



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **South Africa - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 February 2010**

### **Treatment of Zimbabweans**

A paper in June 2009 by *Medicins Sans Frontiers* states:

“Upon arrival, many Zimbabweans endure further suffering in South Africa, without access to proper health care, shelter or safety. During their journey to and within South Africa, they are subjected to violence, physical and verbal abuse, police harassment, inhumane living conditions and xenophobic attacks” (Medicins Sans Frontiers, (June 2009), *No Refuge, Access Denied: Medical and Humanitarian Needs of Zimbabweans in South Africa*,p.3).

In June 2009 a paper by the *Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in Southern Africa* states:

“Recent research has shown that on aggregate, Zimbabweans face the more acute social and human security challenges than either South Africans or other non-nationals. These challenges include access to public services, assets and income, physical insecurity, and feeling threatened because of their nationality. Many Zimbabwean organisations report rising xenophobic threats from members of the public where their members live and work, due to the expectation that Zimbabweans should ‘go home’ after the establishment of the Government of National Unity in their country” (Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in Southern Africa, (June 2009), *Protecting Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigrants in South Africa*,pp.58-59).

A *UNHCR* paper in July 2009 reports that:

“In Johannesburg, many stay in urban areas such as Hillbrow and Windsor, which have a reputation as being ‘no go’ areas. One of the reasons why the majority of Zimbabweans have been forced to live in such areas is that they are fearful of living alongside South Africans in townships, particularly in the aftermath of the xenophobic violence of May 2008. In the absence of any kind of material assistance for the Zimbabweans, some have resorted to livelihood strategies that involve crime and prostitution” (UNHCR, (1 July 2009), *National and international responses to the Zimbabwean exodus: implications for the refugee protection regime*, p.18).

A report by *Amnesty International* in September 2009 says notes the:

“...continuing risks to the rights to life and physical integrity of refugees and others in need of international protection, rights which South Africa is obliged to uphold under both international and regional human rights and refugee law”

(Amnesty International, (1 September 2009), *Human Rights Concerns In South Africa: Memorandum Sent To The South African Government August 2009*,p.10).

A paper in September 2009 by the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* notes:

“While, after an initial period of mass deportations from South Africa that ended earlier this year, Zimbabweans are now able to enter the country and work, they are still subject to harassment and violence and are unable to access necessary resources or employment to survive over the long-term. Vulnerable groups, such as women-head-of-households and unaccompanied minors, are especially at risk, facing dangers such as rape, forced prostitution, and human trafficking” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (26 September 2009), *Zimbabwe and South Africa Mission Trip - September 2009*,p.2).

A *Voice of America* news story in November 2009 states:

“More than 3,500 foreigners, an estimated 1,500 of them Zimbabweans, remained Wednesday in a temporary shelter near the police station in the Western Cape farm town of De Doorns following an outbreak of xenophobic violence against them in a nearby squatter camp in which a number of homes were destroyed by locals over perceived job competition” (Voice of America, (18 November 2009), *Zimbabweans in South Africa Face Another Outbreak of Xenophobic Violence*).

In December 2009 commenting on a specific incident the *Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in Southern Africa* states:

“Zimbabwean nationals displaced by xenophobic violence last week in Westernburg, Polokwane remain displaced as efforts continue to find ways to assist them” (Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in Southern Africa, (14 December 2009), *Displacement Continues in Polokwan*).

A *Human Rights Watch* report in December 2009 states:

“In apparent recognition of the humanitarian and legal needs of the vast majority of Zimbabweans who do not obtain international protection, and in a welcome move, outgoing Home Affairs Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula announced in April 2009 that Zimbabwean migrants would be eligible for a special dispensation permit allowing them to stay legally in South Africa for six months. This announcement was accompanied by the implementation of a free 90 -day visa waiver for Zimbabweans (who have passports) and a moratorium on most deportations of Zimbabweans. However, as of November 2009 the special dispensation permit had not been implemented. Until the dispensation is implemented and protection extended to those without the resources for travel documents, the vast majority of Zimbabweans in South Africa remain undocumented” (Human Rights Watch, (7 December 2009), *No Healing Here, Violence, Discrimination and Barriers to Health for Migrants in South Africa*,p.16).

An *IRIN News* story without mentioning Zimbabweans in February 2010 states:

"Foreign nationals are being attacked with "impunity" in South Africa, a leading human rights organization charged as the latest service delivery protests turned violent and several hundred residents turned their anger on Ethiopian refugees living in Siyathemba township, about 80km east of Johannesburg" (IRIN News, (9 February 2010), *South Africa: Foreign nationals attacked with "impunity"*).

## References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Institute for Security Studies

International Christian Concern

International Crisis Group

International Organisation for Migration

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Norwegian Refugee Council Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

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