



28 May 2020

NEWSLETTER ON THE REPATRIATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS

#Repatriation



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Following the declaration of the State of Disaster by President Cyril Ramaphosa, which saw South Africa implementing the national lockdown on 26 March 2020, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has facilitated the repatriation of over 6 300 South Africans stranded abroad (by air). Hundreds more have also returned through our land borders.

This number includes the 29 young musicians/artists stranded in Turkey. The group was meant to fly home when flights were grounded. The artists were unable to afford the airfare on a Turkish Air flight that was arranged by the Turkish Government to airlift its nationals stranded in South Africa and neighbouring countries. With the assistance of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture and Defy South Africa, the 29 artists were part of the group of South Africans who arrived from Turkey on 22 May 2020.

Over the past few days, South Africans stranded in the United States, Qatar, India, Zambia, Gabon, Tanzania and the United Kingdom were also repatriated.

South Africans abroad requiring repatriation are encouraged to contact the South African embassies to enable the department to assess the demand in each country. You can also contact the 24-hour DIRCO Command Centre on +27 12 351 1754 or +27 12 351 1756 or email Cicc1@dirco.gov.za or Cicc2@dirco.gov.za.

Over 6 300 South Africans have been repatriated to date. Hundreds more have crossed over land borders from neighbouring states.

ARRIVALS FROM 1 MAY 2020



1 May 2020

- ✈ A charter flight from Mali repatriated 19 South Africans
- ✈ A CemAir charter flight from Harare repatriated 26 passengers
- ✈ An Ethiopian Airlines charter repatriated 256 South Africans (Workaways)
- ✈ A private charter flight repatriated three South Africans from Madagascar

2 May 2020

- ✈ A private charter flight repatriated 19 South Africans from Mali

3 May 2020

- ✈ A SAA flight from Washington, USA, repatriated 275 South Africans
- ✈ A flight from Ethiopia repatriated 27 South Africans

4 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Zambia repatriated 21 South Africans

7 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Qatar repatriated 121 South Africans

8 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Jeddah repatriated 165 South Africans
- ✈ A flight from Bangkok repatriated 235 South Africans
- ✈ A flight from St Helena repatriated one South African patient
- ✈ A flight from Guinea repatriated nine South Africans
- ✈ A flight from Bali and Jakarta repatriated 134 South Africans

10 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Washington repatriated 236 passengers
- ✈ A flight from Zambia repatriated 18 passengers

10 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Washington repatriated 236 passengers
- ✈ A flight from Zambia repatriated 18 passengers

11 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Windhoek, Namibia, repatriated 18 South Africans
- ✈ Another flight from Windhoek repatriated 26 South Africans
- ✈ A flight from Zambia repatriated 21 South Africans

12 May 2020

- ✈ A private charter from Beira repatriated three South Africans
- ✈ A flight from Qatar repatriated 167 South Africans

13 May 2020

- ✈ A CemAir flight from the DRC (24), Angola (53) and Botswana (one) repatriated 78 South Africans
- ✈ A charter flight from Equatorial Guinea repatriated nine South Africans

14 May 2020

- ✈ A charter flight from Pakistan repatriated 107 South Africans

16 May 2020

- ✈ A charter flight from Lubumbashi, DRC, repatriated 35 South Africans
- ✈ A Qatar Airways flight repatriated 236 South Africans from Doha

17 May 2020

- ✈ A special charter flight from CemAir repatriated South Africans from five African countries, including Casablanca, Morocco (28); Nouakchot, Mauritania (12); Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (12); Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (19); and Pointe Noire, Congo Brazzaville (seven)

21 May 2020

- ✈ An Airlink flight from St Helena repatriated four South Africans
- ✈ A Qatar Airways flight repatriated 95 South Africans
- ✈ A SAA flight from Washington repatriated 273 South Africans
- ✈ A CemAir flight repatriated 61 passengers from Zambia

22 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Zambia repatriated 16 passengers
- ✈ A flight from Turkey repatriated 61 passengers

23 May 2020

- ✈ A flight from Gabon repatriated 31 passengers

24 May 2020

- ✈ Two flights from Qatar repatriated 198 South Africans
- ✈ A SAA flight from India repatriated 252 South Africans

25 May 2020

- ✈ A SAA flight from London repatriated 222 South Africans
- ✈ A flight from Tanzania repatriated 26 South Africans

27 May 2020

- ✈ A SAA flight from London repatriated 96 South Africans.



