



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe – ZWE39611 – Is it necessary to have a ZANU-PF card to access health, food, and education services

9 December 2011

1. Please provide information on whether it is necessary to have a ZANU PF card to access health, food, and university education?

Several sources refer to the linking of ZANU-PF membership with obtaining access to humanitarian aid. ZWE38103 (2011) noted the use of positive (e.g. easier access to loans¹ and free food handouts²) and negative (threats of violence and denial of basic services) coercive tactics to increase the number of ZANU-PF cards held by Zimbabweans. Sources gave varied information on how prevalent the problem is currently.

Access to food

Sources note that ZANU-PF is in control of the distribution of aid and it is alleged by anti-government websites that ZANU-PF uses this power to pressure citizens into buying ZANU-PF membership cards as a means of fund raising and increasing support for the government.³ A 2009 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report states that ZANU-PF controls the food distribution network and that this has “left the delivery of humanitarian assistance open to manipulation by government agents and ZANU-PF officials.”⁴ The report cites two (unnamed) NGOs alleging that ZANU-PF officials were required to accompany humanitarian agencies or they would not be able to distribute food. In the month of August 2009, the Zimbabwe Peace Project recorded 133 “violations” relating to food and humanitarian programmes with political discrimination accounting for 87 per cent of violations. A September 2010 UK Home Office report drew a distinction between political interference in ZANU-PF “heartland” areas compared to the rest of Zimbabwe noting that the distribution of aid in urban areas was relatively free from political interference.⁵ HRW also noted in its report that NGOs are reluctant to publicly discuss the matter for fear of being banned from Zimbabwe.⁶

¹ Ndlovu, N. 2010, ‘Zanu-PF main beneficiary of ‘empowerment programme’, *Mail & Guardian Online*, 6 October <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-10-06-zanupf-main-beneficiary-of-empowerment-programme> - Accessed 9 December 2011

² ‘Police act on forced Zanu (PF) card sales’ 2010, *The Zimbabwean*, 8 December http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36132:police-act-on-forced-zanu-pf-card-sales&catid=69:sunday-top-stories&Itemid=30 - Accessed 9 December 2011

³ ‘Police act on forced Zanu (PF) card sales’ 2010, *The Zimbabwean*, 8 December http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36132:police-act-on-forced-zanu-pf-card-sales&catid=69:sunday-top-stories&Itemid=30 - Accessed 9 December 2011

⁴ Human Rights Watch 2009, ‘Crisis without Limits - Human Rights and Humanitarian Consequences of Political Repression in Zimbabwe’, January <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/zimbabwe0109web.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

⁵ UK Home Office 2010, *Report of Fact Finding Mission to Zimbabwe Harare 9 – 17 August 2010*, 21 September <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c9c92752.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

⁶ Human Rights Watch 2009, ‘Crisis without Limits - Human Rights and Humanitarian Consequences of Political Repression in Zimbabwe’, January <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/zimbabwe0109web.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

Recently published sources indicate that the linking of being in possession of a ZANU-PF membership card with access to food remains an ongoing issue. Recent accounts from September 2011 provided on anti-government websites include:

- The website *zimonline.com* reported that ZANU-PF cards were distributed in the constituency of Buhera South “as a pass to access food handouts”.⁷
- The UK-based online newspaper *The Zimbabwean* quoted the head of the Rural Project Centre⁸ stating ZANU-PF had taken control over the distribution of food in all districts and claimed “[p]olitical affiliation determines one’s chances of getting food or humanitarian assistance.”⁹

The September 2010 UK Home Office report referred to above cites mixed opinion from NGOs as to whether political interference in aid distribution remains a widespread issue. An anonymous NGO claims that it is necessary to demonstrate a person is an active ZANU-PF supporter to obtain aid. In contrast, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO forum claims that major progress has been made and that it had received advice showing a party card was no longer a prerequisite to obtain aid.

