

Minister Mbengegwi registers as independent

Contributed by ZG Reporter
Monday, 18 February 2008

Cabinet ministers, Zanu PF politburo members joined the list of people who defied their party to register as independents over the weekend. This comes amid the call by Dr Simba Makoni for those who had lost in Zanu PF primaries to join him by registering as independents....

ZANU PF was thrown deeper into disarray on Friday when several party members, including a cabinet minister and a politburo member, filed nomination papers, in open defiance of the party's presidium. Finance Minister Samuel Mumbengegwi and Senator Dzikamai Mavhaire brought their papers to the nomination court in Masvingo and successfully registered as Zanu PF candidates. Their names had not featured on the list of candidates approved by President Robert Mugabe. Mumbengegwi will compete for the Zanu PF vote with former Masvingo governor Josiah Hungwe in the Chivi/Mwenezi seat for the Senate. Mavhaire, of "Mugabe must go" fame, will face a prominent businesswoman, Maina Mandava for the Masvingo Senate seat. Party sources noted the defiance signified growing rifts in the ruling party, rocked to its foundations when a former member of the party's politburo, Simba Makoni, decided to challenge Mugabe for the country's No.1 political job, the presidency. The Zanu PF secretary for legal affairs Emmerson Mnangagwa yesterday could not say whether or not the senior party members who defied the presidium would be fired from the party. "I am not aware that this is what happened. Ask (Elliot) Manyika (Zanu PF's secretary for the commissariat). He should have the correct information," Mnangagwa said. Manyika could not be reached for comment. Mumbengegwi and Mavhaire were not the only politicians in Masvingo to defy party rules. In fact, as one Masvingo politician put it yesterday, "it turned out to be a defiance galore" in a province which used to be solidly behind Mugabe. Another Zanu PF provincial executive member, Eddison Zvobgo Jnr, also defied the party by standing against the party's official candidate, businessman Edmund Mhere. Henrietta Rushwaya, another member of the provincial executive, also defied the presidium, filing her nomination papers in Gutu South as a Zanu PF candidate. Rushwaya, the Zifa chief executive officer, lost in the party primary elections in neighbouring Gutu East, but will square up against the veteran MP for Gutu South, Shuvai Mahofa. And the contest between the Zanu PF candidates is promising "fireworks"—literally. Mahofa's husband, Rt Major Micah Madombwe (46), is in custody after he and three other Mahofa supporters, were accused of torching the home of a Zanu PF activist who refused to campaign for the former deputy minister. In court yesterday, prosecutors said the accused set the home ablaze in a bid to punish Joseph Muvadi, who allegedly received \$240 million from Mahofa but proceeded to campaign for Rushwaya. In what was speculated to be a pointer to the presence of a heavy Makoni element in the March election, 22 independent candidates registered to stand in Masvingo province. Key members of the Makoni camp Ibbo Mandaza and Rt Major Kudzai Mbudzi filed their nomination papers successfully in Mazowe West and in Masvingo West, respectively. In Manicaland, the camp successfully lined up candidates to challenge party heavyweights. Prosecutor Levison Chikafu, the provincial co-ordinator, will duel with Zanu PF heavyweight Didymus Mutasa in Headlands. Patrick Chinamasa, the Justice Minister, will compete with a local medical doctor Edwin Kusano, while Chris Mushohwe will be challenged by Ruth Chikukurudze. Minister Joseph Made will be challenged by George Kawonza, a businessman in the area. In Bulawayo and Matabeleland North, a high number of independent candidates filed their nomination papers successfully. Mark Mbayiwa, who had won a High Court interdict against Zanu PF from fielding Industry and International Trade minister, Obert Mpofo, will stand as an independent in Umguza constituency. "I am still a Zanu PF member but I want to teach Mpofo a lesson that politicians are chosen by the people," Mbayiwa said after filing his papers. What promises to be the most interesting battle in Bulawayo will be at Makokoba constituency, where key officials of the two MDC formations, Thokozani Khupe and Welshman Ncube, and Zanu PF's candidate, Retired Colonel Tshinga Dube will battle it out. Khupe is the sitting MP, Dube the executive director of the Zimbabwe Defence Industries, and Ncube the secretary-general of the Arthur Mutambara formation of the MDC. In Nkulumane, Gibson Sibanda of the Mutambara faction faces a stiff challenge from Thamsanqa Mahlangu, the youth secretary in the Tsvangirai faction.

Eddie Cross, won a reprieve from the High Court after the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) had barred him from registering, claiming he was a British citizen. He will be a candidate for the MDC Tsvangirai faction for the House of Assembly for Bulawayo South. There were surprises in the Tsholotsho North constituency, where Mgelezelwa Ncube, the candidate for the Arthur Mutambara formation filed his papers against former Information and Publicity minister, Jonathan Moyo. There had been reports that the professor had struck a deal that would stop the MDC factions from challenging him. Mutambara himself faces trade unionist Collin Gwiyo (MDC Tsvangirai) and Zanu PF's Patrick Nyaruwata in Zengeza West. In Harare, the Makoni camp will have two prominent women standing on their ticket, Professor Rudo Gaidzanwa and the former government minister, Fay Chung. At the time of going to the press, the ZEC was yet to release the results of the nomination courts which sat on Friday, in what observers concluded signified how ill-prepared the commission was to run the elections. The Standard