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Opinionista • Ntsiki Mashimbye • 25 May 2020

The angst of being a locked-down South African diplomat in Brazil

Ntsiki Mashimbye

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Ntsiki Mashimbye is South Africa's Ambassador to Brazil. He was formerly a Member of Parliament and chairperson of Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Correctional Services, and is South Africa's former ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The greatest causes of anxiety among diplomatic officials, both in Brasilia and São Paulo, is the health of family and friends in South Africa, especially those with elderly and vulnerable parents, and siblings. The utter devastation of losing a loved one while abroad is only surpassed by the absolute injustice and heartbreak one feels at not being able to travel home to say a final goodbye.

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, a wonderful thing happened to me last week: I received a call from a colleague in the Employment Health and Wellness Centre (EHWC) at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco). The purpose of the call was to inquire as to my wellbeing under the difficult circumstances brought about by the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown in Brasilia, the capital city of Brazil. I was more than elated to receive this call, the first of its kind in my 10 years of service at Dirco. During my first posting as Ambassador to the DRC and the Great Lakes, I visited the most dangerous and far-flung battlegrounds and war zones for meetings in pursuance of South Africa's foreign policy.

Perhaps the most traumatising of my experiences in the DRC was waking up to the deadly projectiles that landed on the property of the Chancery, which also housed the official residence and residences of all officials at the Mission in Kinshasa. The trauma affected my family and colleagues in ways we will never fully be able to articulate. I had to counsel several of the embassy officials (and their families) who were determined to resign immediately and return home to safety. Fortunately, I managed to convince all to stay and to complete their postings. And now, 10 years later, I finally received the call: cometh the hour, cometh the wellness unit!

My colleagues will be aware that in the past, I have questioned the role and purpose of the EHWC. However, after the experience of one simple call, I am now more convinced than ever that this unit should be better equipped and adequately resourced to assist our diplomats to cope with the challenges of serving in foreign lands, away from family structures and from the familiarity and comforts of our beautiful country. Most, if not all, foreign ministries have such a unit, and some countries even have health professionals deployed at their larger embassies and covering several countries.

After the call from EWHC, I decided to engage officials at the embassy, starting with video calls to each of the officials in our Consulate-General in São Paulo, which happens to be the epicentre of the pandemic in Brazil. As a result, the consulate has been closed for two months now. My intention was to hear how each of the officials and their families are coping with this most unnatural situation and to reassure them that this too shall pass. After all, separating from others goes against the basic human need for companionship and connection that we all feel.

I thought I was ready to place this call given all my training over the years as a political commissar to hundreds of soldiers in the most unspeakable conditions of a people's war against apartheid tyranny. Then, the enemy was clear and victory was in sight, but now, I had to speak to soldiers fighting an invisible and insidious enemy with no end in sight.

Speaking to my colleagues left me overwhelmed with a lump in my throat. I saw fatigue and worry, but also bravery and defiance. I heard fear and anxiety, but also resilience and endurance. I felt pain and melancholy, but also incredible patriotism and an indomitable spirit to survive and continue to serve the republic. Officials conveyed the helplessness of being unable to respond to queries from their young children on even the simplest of activities: seeing their friends, watching a movie at a cinema or riding their bicycles in a park. Children are generally visual creatures, and an abstract and obscure virus may as well be an imaginary and distant friend. Teenagers of officials are not necessarily better placed to handle the virus, many delving even further into the virtual world that already consumed most of their days in pre-Covid-19 times.

Spending long days indoors and even more time in front of television screens, mobile phones and laptops can only be harmful to their mental and physical wellbeing. For some of our children, the impact will be lifelong. As an April 2020 United Nations report stated: "Children are not the face of this pandemic. But they risk being among its biggest victims." For those of us who are parents, this is indeed a difficult pill to swallow.

The greatest causes of angst among officials, both in Brasilia and São Paulo, is the health of family and friends in South Africa, especially those with elderly and vulnerable parents, and siblings. The utter devastation of losing a loved one while abroad is only surpassed by the absolute injustice and heartbreak one feels at not being able to travel home to say a final goodbye.

I am indeed privileged to work with diplomats of this calibre. Listening to my staff and attempting to play the strong leader has only taught me that, like them, I too am just a mere mortal that always needs to know that someone out there cares.

If nothing else, this pandemic has taught governments and companies across the world the importance of investing in the health and wellness of its citizens, and employees. Healthy citizens and employees are productive citizens and employees. The nexus between health and economic productivity has been written about extensively. DIRCO — and indeed the rest of government — needs to continue showing that it is a caring employer. **DM**

Source: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2020-05-25-the-angst-of-being-a-locked-down-south-african-diplomat-in-brazil/>

CAPE ARGUS / NEWS



Twenty-nine artists and musicians who had been stranded in Turkey returned to South Africa at the weekend, in a co-ordinated trip. Picture: Facebook/Supplied

Musicians who had been stranded in Turkey back in SA

Cape Town - Twenty-nine artists and musicians who had been stranded in Turkey returned to South Africa at the weekend, in a trip coordinated by the government and Turkish authorities.