There was a time when it was very difficult for many people to access aid. Politicisation was a major problem, with the ZANU-PF leadership in many areas insisting that people had to show a party card to access aid. The situation is very different now and the Forum is not aware of any humanitarian organisation involved in aid distribution that allows food distribution to be controlled on a political basis. All now have effective mechanisms in place to prevent this, which is a remarkable transition.¹⁰

In its 2009 report, Human Rights Watch also noted that access to farming inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilisers) was also susceptible to government interference to the benefit of ZANU-PF members, although it did not specifically refer to membership cards.¹¹ The report noted that access to government assistance programmes was closely linked to political affiliation with farmers in some MDC-supporting areas receiving no aid and referring to the disciplining of a bureaucrat within the Department of Agriculture who had “distributed inputs to qualified farmers whatever their political leanings.”¹²

Access to healthcare

Sources from 2007 and 2009 indicate that ZANU-PF interference in the delivery of health care services is widespread and that proof of ZANU-PF membership was beneficial in accessing medicines and other health services. A more recent report from 2010 claims the distribution of medicines and medical care is relatively free from political interference.

⁷ Muza, N. 2011, ‘Villagers fear army intimidation’, *ZimOnline*, 23 September <http://www.zimonline.co.za/Article.aspx?ArticleId=6819> - Accessed 9 December 2011

⁸ Further details on this group could not be located.

⁹ Saxon, T. 2011, ‘Zanu (PF) hijacks food aid: NGO’, *The Zimbabwean*, 21 September <http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/news/zimbabwe/52960/zanu-pf-hijacks-food-aid.html> - Accessed 9 December 2011

¹⁰ UK Home Office 2010, *Report of Fact Finding Mission to Zimbabwe Harare 9 – 17 August 2010*, 21 September <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c9c92752.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

¹¹ Human Rights Watch 2009, ‘Crisis without Limits - Human Rights and Humanitarian Consequences of Political Repression in Zimbabwe’, January <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/zimbabwe0109web.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

¹² Human Rights Watch 2009, ‘Crisis without Limits - Human Rights and Humanitarian Consequences of Political Repression in Zimbabwe’, January <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/zimbabwe0109web.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

A 2009 *ZimOnline* report notes the interference of ZANU-PF into humanitarian programmes designed to assist AIDS/HIV and TB patients. The report quotes a ZPP official stating that potential aid recipients were first required to register with local ZANU-PF officials who would then authorise health workers to register the patient for relief assistance.¹³ The report notes that, in general, most “health care givers ... allegedly report directly to ZANU-PF officials.”¹⁴

A 2008 judgement published by the (United Kingdom) Appeals Court quotes Tony Barnett responding to a question on how medication is used as a political tool in Zimbabwe. Mr Barnett is an Economic and Social Research Council Professional Research Fellow at the London School of Economics who provided written advice in 2007 to an Immigration Judge. Barnett wrote:

This question is hard to address for I cannot provide any names for my sources as to do so would put them in danger. The situation is that to get medical treatment in any public facility a ZANU-PF party card must be produced. If it is not produced, no treatment is available. This applies to many other interactions with government in Zimbabwe. If a party card is not produced, a person is assumed to be an MDC supporter. Such suspicions can result in intimidation, physical harm and even death.¹⁵

In contrast to the above, a September 2010 report from the UK Home Office noted that the “distribution of medicine and medical care was reported to be relatively free from interference.”¹⁶

Access to university education

No sources were located indicating that access to university education was dependant on holding a ZANU-PF membership card. One source was located that indicated ZANU-PF members may gain preferential treatment in accessing tertiary education. The *University World News* website in an August 2008 article claimed that ZANU-PF supporters were able to gain entry to universities even though they did not meet entry requirements.¹⁷

¹³ ‘Zimbabwe: ZANU PF continues to politicise food’ 2009, *ZimOnline*, 1 December, ReliefWeb website http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb_pdf/node-335452.pdf - Accessed 9 December 2011

¹⁴ ‘Zimbabwe: ZANU PF continues to politicise food’ 2009, *ZimOnline*, 1 December, ReliefWeb website http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb_pdf/node-335452.pdf - Accessed 9 December 2011

¹⁵ UNHCR 2008, ‘Court of Appeal (Civil Division) on appeal from the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal AIT No: AS/01476/2005’, 10 April, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/482d47d5ff3e.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

¹⁶ UK Home Office 2010, *Report of Fact Finding Mission to Zimbabwe Harare 9 – 17 August 2010*, 21 September <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c9c92752.pdf> - Accessed 9 December 2011

¹⁷ Manyukwe C. 2008, ‘Unqualified Mugabe supporters access HE’ *University World News*, 31 August <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2008082814410845&mode=print> - Accessed 9 December 2011

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