



## **Refugee Digest 65**

**12<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

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

The rise and seeming popularity of Operation Dudula (translated: ‘to push away’) has in many ways dominated the refugee and migrant space in recent times. Many fear that the sharp xenophobic narratives will, if given publicity and on the basis of repetition, become dangerously dominant, with dire consequences. Many also fear that the modus operandi of this group shows potential for morphing into a vigilante type organisation. Indeed, a number of the articles recommended below openly describe it in that way. But despite its public utterances, the organisation denies that it only targets foreign nationals.

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/08/migrant-shop-owners-close-shop-for-second-day-amid-dudula-movement-removals>

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/08/dudula-movement-denies-that-it-is-only-targeting-black-foreign-nationals>

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/09/dudula-movement-we-are-not-acting-illegally>

Besides issues around foreigners taking jobs from South Africans, Dudula also blames undocumented foreigners for complicity in the drug trade and in trafficking in persons.

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/29/operation-dudula-s-nhlanhla-lux-says-he-s-willing-to-die-for-his-beliefs>

There is also a fear amongst foreign nationals that establishing branches of Operation Dudula in Kwa-Zulu Natal will heighten the prospects of conflict in that province.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2022-03-28-foreign-nationals-say-they-fear-operation-dudula-moving-to-kzn/>

Amnesty International has called on the government to take firmer action against those perpetrating xenophobia, warning that its failure to act has led to the violation of many people’s human rights.

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/10/amnesty-international-urges-govt-to-stop-attacks-on-foreign-nationals>

Various political parties have called on the President to act more decisively on issues of foreign nationals. It must be said that there is a wide variation in what they wish to see done; they mostly call for a firm hand in dealing with undocumented foreign nationals.

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/10/amnesty-international-urges-govt-to-stop-attacks-on-foreign-nationals>

A further interesting point has been that, as Dudula has asserted its self, so it has also forced political parties to take a stand on the organisation itself and what it stands for, as well as xenophobia, migration, models of immigration and the like.

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/28/political-parties-denounce-attacks-on-foreign-nationals>

Most of the major political parties have spoken out against Operation Dudula, but with different emphases. In the broader scheme of things, it is probably true that issues around migration and mobile communities are likely to emerge as a key campaigning issue and, even now, parties' responses are being crafted with an eye on the 2024 elections.

<https://www.news24.com/fin24/opinion/khaya-sithole-the-issue-of-migrant-workers-could-have-serious-implications-for-2024-elections-20220216>

The Democratic Alliance has said that Dudula must leave the tasks that they are undertaking to the relevant government bodies. It is the task of the state to ascertain who is here with documents or otherwise. The DA has also made the point that inefficiency and corruption have made it difficult for people to obtain documents, thus rendering them vulnerable to being preyed upon by traffickers.

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/10/da-says-corruption-inefficiency-making-it-difficult-for-foreign-nationals-to-be-documented>

ActionSA, which is seen by many commentators to be closest ideologically to Dudula, has blamed the tensions on the lack of rigidity of the immigration laws over the past many years. They also share the outlook that undocumented foreigners are taking South Africans' jobs. In the same article, the Pan African Congress of Azania takes a very different view. It says that Africa belongs to all who are part of the continent and freer movement must be allowed. It takes issue with Dudula's focus on Africans.

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/03/27/actionsa-s-mashaba-sa-s-immigration-laws-not-as-rigid-as-they-should-be>

The Inkatha Freedom Party, in its denunciation of Dudula, which they castigated for taking the law into their own hands, made the very important point that undocumented migrants have rights under the Constitution and, along with other parties, observed that the Department of Home Affairs had failed to carry out its responsibilities satisfactorily. This had added to the vulnerability of undocumented people and of those who had not been able to renew their documents. The African Christian Democratic Party added the insight that the DHA's failures should not be used as a reason for scapegoating foreigners. The ACDP also warned about criminal elements being involved in stirring up resentment and targeting foreign nationals.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2022-03-22-mps-slam-operation-dudula-immigrants-have-rights-too/>

The governing party has spoken out against the activities of Dudula. President Ramaphosa has said that such organisations are breaking the law, and that such campaigns cause social tensions. He also said that those who employ undocumented foreign nationals were breaking the law. He said that the government could not allow organisations to embark on vigilantism as an attempt to solve social problems. South Africa's high unemployment was no excuse to wage war on other people.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2022-03-21-dudula-organisations-contravening-the-law-ramaphosa/>

<https://tinyurl.com/2j2kswhj>

Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi said that the government would not allow foreign nationals, whether documented or undocumented, “to be treated like animals.” He reminded his audience in the North West Province that foreign nationals have rights.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2022-03-13-we-cannot-treat-refugees-like-animals-thulas-nxesi-condemns-dudula-campaign/>

It seems absolutely clear that, in a country which prides itself on its progressive Constitution, which publicly celebrates its culture of human rights, and which understands its foundations as being embedded in the spirit of Ubuntu, such organisations, tendencies and narratives are at severe odds with all that we stand for. We are obliged to counter such polarisation and narrow discourses by standing firm on the values and practices of Ubuntu and on the ‘four verbs’ which Pope Francis has laid as the cornerstone of all words and activities to do with the mobile community, namely *welcome*, *protect*, *promote* and *integrate*. That seems to be the best way forward.

---

**Peter-John Pearson**

**Director**

[pearson@iafrica.com](mailto:pearson@iafrica.com)

This Digest, or parts thereof, may be reproduced with acknowledgement.