



Refugee Digest 59

28th October, 2021

Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons

In South Africa, the country moves towards local government elections. By definition, these elections have a huge impact on the living conditions of people at the most basic level. They are also the only elections in which individuals are voted for directly. There have been instances in the past where local problems and prejudices have been manipulated and magnified for political gain, but with huge deficits of trust and physical and material disadvantage following as a result. Thus, some commentators hold that xenophobic attacks are most likely at election times, when community prejudices are ramped up. It is argued that candidates and parties feel emboldened to act in such ways because no sanction follows. Some of the smaller parties have entered this fray, bringing the issue of foreign nationals into sharp relief, especially in areas where there is contestation for scarce resources.

In this interesting recent article, the Director of Xenowatch sketches the broader backdrop with regard to elections and the ambivalent situation for mobile people.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2021-09-05-preventing-xenophobic-attacks-in-south-africa-is-possible-look-no-further-than-the-state-response-to-the-july-unrest/>

As campaigning enters a decisive phase, prejudices and political expediency can emerge. At a recent food parcel distribution drive in Gauteng, it is alleged, only South Africans were given parcels even though some 400 migrants were registered on the distribution lists. The allegation is that, once locals had received the parcels, EFF campaigners used the opportunity to link the distribution with a vote for that party. The EFF denies this, but the incident shows how, at election time, lines can be seriously blurred.

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/immigrants-were-refused-food-parcels-jeppestown-distribution/>

The two parties in these elections with the highest profiles around mobile people are the Patriotic Alliance and ActionSA. On 9th October the Patriotic Alliance reiterated its position on deporting foreign nationals. It said that its controversial position on foreign nationals was not xenophobic but patriotic. Without producing evidence it averred that foreign nationals owned RDP housing meant for locals. The deputy president of the party also blamed foreign nationals for the high crime rate and spoke of foreign nationals taking over certain residential areas.

<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/elections-2021-patriotic-alliance-targets-illegal-foreigners-at-manifesto-launch-20211009>

<https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/patriotic-alliance-wants-illegal-foreigners-to-be-sent-home-blamed-for-high-crime-rate-407cf24b-599c-4aef-b1a7-5c588417d866>

Mr Mashaba, the president of ActionSA, has acknowledged that many characterise his party as xenophobic, due in the main to his utterances as Mayor of Johannesburg. He denies this charge, however, saying that the party wants legal movement across borders, and promises to assist people who have been 'let down' by Home Affairs. At the launch of his party manifesto he promised a crackdown on undocumented foreign nationals, and has also promised to set up a special unit within the municipal police to deal with undocumented foreigners.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-09-05-action-sas-herman-mashaba-unapologetic-about-stance-on-foreigners-and-driven-to-wear-joburgs-mayoral-chain-again/>

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2021-09-23-herman-mashaba-says-actionsa-will-be-unapologetically-pro-poor-create-jobs/>

The reality for mobile people in South Africa continues to be riddled with ambiguities and ambivalences. A number of the references in this Digest point to the fact that, even where official policies, legislation and court rulings clearly indicate a particular position on some aspect, usually upholding mobile people's rights, lower levels in the bureaucracy often subvert them. This happens partly because such officials are certain that political will secretly favours their position and thus no consequences will attach to such actions. This is tantamount to the phenomenon of 'push-back by stealth.'

The following link leads to an article which raises the question of asylum seekers who arrived in the country after March 2020 having no way to apply for registration. Refugee reception centres around the country have remained closed. For those needing to renew their applications, online possibilities exist, but new arrivals have been left with no recourse to documentation.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-10-08-refugees-who-arrived-after-lockdown-have-no-way-to-apply-for-asylum/>

South Africa has recently refused to accept applications from health professionals wishing to work in the country. The Department of Health said that South Africa is abiding by protocols, agreements and professional recruitment codes in the SADC region which ask governments not to poach health professionals from countries where the public health system is in collapse.

<https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/south-africa-shuts-doors-on-zim-health-workers-64731941-2f5f-4628-909a-4c2751cf8649>

This story centres on a young Zimbabwean school leaver who has begun a petition requesting that the DHA have a process for South African-born children of immigrant parents who, because of lack of documentation, cannot access tertiary institutions to continue their studies.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-10-07-matriculant-petitions-for-stateless-youths-to-be-granted-access-to-university-education/>

This article is about refugee children who are unable to enter the state school system for reasons linked to their status. The *Three2Six Project* provides opportunities for such children and prepares them for later entry into the state system. The project is part of the broader Roman Catholic Church's response to the plight of mobile people.

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/refugee-children-waiting-years-get-school-south-africa/>

From the Archives

This paper, 'Migration and Displacement in Sub-Saharan Africa', explores South-South migration and takes a critical look at the vocabulary used in AU narratives about migration and its implications.

Published a decade ago, it nonetheless contains paradigms, arguments and insights that remain useful for contemporary analysis.

https://www.academia.edu/35977703/African_Union_and_its_Policies_on_Voluntary_and_Forced_Migration?email_work_card=view-paper

Also from the archives is this interesting paper on the 'Evolution of Migration Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa'. It explores some of the positive aspects of policy options and many of the contradictions. It still, years later, provides an important historical record of policy struggles in this domain and remains a useful resource for those working on policy issues at present.

<https://sihma.org.za/reports/the-evolution-of-migration-policy-in-post-apartheid-south-africa>

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