

Final extension for Zim Exemption Permits

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Zimbabwean Exemption Permits (ZEP) have been extended for another six months and additional internal changes have been made to South Africa's visa processing system.



Image source: Vitaliy Vodolazskyy – [123RF.com](#)

After careful consideration, the Minister of Home Affairs issued a directive on 2 September 2022 extending the exemption permits granted to Zimbabwean nationals for another six months, to allow them to apply for one of the visas in the Immigration Act, 13 of 2002 (Immigration Act).

The directive provides that the decision should be implemented as follows, during the extension period, from 31 December 2022 to 30 June 2023:

- no holder of a ZEP may be arrested, ordered to depart, detained for deportation, or deported in terms of section 34 of the Immigration Act (deportation and detention of illegal foreigners);
- the holder of a ZEP may not be dealt with in terms of sections 29 (prohibited persons), 30 (undesirable persons) and 32 (illegal foreigners) of the Immigration Act;
- the holder of a ZEP may enter or depart from South Africa in terms of section 9 of the Immigration Act, provided that they comply with all other requirements for entry into and departure from the country; and
- no holder of a ZEP should be required to produce: (i) a valid exemption certificate; or (ii) an authorisation letter to remain in South Africa when applying for any category of visa, including a temporary residence visa.



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The decision was made because only a handful of Zimbabwean nationals have applied for a different visa and/or waivers. The Minister is urging all affected Zimbabwean nationals to use the extended window and not to wait until the last minute to apply for a new visa, as set out in the Immigration Act. The Minister said there would be no further extension.

On 8 June 2022, the Minister also announced a complete overhaul of South Africa's immigration system, which was discussed in a previous Alert. The area of change the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has focused on is long-term visa applications by foreign nationals wishing to stay in South Africa for longer than three months. This change resulted in a backlog in all processing of visa applications.

On 1 September 2022, an internal change was made. The decision to adjudicate visa applications in South Africa was withdrawn because immediate outcomes are often required to ensure that foreign nationals may lawfully enter and depart from the country.



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Foreign nationals will still have to apply for their visas at the relevant South African mission abroad. The officials at those overseas missions have been instructed to adopt a risk-based approach towards every application, and to follow a checklist when adjudicating any application. Officials are required to complete a Reporting Document for every visa issued, which must be submitted to the relevant Regional Co-ordinator at the DHA, accompanied by daily statistics.

Based on the new internal changes, which are effective from 1 September 2022, foreign nationals can now heave a sigh of relief, as the processing times on visa applications should now revert to those indicated on the websites of the relevant South African missions abroad.

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