



## **Refugee Digest 52**

**April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021**

### **Refugees, Migrants, and Displaced Persons**

On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021, Minister Motsoaledi announced that refugees in two temporary shelters in Cape Town would have to decide, within a two week period, on whether to begin a process of local reintegration or accept offers to be repatriated to their countries of origin under a deal worked out with the UNHCR. The Minister said that facilities would be dismantled at the end of April. The Minister said that to date 121 have agreed to voluntary repatriation and 390 to local reintegration. A number are holding out for repatriation to a country of their choice other than their country of origin. For most of those holding out, Canada seems to be the destination of choice. The UNHCR has repeatedly said this option is not part of the international protocol and would not be considered. This is the group that began a sit in in front of the UNHCR offices in Cape Town two years ago.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-04-19-cape-town-refugee-camps-to-close-down-at-end-of-april/>

<https://www.power987.co.za/featured/united-nations-to-assist-refugees-stuck-in-ct/>

The Minister also announced that 41 members of the protest group had already been deported including two leaders from the rival formations, Aline Bukuru and Papy Sukami. The Minister added that Jean Pierre Balous was facing criminal charges and would be deported when the case was finalised. He also indicated that 382 of the protesters did not qualify for refugee status.

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/refugee-protest-leaders-deported/>

<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-04-19-ringleaders-of-cape-town-refugee-protests-kicked-out-of-sa/>

In the Government Gazette dated 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the Minister of Home Affairs, again extended the validity of documents that had expired during the lockdown, opened several more border posts and extended the services rendered by his department but did not re-open services for refugees and asylum seekers. The Refugee Reception Centres remain closed.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-03-30-home-affairs-extends-visas-that-expired-in-lockdown/>

This article makes an argument that subtly and below the radar the DHA especially is at work redefining some standard practises in the refugee world to continue a process of exclusion and 'othering' of foreign nationals resident in SA and the rights that go with that.

<https://rb.gy/f4uk0c>

This article avers the DHA is failing refugees and asylum seekers by not re-opening their offices but more fundamentally through various actions is deepening the crises of statelessness and barring especially young people from accessing services necessary to live full lives.

<https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/government-policy-is-failing-refugees-2a3ad4a5-f47c-4a01-bf46-96dc3ae5bd9e>

It often seems that if one looks at the experiences of mobile people around the world, then it resembles an obstacle course. The pandemic has certainly intensified the obstacles. The following links point to some of these difficulties.

The Kenyan government has recently demanded that the UNHCR provide clear guidelines with regard to the closure of the two biggest refugee camps in Kenya, together housing half a million refugees. Many organisations have pleaded for the integration of such camps rather than their closure.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/4/15/integrate-dont-close-africas-largest-refugee-camps>

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/821498-integrate-don-t-close>

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021, Pope Francis and the UNHCR chief, Mr Filippo Grandi met to discuss issues related to mobile people. Amongst the issues discussed was their shared concern over the fact that the poorest countries are carrying the burden of migration.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-04/pope-francis-unhcr-grandi-audience-refugees-migrants-movement.html>

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/4/6079a4f64/unhcrs-grandi-pope-francis-share-vision-global-response-displacement-based.html>

Vatican's 10 Rules for Climate Refugees.

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/14000/vatican-s-ten-commandments-to-help-climate-refugees>

In a meeting with the Italian Prime Minister, Mario Draghi, UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi, criticised the Italian government for unnecessary interference with rescue missions directed at migrants in Italian waters and the refusals to give permission for such ships to dock at Italian ports. He also spoke about the difficulties of land routes into Italy.

<https://apnews.com/article/mario-draghi-italy-luigi-di-maio-weather-migration-4af20a118dbf39ed516e9f2878533379>

Top Canadian Court might be asked to rule if the USA is safe for refugees.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/17/canada-top-court-could-be-asked-to-rule-if-us-safe-for-refugees>

The USA has entered into agreements with Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala asking them to halt the movement of migrants to the USA and to enhance border security. These bilateral agreements came after the US southern border showed an increase of unaccompanied minors trying to cross the border (18,890) as well as the highest number of border patrol encounters in March 2021, - 170,000- the highest number since March 2001. Indeed it is estimated to be 71% up on the February 2021 figure.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/12/biden-migration-security-deal-mexico-guatemala-honduras>

<https://nypost.com/2021/04/17/biden-finally-calls-migrant-surge-a-crisis-as-he-explains-refugee-cap-cave/>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/04/08/migrants-border-were-up-march-biden-grapples-immigration/7130399002/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/16/joe-biden-refugee-admissions-trump-us-immigration?CMP=Share AndroidApp Other>

After strong criticism for back pedalling on his earlier promises to raise the cap for migrants from the Trump era low of 15,000, and then settling for the Trump cap, President Biden has now said that he will go beyond the 15,000 cap. The President also seems to have shelved the February plan of raising the cap to 62,500. This is still far short of the 125,000 promised during the election campaign.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/biden-says-he-will-raise-us-cap-refugee-admissions-2021-04-17/>

Amongst the critical voices were several church groups who held President Biden to his earlier promises. They warned that the consequences for many families caught in a betwixt and between situation would be dire.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/catholic-refugee-advocates-want-biden-live-campaign-promises>

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