

URGENT ACTION

GOVERNMENT RESPONDS TO SHOP RAIDS CONCERN

Following an Urgent Action in October 2012, the South African government has met with Amnesty International and committed to investigate our concerns about forcible closures of asylum-seekers and refugees' shops in South Africa's Limpopo province

Amnesty International's October Urgent Action highlighted the plight of hundreds of asylum-seekers and refugees in South Africa's Limpopo province, who are being pushed into destitution because police are forcibly and without notice closing their shops and seizing their goods. The shop closures began from late June and have continued regularly since then across the province. Fears are growing that this coordinated campaign could spread to other provinces. The police raids are taking place without warning and involve seizing trading stock and forcibly closing the premises. Some asylum-seekers and refugees have also been subjected to xenophobic verbal abuse, detention in police cells, and charged or fined for running their business.

On 28 November 2012, the Department for International Relations and Co-operation in South Africa requested to meet with Amnesty International. This followed the South African mission in Geneva receiving letters from Amnesty International members.

At the meeting, on 29 November 2012, the Amnesty International delegation reiterated our concerns about forced shop closures in Limpopo province. The government officials committed to look into the issues raised.

There has been no change to the situation on the ground and unfortunately forced closures of shops run by asylum seekers and refugees continue. However Amnesty International considers this engagement with the government to be a positive development.

Many thanks to everyone who sent appeals. There is no need for continued action at this time but we will continue to monitor the situation.

This is the first update of UA 300/12. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR53/006/2012/en>

Name: Refugees and asylum-seekers owning around 600 small businesses in Limpopo Province, South Africa
Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 300/12 Index: AFR 53/007/2012 Issue Date: 4 December 2012

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