



Refugee Digest 102

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Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Over the past couple of months the eyes of the country were firmly fixed on the issues around the threatened expulsion of undocumented foreign nationals, along with fearmongering and intimidation amongst all foreign nationals, irrespective of status, and the isolated but not unplanned campaigns of targeted violence. Now, as the weeks unfold after the June 30th 'deadline', there are still signs of all of the above pathologies, together with attempts to give the campaigns more oxygen, so that the toxic, xenophobic message continue to spread and to breed anxiety.

The various groups promoting xenophobia have gathered post 30th June and announced fresh plans for the immediate and long-term future, in order to keep their campaigns alive in the public domain. They seek to ensure that their publicity remains a core pressure point on government to ensure policy changes.

<https://www.enca.com/news-top-stories/march-and-march-renews-immigration-policy-protests>

<https://iol.co.za/news/south-africa/2026-07-06-it-will-be-our-blood-or-victory-march-and-march-unveils-three-month-migration-plan/>

<https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/march-and-march-movement-vows-to-continue-marching-today/>

Allied to these campaigns, the uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP) is demanding the immediate repatriation of approximately 27 880 foreign national prisoners. They argue that the annual R4.2 billion cost of housing them strains the budget and should be redirected to support unemployed South Africans.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ew_dJKZ_NYc&t=53s

<https://iol.co.za/the-star/news/2026-07-07-mk-party-calls-for-urgent-repatriation-of-foreign-national-prisoners/>

On its part over this period, the Department of Home Affairs has embarked on a programme of increasing the number of immigration officers, thus assuring its critics of the seriousness with which it takes the task of enforcement; and possibly also in the hope of quietening the spurious claims made by xenophobic groups that, if the government lacks capacity, they will take over its functions.

<https://www.news24.com/politics/home-affairs-to-recruit-300-new-immigration-officers-to-strengthen-enforcement-capacity-20260706-0891>

Despite the fear, anxiety and trauma that hung over migrant communities during the lead up to 30th June, and which indeed is still part of their lives, many migrant communities dug in their heels and decided to stay. They believe that their resilience will see them through this crisis, as it has seen them through prior difficult moments.

<https://www.polity.org.za/article/scared-but-staying-some-migrants-dig-in-as-south-africa-turns-hostile-2026-07-02>

However, many migrant communities, including those which refused to be intimidated by the xenophobic forces, complained that the crises could well have been handled better.

<https://tinyurl.com/45ys3x23>

This link to 'What comes after 30th June?' takes up the observations of three journalists who were present at three of the marches, and offers their analysis of what happened and what the possible further outcomes could be.

<https://tinyurl.com/2p9sps7u>

Continuing on the trajectory of enforcement, in July the government deployed more than 3 000 soldiers nationwide to bolster security and support police during anti-migrant protests that organisers vowed to hold every week.

<https://www.polity.org.za/article/south-africa-deploys-troops-to-bolster-security-during-anti-migrant-protests-2026-07-03>

The opening words of the following analysis say, "South Africa is experiencing its strongest anti-migrant backlash in years. But when the Daily Maverick investigated one of the most successful online campaigns driving this movement, we found evidence suggesting its real motivations may not be what supporters believe." This insightful piece of investigative journalism gives an insight into some of the inner dynamics of one of the organisations.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxzQ4Uk-Gj4&utm_campaign=Post-2278&utm_medium=email&utm_source=maverick-life-live-smarter

Members of Parliament from the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs conducted an urgent two-day oversight visit to Musina and the Beitbridge border post to assess the temporary repatriation centres and border management processes following widespread anti-illegal immigration protests. At the time of their visit, 45 000 undocumented persons had been processed for deportation or voluntary departure.

<https://www.parliament.gov.za/press-releases/media-statement-home-affairs-committee-concludes-urgent-oversight-visit-musina-and-calls-greater-investment-border-security>

South African authorities processed 53 499 foreign nationals for deportation and voluntary repatriation in the nationwide clampdown following the June 30th 'deadline'. This total consists primarily of Malawians (over 80 per cent), followed by citizens of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The stories behind each of these statistics remain tales of loss, desperation and fear.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgj2prd4p8o>

As indicated, the situation remains volatile and attempts to resolve the deeper underlying causes of poverty, contested access to limited resources, large scale corruption, and failures of governance, all indicate that we have a long way to go to make progress in constructing a human rights-based migration regime in South Africa.

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