



South Africa – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 20 February 2014

Is there any information as to whether a Zimbabwean who fears ZANU-PF is safe in South Africa?

The US Department of State country report on South Africa for 2012, in a section titled “Protection of Refugees” (paragraph headed “Refoulement”), states:

“Observers reported that during the year the government refused entry to asylum seekers who could not show positive identification or who passed through a ‘safe country of transit,’ and expressed concern that this could result in refoulement if refusals were not coordinated with other countries. In October 2011 the government resumed deportations of Zimbabweans found to be in the country without legal documentation, with at least 5,000 returned by year’s end. Some Zimbabweans possessing legal documentation were reportedly included with those returned. Refugee and migrant advocacy groups criticized the government for beginning the deportations before it had finished issuing residency permits to Zimbabweans who had complied with a government program to register previously undocumented migrants, and stated that this increased the risk of legal residents being deported.” (US Department of State (19 April 2013) *2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - South Africa*, p.17)

The 2014 Human Rights Watch report on South Africa, in a paragraph headed “Rights of Asylum Seekers”, states:

“In defiance of court orders, the Department of Home Affairs refused to reopen three of its seven Refugee Reception Offices, closed in 2011. The closures, which were part of the department’s plan to move asylum-processing to the country’s borders, have limited asylum seekers’ access not only to the asylum procedure, but also to work permits, adequate shelter, and assistance while their refugee claims are pending. On June 20, the Eastern Cape High Court once again ordered the government to reopen the Port Elizabeth Refugee Reception Centre and ensure that it was fully functional by October 1. At time of writing, the reception center had not been reopened.” (Human Rights Watch (21 January 2014) *World Report 2014 - South Africa*)

A report from the UK-based SW Radio Africa states:

“In the weeks since the elections, an influx of Zimbabweans have been crossing the border into South Africa, with many said to be fleeing retribution for voting against Mugabe’s ZANU PF. Others have said they are fleeing a potential economic meltdown, such as the one witnessed during the last ZANU PF government, before the coalition that was formed in 2009 with the MDC. In South Africa, there are concerns that an unofficial change of policy regarding Zimbabwean asylum seekers is being implemented. The refugee

rights group PASSOP has said it is receiving more and more reports about Zim refugees whose statuses have been reviewed and rejected by the South Africa Department of Home Affairs. New asylum seekers are also being turned away. Langton Miriyoga of PASSOP told SW Radio Africa that they have had 'very high volumes' of people contacting the organisation, after being told that their applications for refugee status would not be considered, on the basis that 'there is no crisis in Zimbabwe.'" (SW Radio Africa (6 September 2013) *Zimbabweans denied refugee status in SA amid fears of policy change*)

An article from The Zimbabwean, a newspaper founded by Zimbabweans in exile, refers to the alleged presence of members of the Central Intelligence Organisation in South Africa as follows:

"Zimbabwean exiles this week identified members of the Central Intelligence Organisation deployed by Zanu (PF) to spy on army deserters and MDC activists. This follows recent reports that CIOs have been deployed in refugee reception centres, political parties and non-governmental organisations. 'We have identified the CIOs, who drive around in 4x4 vehicles and live in Johannesburg and Pretoria,' said an MDC activist, who lives in the Central Methodist Church in downtown Johannesburg. 'One of their teams is being led by a man called Sheppard, who drives around in a black Navara and recently moved from Pretoria to Johannesburg. He abducted many people in Pretoria, at the Bosman bus and train terminus, and sent them back to Zimbabwe. He usually drives around with four people in his car and they seem ready to take out the all vocal MDC-T activists in a bid to weaken the party ahead of polls.'" (The Zimbabwean (18 July 2013) *CIOs, informers, identified in SA*)

See also article from The Zimbabwean which states:

"President Robert Mugabe's Zanu (PF) party has reportedly deployed members of its hated spy unit, the Central Intelligence Organisation, to hunt down security services deserters and influential political activists in some Southern African countries." (The Zimbabwean (20 June 2013) *CIO hunts deserters in SADC*)

This article also states:

"While the 'strict instructions' on army deserters is that they should be immediately arrested and sent back to Zimbabwe, the actions and movements of MDC activists and civil society leaders should be 'noted down' and communicated to Harare. 'There have been no specific ways to deal with civil society leaders, other than note their actions and movements and report on them. I don't know if they will be targeted for arrests when they go back home to monitor elections, but so far, none have been arrested or put up for that from the operation.'" (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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.

References:

Human Rights Watch (21 January 2014) *World Report 2014 - South Africa*
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European Country of Origin Information Network
Human Rights Watch
Google
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Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
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