Sports, Arts and Culture department spokesperson Masechaba Khumalo said: "The flight was arranged by the Turkish government to airlift its nationals stranded in South Africa and neighbouring countries. The 29 artists were part of the 93 South Africans granted approvals to board the flight to South Africa." She said they were taken to a government facility for quarantine.

Source: <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/musicians-who-had-been-stranded-in-turkey-back-in-sa-48498969>

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Fab South African Stuff News

South Africans Stuck in India Finally Flying Home to SA

By Jenni Baxter - May 24, 2020

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South Africans who have been stranded in India for over seven weeks are finally winging their way home to SA today! With money and medicine having run out for many, it is such welcome news.

It's believed the South Africans are being carried on an SAA plane which had brought Indian citizens – who were trapped in SA due to COVID-19 lockdown – over from Joburg to India. That plane departed from SA on Thursday evening.

Today, Sunday, SAA is flying from Mumbai, via Delhi, carrying South Africans back to Johannesburg. The South Africans in India – nearly 300 – had become quite distraught that they were being forgotten by the SA government, and a petition had been set up on Change.org.

One of the Saffers stranded in India, Sadhana (Sharon Ryan), wrote a letter on SApeople pleading with the government to come up with a plan. She explained: "Amongst the elderly and children who make up our numbers, is a stage 4 cancer patient, someone who suffers from diabetes and ischemic heart disease, both out of medication, and a young medical student who lost his father to Covid19, with no assistance from DIRCO to get home for the funeral. Another who suffers heat intolerance and is stuck in the Thar desert in temperatures ranging 38-45 degrees Celsius, suffering heat exhaustion.

She said that "Ben Joubert from our High Commission in Delhi has been a pillar, yet can offer little solace in the face of no plan from DIRCO."

One of Dirco's "excuses", Sadhana said, had been India's "closed airspace"... but it was only closed to commercial flights, not to those arranged by embassies for repatriation as evidenced by European repatriation flights.

Thankfully India opened its airspace to repatriate its own people, and DIRCO came up with a plan.

Source: <https://www.sapeople.com/2020/05/24/south-africans-stuck-in-india-finally-flying-home-to-sa/>



SOCIAL MEDIA SAYS

Ben Pio HomeAwayFromHome 🇷🇺 🇳🇱 🇿🇦
2 hrs · 🌐

Hi All.

This is a message of Gratitude I am expressing towards the Home Away From Home Team, ACSA, Swissport, Both the Tanzanian and South African High Commissions, governments and DIRCO. Together these teams have successfully managed to Repatriate 25 South African Nationals during the course of today the 25th of may. They are now in their quarantine facility in Sandton. On top of this the mission is still yet to take 25 pax back to Tanzania to be at home with their families and to start work in Tanzania. They will arrive in Tanzania by tomorrow morning. A big thank you once again to these people for their assistance

Department of International Relations and Cooperation, SA
2 hrs · 🌐

A message from an elated South African 🇷🇺 whose loved one has recently returned home from the USA 🇺🇸 after being stranded there for weeks, when the #COVID19 #lockdown began.

Many thanks to the officials at the missions abroad, South African Airways, the US government and the #DIRCO Command Centre.

#RepatriationSA #CoronavirusInSA

Urgent Repatriation #Turkey
23 May at 14:50 · 🌐

! MEDIA STATEMENT !

To the county at large, the government and all stakeholders involved in our repatriation we would like to extend this message of thanks.

This 2 month ordeal that felt like a lifetime has surely been an experience unlike any other - from being ordinary musicians seeking employment abroad, we all morphed into a unit stranded in a foreign country and seeking the help of our fellow men. This time in our lives has certainly been a paradigm shifting realization of the importance of Ubuntu, a virtue so deeply espoused by our country. Strangers turned into family through all this and people we never thought we'd meet fought for us in unimaginable ways.

Our initial call for help dubbed #BRINGUSHOME, was on social media platforms and that catapulted our plea to the world -- media houses, celebrities and politicians all heeded our call and sprung to action. We received calls of comfort, messages of hope and monetary donations from too many people to count.

Our Embassy in Turkey, the Local Ministry in Antalya, Turkey, Ugur University (Turkish based), Arçelik (Turkish based) and Defy South Africa made sure that we were sustained in the way of food and essentials - suddenly we didn't feel so stranded, there was a comfort in the midst of the storm but as they say "there is no place like home", therefore we remained steadfast in our goal to be repatriated. We were then in contact with Minister Nathi Mthethwa, Deputy Minister Nocawa Mafu and Minister Naledi Pandor to help fast track the process; eventually we were given a date and finally we could breathe.

