

Report

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ZANU PF ABUSING AND POLITICISING PUBLIC SERVANTS IN ZIMBABWE



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1. Introduction

There is a growing concern around the politicisation and abuse of public (civil) servants to advance the political interests of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) in Zimbabwe. This is supported by a growing body of irrefutable evidence that ZANU PF is among the leading abusers of civil servants as it seeks re-election ahead of general elections. This misuse and politicization yields a political advantage and benefit (re-election) to ZANU PF. This way, the practice is tantamount to the crime of corruption. Other rampant practices are many incidents of:

- The abuse of public infrastructure, vehicles and stationery;
- Manipulating state media;
- Trading votes for access to public services; and
- Extorting donations from the private sector, among others

This mini-report gives evidence of the abuse thereof. Furthermore, urgent remedial action should be taken against the practice.

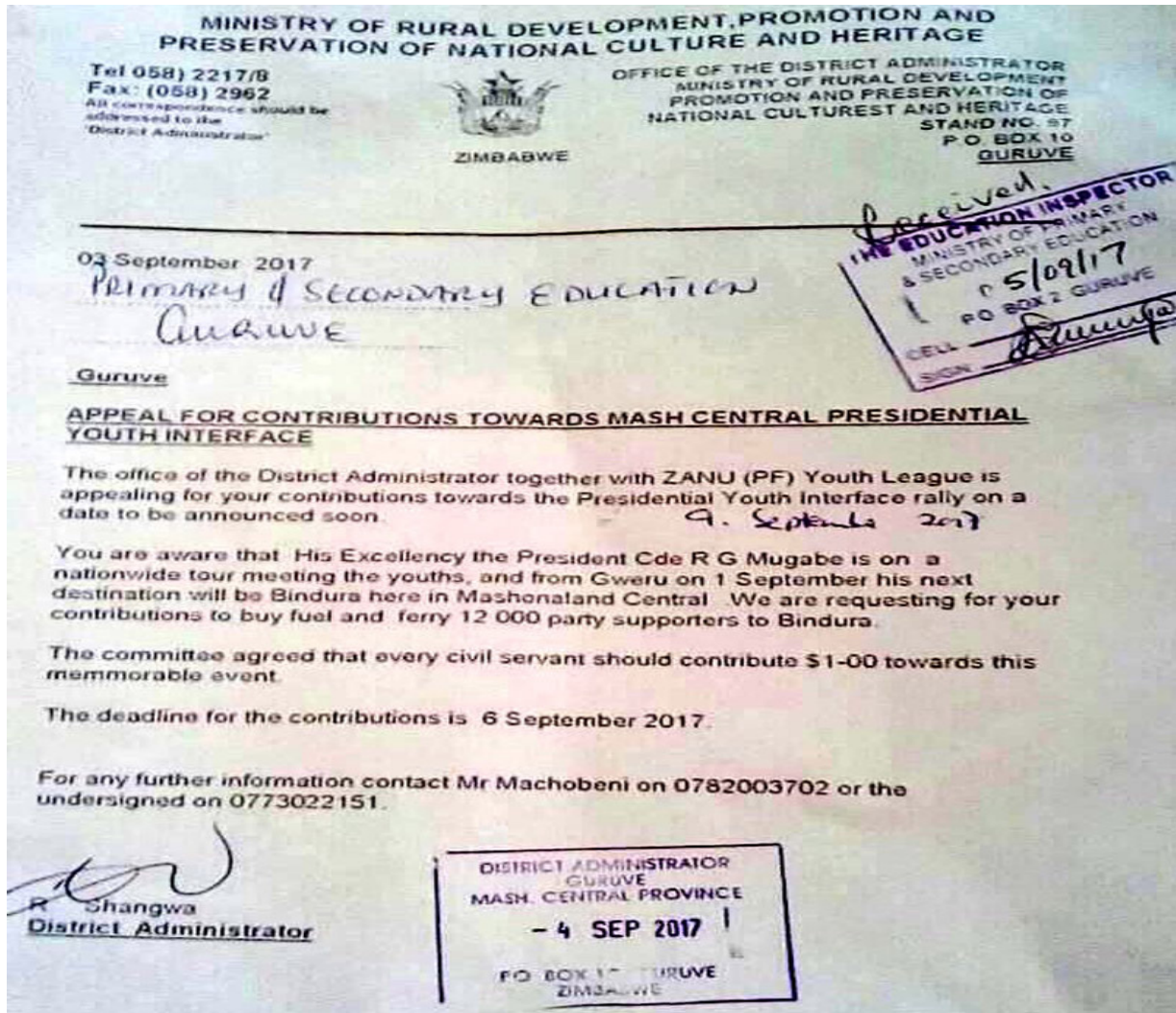
2. Abuse and Politicization of Public Servants

A letter below dated 3 September 2017, signed by the Guruve District Administrator in his official capacity speaks volumes about the abuse thereof. The District Administrator communicated in his official capacity and using a government letterhead, The letter gives evidence that the senior civil servant was actively involved in organising the Mashonaland Central ZANU PF Youth Interface Rally.

Beyond abusing public infrastructure, vehicles and diverting assets, ZANU PF gained notoriety for enlisting the assistance of civil servants in organising its party activities such as the rally in question. This has been the case in all the ZANU PF Youth Interface rallies that were conducted by ZANU PF in the country. There are several ways and strategies used by ZANU PF to “instrumentalize” the public service for political purposes:

- a. Public servants are enlisted in organizing committees and given specific duties and responsibilities to implement during working hours. For instance, the letter below shows that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was required to buy fuel for 12 000 ZANU PF

- b. Public servants are summoned to attend political rallies;
- c. Another form of abuse involves the extortion of payments to the ruling party from civil servants. The so-called “voluntary contributions,” are not voluntary per se but are imposed to all civil servants. In the letter below, all civil servants were directed to contribute US\$1 per person. In Masvingo, civil servants were also forced to make contributions to ZANU PF.¹
- d. Finally, an entire career in public service hangs on political affiliation. Some public servants give their allegiance to political parties as a strategy to have access to higher positions in government. The separation of state from party becomes very difficult.



Source: <http://news.pindula.co.zw/2017/09/08/zanu-pf-forces-civil-servants-contribute-towards-mugabes-mash-central-rally/#.Wbjl2-mxXIU> [Accessed on 13 September 2017]

3. The Costs

The abuse and politicization of civil servants has countless costs. Forcing public servants to participate in politics implies a moderate cost in terms of the economic efficiency of public service. Service delivery slows down and this is costly to the country. Furthermore, involuntary contributions to political parties mete out costs on

¹ Chidza, R and Chitagu, T (2017) Civil servants forced to fund Mugabe rally. [online] Available at <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/06/civil-servants-forced-fund-mugabe-rally/> [Accessed on 15 September 2017]

public servants who are dispossessed of part of their wages. This causes economic costs and hardships on civil servants households and violates their basic rights as members of the civil service. It is also important to note that forced political contributions have a negative symbolic value and gives the impression that public servants serve the incumbent government rather than members of the public.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

There is strong need to confront the abuse of state resources for political gain. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Zimbabwean citizens and opposition political parties should not watch these developments in silence. The *demand side represented by* politicians abusing these assets, should be penalized. Furthermore, the *supply side being* the public administration system that supplies such resources should also be penalised. Other solutions to this problem involve reforming the electoral system, strengthening political parties, and regulating the financing of parties and elections. At the same time, curbing the supply of resources by the public sector requires strengthening the civil service, building strong state monitoring mechanisms, and enhancing transparency to allow for media and civil society oversight.