

# **Relations Between Botswana and Zimbabwe: with Special Reference to the Influx of Illegal Zimbabwean Immigrants into Botswana.**

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This paper addresses the issue of relations between the two sister states since the liberation of Zimbabwe. The study briefly reviews the political and economic relations between the two countries and argues that they have had cordial relations in this field, although some measures such as the opening of the Beit Bridge rail corridor by Zimbabwe led to loss of revenue for Botswana. The study then shifts to the beginning of the current economic and political strife in Zimbabwe. It argues that this crisis has contributed to the influx of Zimbabweans into Botswana, the majority of whom are illegal immigrants. It argues that some of the Zimbabweans are skilled workers and professionals. Although there has always been a tendency of xenophobia in Botswana and more of that on Zimbabweans, the paper reveals that in the past few years xenophobia towards Zimbabweans has intensified because of this influx and the rising wave of crime associated with it. The study reveals that in the past years the xenophobic tendencies was caused by resentment by Botswana who viewed Zimbabweans as people who took their jobs and were prepared to accept menial tasks for low pay. The paper further argues that the ‘xenophobia’ towards Zimbabweans has intensified as more Zimbabweans were pushed out of their country and ‘pulled’ into Botswana. Both push and pull factors are at work, mostly push. The influx of illegal Zimbabwean immigrants has been accompanied by a rise in the crime rate, especially in the north-eastern part of the country and in the major towns and villages. These crimes, especially burglaries, common theft, shoplifting and of late armed assaults and robberies have been largely blamed on Zimbabweans illegal immigrants. The paper reveals that in the past two year numerous cases of assaults and robberies in the north east heightened tensions between Botswana along the border and Zimbabwean with the call to expel all Zimbabweans in some areas. We show that the governments of Botswana and Zimbabwe have reacted in a diplomatic and cautious manner despite accusations of torture and harassment by the Botswana police, and calls by Botswana for the government to be more stringent on Zimbabweans. The government of Botswana has employed legal means to deal with the situation and cautioned its people against xenophobia amid appeals at one stage by Zimbabwean authorities to the Botswana government to ensure protection for its citizens. The two governments have not allowed this situation to boil out of control and ruin the otherwise cordial relations between the two countries essential for African economic integration, democratization and the African renaissance. The Botswana government has cautioned its citizens against xenophobia amidst calls by some leading officials such as chiefs for stringent measures. Using oral interviews with illegal immigrants, government officials from the two countries, locals, newspaper reports, secondary sources and government of Botswana official documents the paper shows how the two countries have maintained cordial relations even with heightened xenophobic tendencies with the influx of illegal Zimbabwean immigrants into Botswana.

