction

Malawi goes to the polls on the 16th. September 2025 to elect a President, Members of Parliament, and Ward councillors. With preparations well underway, there are disturbing developments in some parts of the country where cases of politically motivated violence have been documented and reported to police for action. Two most recent cases of politically motivated violence occurred near the Lilongwe City Mall on February 24, 2024, where supporters of the main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) were attacked as they gathered for a blue parade, and another case of politically motivated violence occurred at Mponera Trading Centre on 18th. April 2024 where members of the AFORD Party were allegedly attacked as they were preparing for their rally on the 19th of May 2024. According to the leadership of the AFORD Party, it is alleged the attackers were sent by the lead party in the “**Tonse Alliance**”. Both cases of politically motivated violence were reported to police, but no arrests have been made to date.

Our concern

Politically motivated violence has surfaced in Malawi with about seventeen months to the polls, and as the country is celebrating thirty years of multiparty democracy. The violence has the potential to undermine preparations for the September 2025 tripartite elections as it creates a non-conducive environment for a participatory and inclusive democratic and electoral process.

It has also the potential to undermine individual and or national efforts to promote women and young women's participation in politics and election, an area currently male-dominated.

Perpetrators of political violence in Malawi employ the youth as instruments to unleash violence on their (perpetrators) competitors instead of empowering them (the youth) as future leaders of the country and as instruments for national peace-building efforts.

Political violence challenges the rule of law and restricts freedom of expression and assembly as guaranteed in Chapter Four (**Human Rights**) of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, and as enshrined in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (**Universal Declaration**), Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other international human rights instruments.

In terms of citizen participation in government and the conduct of public affairs of their country, Malawi's political violence tends to significantly undermine the citizenry's right to vote and to be elected in periodic elections, without discrimination. Their will as expressed through the ballots to provide the basis of authority for a democratic government is both denied and abused.

Surprisingly, to date, the leadership of this country has NOT come out to condemn or comment on the spate of political violence witnessed in the country so far.

Our position as PACENET

PACENET **unreservedly** condemns **ALL** forms of political or electoral violence and will never hesitate to promote or support efforts to uproot the cause of it regardless of which political party is alleged as the perpetrator of this evil in democratic Malawi.

While **ALL** electoral stakeholders including citizens have a responsibility to promote peace the Malawi Police Service has the ultimate duty and responsibility to protect peace by among other things taking urgent but lawful actions to deal with perpetrators of any form of violence before, during, and after an election. Failure by the MPS to exercise this duty and responsibility irrespective of who the alleged perpetrator of political violence is, renders itself (MPS) an accomplice to the said acts of violence and a betrayal to the citizens of this country.

Our Call to Action

Given this context, the **Pan African Civic Educators Network (PACENET)**, a local NGO in Malawi, with over **20** years of experience in elections focusing on women's political participation, voter mobilization, election observation, and electoral reform process, and in collaboration with its grassroots partners would like to appeal as follows:

a). The President of the Republic of Malawi

Based on Servant Leadership, we call upon Your Excellency to make your position and that of your government known to the people of this country on the current state of political violence in the country. We expect that your position on this divisive issue will first and foremost portray you as Head of State and Government and not as president of your political party.

b). Political leaders/parties:

PACENET would like to urge political leaders/parties to embrace “**issue-based**” campaigning and avoid the use of intimidation, negative messages, and verbal/physical attacks against political opponents, as this has the potential to fire up party supporters and increase tensions.

Political leaders/parties should practice civilized politics and allow participatory democracy to thrive in Malawi. They should also promote and entrench inter and intra-party democracy in this country. Remember, two wrongs do not make one right.

c). The Youth in Malawi

PACENET would like to appeal to the youth of this country to say a big “**NO**” to political violence, and to never allow politicians to use you as instruments of violence. You should instead demand accountability from these politicians on their previous and future campaign promises, such as jobs, and loans to start or expand your businesses.

d). The Malawi Police Service

It must promote and sustain its image as a police service and not a police force. It must always be answerable and of service to the people of Malawi and not to those with political power because those with political power derive such power from the authority bestowed on them by the people of Malawi. Mere condemnation of these acts of political violence will not guarantee peace in the country ahead of the elections in September 2025.

Consequently, we make unapologetic demands from the Malawi Police Service to urgently apprehend perpetrators of the recent spate of political violence in Lilongwe City and Mponera for them to face justice. The prevalence of peace before, during, and after the election is our right as citizens.

e). CSOs in Malawi

In fulfilment of our watchdog role in a democracy, let us not shy away from condemning perpetrators of political violence. We must always demand accountability from political leaders, as we represent the interests of ordinary citizens regardless of their and our political affiliations.

PACENET would like also to acknowledge the action already taken by some NGOs/CSOs in Malawi who quickly condemned the said cases of politically motivated violence.

f). Development partners

Active involvement of CSOs in electoral activities including monitoring political violence in the country is being hampered by lack of financial resources. Many CSOs have remained inactive over the past four years due to a lack of financial resources. We therefore appeal to development partners to urgently assist CSOs' participation in the electoral process.

CONCLUSION

The success of the September 2025 elections in Malawi largely depends on the collective efforts of all electoral stakeholders to create and sustain a peaceful environment before, during, and after the election. Violence begets violence and therefore, no one benefits in the end.



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