
UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

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4 November 2011

OPEN LETTER

The Statistician-General, Padi Lehohla
Statistics South Africa
Private Bag x44
Pretoria
0001

Dear Sir

ALLEGATIONS OF A FIELDWORKER CHANGING CENSUS 2011 FORMS

We understand from the Frequently Asked Questions on the Census 2011 website (<http://www.statssa.gov.za/census2011/faq.asp>) that Census 2011 questionnaires may be completed with a black pen and that all other colours do not show clearly when the questionnaires are scanned, and the questionnaires will then be regarded as spoilt.

It is also stated that *"We prefer that the questionnaire be completed in pencil; that way, if an error is made, it can easily be rectified. If you write in pen, make an error and scratch it out and write the answer elsewhere, the questionnaire is regarded as spoilt."*

Please find attached to this letter an email from ----- wherein she alleges that a Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) fieldworker erased and changed already completed questionnaires allegedly upon the instruction of his supervisor. ----- provides a detailed account of her experience and also attached photographs as proof.

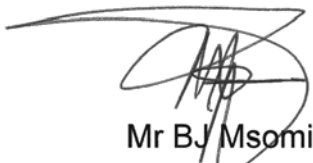
Although it is appreciated that pencil-completed forms allows for corrections, it also allows for surreptitious changing of already completed forms. This incident raises serious concerns over the legitimacy of the information gathered by Stats SA during this year's census. Stats SA's

credibility is at stake, because it could be construed that Stats SA is wilfully (and illegally) influencing the results of Census 2011 – for what purpose is a matter of speculation.

We call upon your office to:

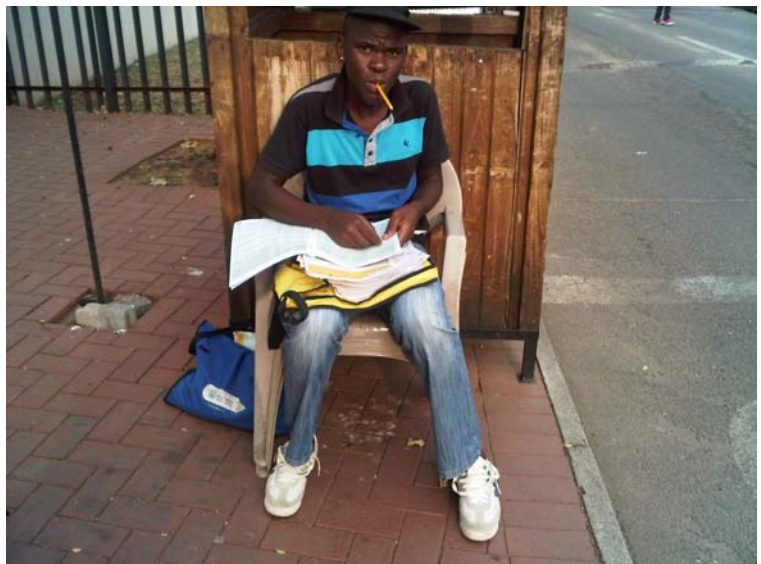
1. Immediately sequester the questionnaires from Edenglen (Edenvale, Gauteng) and conduct an investigation into the allegations made.
2. Screen all the questionnaires handled by the persons who are alleged to have tampered with questionnaire to ensure that there were no other instances of manipulation.
3. Set the minds of the residents of Edenglen at ease by showing them their forms so that they can confirm the correctness of their information.
4. Assure South Africans that their personal information had been gathered and collated in a responsible manner, and that it reached your office unaltered.

Yours sincerely



Mr B.J. Msomi
UDM Secretary General

Photographs attached to the below email from -----



United Democratic Movement

From: -----
Sent: 03 November 2011 10:13 AM
To: Undisclosed-Recipient;
Subject: Ha,Ha ---/Census 2011 - A farce
Attachments: IMG00255-20111027-17082.jpg; IMG00256-20111027-17083.jpg

The census 2011 is a farce. Attached is evidence of a Stats SA employee with eraser in hand, erasing out information on people's forms. He was sitting at the security hut at Erasmus Road, Edenglen, Edenvale. When I asked him what he was doing and why he was erasing, he said his supervisor told him to do this.

I asked for a supervisor name, he said "I don't know". He continued to say "the people made mistakes and I must fix it".

I asked how many forms he was erasing out, he said, "all of them". I asked to see which forms and he would not show me. He would not show me from which street the forms were. He packed them up and put them in his bag. He would not show me what he was erasing and kept saying I must wait for his supervisor.

A poster on the lamp post gave me details of a supervisor, "Sibongile". I called her, she tried her utmost to give an explanation as to why the numerators were erasing the forms. Any kind of tampering with these forms is surely illegal. As these forms will be counted electronically, I assume, hence the pencil, then any mistake made will be kicked out of the system. Any statistician allows a percentage for errors.

Sibongile finally arrived with another homeowner who had offered her a lift to where we were. I asked him if he was happy with them erasing on his form and he said, absolutely not. I also stood at the boom gate asking people as they came and went out of the street if they were happy that the forms were being tampered with. Everyone expressed shock and reiterated that that should not be happening.

Another homeowner in front of where we were came out. She was dismayed to find her form was at risk and asked to see her copy. Hers, completed a week ago, they said had already gone to Pretoria. How do we as ordinary citizens know that each of our forms have not been tampered with. How certain are we that they have "erroneously erased" a column without our knowledge.

How can we trust the results of this survey and how can government do what is right if our forms have been tampered with? I fully understand the reasoning behind a census, if the results and statistics extracted from the information given is true. However, if any numerator, or anyone else for that matter, is given full authority to erase the answers, be they correct or incorrectly filled in, then that makes this census, null and void and a complete farce. We have wasted time and a lot of money on a census that will not reflect the true results.

If a student at school is asked to complete their examination in pencil and the prefect who is asked to collect the papers has the right to erase anything on the form, from the desk number to the students name, that would be illegal. I want an explanation as to why numerators are allowed to tamper with a legal document.

This is not the first time that we have seen numerators sitting on the side of the road with an eraser in their hands. We spotted three at the boom gates on the corner of Baker Road and Steyn Avenue, Edenglen, Edenvale, I just did not catch them on camera.

Sibongile contacted her superior who was less astute and far more aggressive in his mannerism to me on the telephone. By this point, I had flagged down a passing police vehicle and asked for their assistance. They agreed with me that it was unacceptable for the document to be erased and they too agreed that if the census forms are being scanned electronically, it would kick out errors, which become inadmissible.

I threatened to go to the media with the evidence in hand, the superior said, "I am giving you the go-ahead to go to the media". I asked for his name, he refused to give it to me. He kept provoking me for

my name. I gave him my name, he responded, "I will not give you my name".

I handed the telephone over to the police officers who spoke to him, when the phone was handed back to me, the rude man on the other end of the phone said to me, "I have given you what you want". I answered, "what is that?". "I have given you to go-ahead to go to the media", he said. "Well can I have your name", I asked. He did not give me his name, instead he said, "You are not allowed to intimidate the numerators".

I said "I am doing nothing of the sort". "I can hear the shouting in the background" was his reply.

I said that was the Census people and the police officers and no-one was being intimidated. I confirmed with the policemen that I had not intimidated anyone and that I felt the numerators themselves had handled the situation relatively well.

I am hoping that you will raise the issue of the Census and the question around erasing forms for us to get answers from government.
