



Refugee Digest 69

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Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Of great significance, the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, has announced that at the end of 2023 the Lesotho Special Permits will not be renewed. This follows a similar decision regarding the Zimbabwean Exemption Permits. The Minister has indicated that this is part of an overall redesign of migration policy. The Lesotho permits affect about 90 000 people.

<https://www.news24.com/fin24/economy/its-not-only-zim-lesotho-special-permits-will-also-end-soon-says-motsoaledi-20220825>

<https://www.polity.org.za/article/south-africa-seeks-to-curb-immigration-plans-policy-re-vamp-2022-08-25>

The vexed issue of the ZEPs continues to dominate the policy landscape. The DHA recently announced that only about 4% of those holding the ZEP have applied for alternative visas. This amounts to about 6 000 persons. This would seem to indicate that many are either planning to return to Zimbabwe or envisage a future 'under the radar'.

<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/zimbabwe-special-permit-less-than-4-have-made-representations-to-govt-home-affairs-dept-20220822>

Whichever option they choose, as time begins to run out difficult futures await everyone involved. There is no indication at the moment that the government will rescind its decision.

<https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2022-08-23-home-affairs-to-end-178000-zimbabwe-exemption-permits-in-december/>

<https://neasa.co.za/zimbabwean-special-permits-permits-to-be-terminated-guidance-for-employers-and-employees/>

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8r8nbf>

As Zimbabweans in SA face uncertainty, many of them have begun tackling the ruptures in relationships with banks, financial institutions and big corporations. At stake is the fear that banks will close ZEP holders' accounts when the deadline is reached, thereby throttling any attempt for the holders to continue living and working in SA, even if without documents.

<https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/south-africa/zimbabweans-at-risk-of-deportation-prepare-to-take-on-banks-big-corporates/>

In early August, the Constitutional Court handed down a judgement in which it held that foreign nationals, even if they had studied and done articles in South Africa, were still not eligible in terms of the Legal Practices Act to practise law in South Africa.

<https://tinyurl.com/nr9nh7nx>

One of the most disturbing events over the past weeks was the upbraiding of a Zimbabwean patient in the Bela-Bela hospital by the MEC for Health in Limpopo, Dr Phophi Ramathuba. On a visit to the hospital she discovered that the patient she was speaking to spoke Shona, and she then launched into an

attack on how foreigners were using SA health facilities and depriving locals of treatment. She said that the Zimbabwean government does not contribute to the health costs of their nationals in SA, and gave vent to much more of the usual anti-foreigner rhetoric to which we have become accustomed. Her comments have resulted in considerable controversy, although in the party political realm they were supported by the Patriotic Alliance. Another worrying aspect is the way in which blame for an increasingly dysfunctional health system is now laid at the door of migrants, and not at the door of corruption, mismanagement, etc. It is also concerning that politicians in senior leadership, who are charged with building the social cohesion of the country, in fact are guilty of lending credibility to xenophobic narratives. Below is a selection of links leading to various aspects of this controversy.

<https://www.enca.com/news/watch-limpopo-health-mec-ramathuba-responds-after-viral-clip>

<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/xenophobic-tendencies-must-be-rejected-healthcare-groups-say-migrants-have-right-to-treatment-in-sa-20220827>

<https://www.enca.com/news/mec-chastising-patient-not-appropriate-deputy-health-minister>

<https://www.news24.com/news24/Health/limpopo-anc-supports-ramathubas-foreigners-comments-and-will-not-take-any-action-against-her-20220825>

<https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/zim-opposition-leaders-begs-sa-to-bear-with-zimbabweans-for-only-400-more-days-b0e70a85-5bd8-46f4-9b84-caa9202e971e>

Amidst all these spikes in the anti-migrant discourse that swirls around the country, the dangers that face especially women who migrate to SA, continue unabated. Indeed, their vulnerability is increased by the normalising of anti-migrant talk.

<https://tinyurl.com/2s363mbp>

Operation Dudula continues to stoke up anti-immigrant feelings and has taken to 'evicting' people from buildings which they claim migrants occupy illegally. It has also been blocking foreign nationals from entering hospital premises. These are functions that are not theirs to exercise.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-08-22-inside-joburgs-building-of-darkness-where-migrants-live-in-fear-as-operation-dudula-threats-amplify/>

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-08-22-city-of-joburg-responds-to-operation-dudulas-threats-only-a-court-of-law-can-issue-an-eviction-notice/>

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/08/30/operational-dudula-turn-illegal-migrants-away-from-atteridgeville-hospital>

<https://ewn.co.za/2022/08/30/staff-forced-to-carry-ids-amidst-protests-says-kalafong-hospital-ceo>

<https://ewn.co.za/0001/01/01/law-enforcement-monitors-kalafong-hospital-following-protest>

The outlook in terms of issues affecting the mobile communities looks increasingly bleak in South Africa and beyond. It behoves all of us to find ways, personal and communal, to stem the tide of language and actions that promote such assaults on dignity.

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