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Zimbabwe confirms 60 000 returnees as SA migrant exodus grows

The Zimbabwean government has confirmed that more than 60 000 of its citizens have already returned home as anti-illegal immigration sentiments in South Africa forced thousands of Africans to leave the country and protesters took to the streets last Tuesday to reiterate the unofficial deadline for departure. Official figures showed 11 065 Zimbabweans had been repatriated via inter-governmental collaboration, with a further 47 703 returning of their own accord.

Of those repatriated by the South African and Zimbabwean governments, 2 449 were adult men, 2 407 were adult females, and 4 955 were minors.

Mnangagwa calls for compassion
Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa said the returnees should be welcomed with open arms and that the government would attempt to help make their transition smooth.

"I appeal to all families and communities to exercise the true African values of compassion, love and caring for one another, more so as we welcome those returning from the diaspora."

"Government has put in place comprehensive programmes to ensure their seamless, safe and dignified reintegration," Mnangagwa said. Deputy chief secretary in the Office of the President and Cabinet, George Charamba, elaborated on the value the returnees could add.

"These returnees are bringing in unique skills, including in the horticulture industry. The skills that Zimbabwean returnees have are badly needed back home so Zimbabwe can meet its export quota," Charamba told The Sunday Mail.

"They are coming back to



Hundreds of Zimbabwean migrants gather with their belongings outside the Zimbabwean Consulate in Cape Town, on June 27, 2026, as they try to get repatriated to Zimbabwe. South Africans President Cyril Ramaphosa vowed on Thursday to crush any attempts to destabilise the nation during planned anti-immigrant marches next week, amid a wave of xenophobia. Citizen-led groups have set Tuesday 30 as a deadline for undocumented foreigners to leave and called for nationwide marches against illegal immigration, marking a crescendo in months of protests that have at times turned violent. Picture: Rodger Bosch/ AFP

a changed country. The economy is growing and creating new opportunities."

Repatriation centre at Beitbridge

A temporary repatriation facility just outside the Beitbridge border post was erected within days by the South African Department of Home Affairs. Public Works Minister Dean Macpherson said: "The goal, from the start, has been to ensure the dignity of migrants travelling out of South Africa."

The facility will serve as the primary processing centre for Africans leaving South Africa. However, there are still thousands of immigrants from Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe waiting to be repatriated to their home countries.

Limpopo provincial head of home affairs Albert Matsaung said the repatriation centre includes processing, resting and loading areas.

"In the processing areas, the SA Police Service checks all the people we are processing so if there is anyone who has criminal cases against them, police can immediately act on that."

"We also have our colleagues from the department of health for health-related issues. NGOs and the Gift of the Givers are assisting us in terms of the food provision."

"We have embassies working with us. The Malawian embassy is here as most of the people we are processing here are from Malawi," he added. Matsaung said 6 000 people have moved into the facility,

which can hold about 20 000. Mozambique prepares for returnees

According to 360 Mozambique, Mozambique President Daniel Chapo said there are logistical arrangements in place for the repatriation of Mozambicans.

"We are welcoming our compatriots; we have already rented machimbombos (passenger buses) to transport the Mozambicans."

"They arrive at the Ressano Garcia border crossing and, upon arrival, they receive food assistance, a hot meal and from there they are screened," he said.

Chapo also highlighted the case of 194 Mozambicans who lost their homes in the Mamelodi region of Pretoria, following attacks by anti-immigration protesters.

"The police took this group to the Mozambican high commission in Pretoria, which took them in and provided them with food." According to 360 Mozambique, 300 000 Mozambicans are living in South Africa. "At least 283 Mozambicans were assaulted, their homes set on fire and property vandalised during the latest wave of xenophobic attacks," Chapo added. Gift of the Givers said it will remain on the ground until all migrants have been repatriated from the Epping Centre in Cape Town.

By Jarryd Westerdale and Marizka Coetzee