On the day of the trip home we travelled firstly by bus to Istanbul International Airport using the donations we had received from the public back home, following the very arduous 10 hour bus ride we reached the airport and thereafter prepared to take flight. Our Embassy Ambassadors, Mr. Tshepo Ranamane and Mr. Onassis Tloubatla were there to see us off in true South African style, they thanked us for our patience and bid us farewell.

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As we broke into South African airspace the view was inexplicable; the hues of the night sky were meticulously balanced without any colour overpowering the next and as we landed we were greeted with warmth by airport staff. We're currently in quarantine under the care and supervision of very friendly staff.

Thank you again to everyone who has been supportive to our efforts, we cannot mention names of everyone individually. However, we really appreciate it.

#Turkey29

Tracey Stentiford
Just now · 🌐

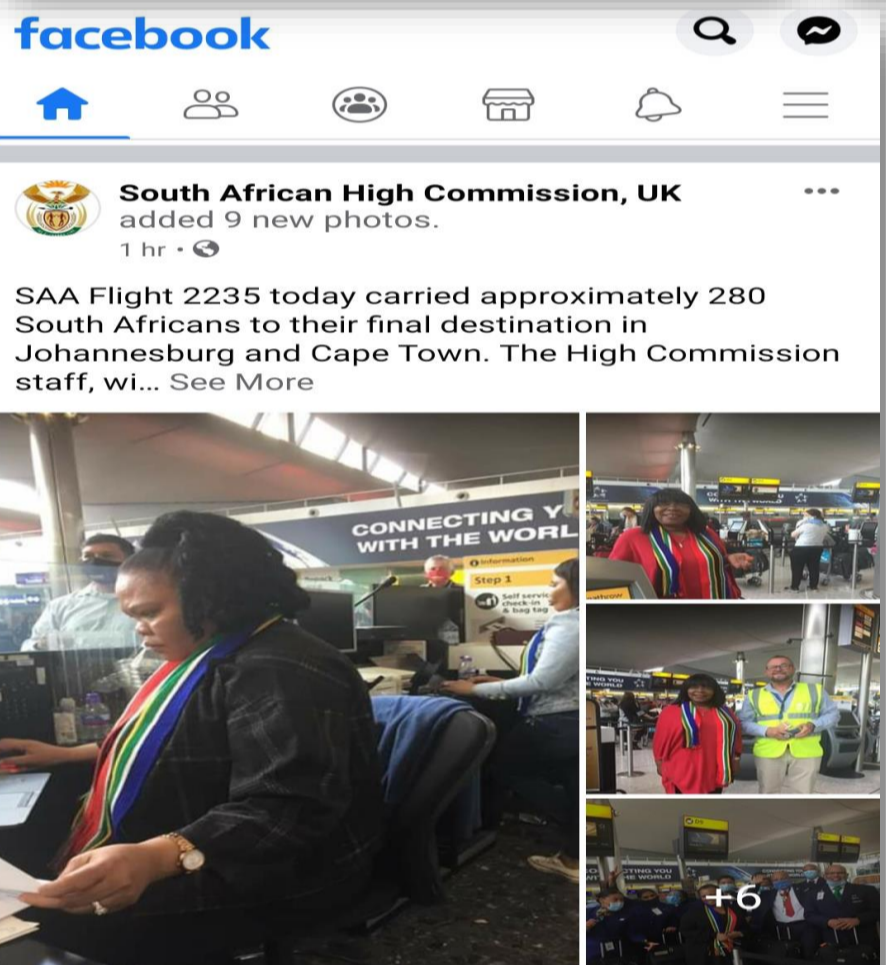
I would like to say a huge thank you to MmolediN@dirco.gov.za and Mr Edries Ebrahim who were instrumental in helping get my son back from Italy. On arrival from Doha the whole process was extremely well organized. Temperatures taken on plane before all South Africans disembarked. All passports collected and stamped. Luggage was waiting on tarmac for passengers to collect before boarding a bus where they were police escorted to quarantine site. Thank you.

Department of International Relations and Cooperation, SA
2 mins · 🌐

A group of young South Africans has been stranded in Turkey for over month. They told South Africa that they were there and informed #DIRCO that they wanted to return home 🇷🇺.

Defy SA came to the party and this morning 22 May 2020, they boarded a flight to South Africa. 🇷🇺

#RepatriationSA #CoronavirusUpdate #Day57ofLockdown



Hollard.

28 May 2020

Mr Alvin Botes
Deputy Minister
Department of International Relations and Cooperation
17th Floor
120 Plain Street
Cape Town
8001

Via Email: istana@dirco.gov.za

Thank You Letter: Repatriation of South Africans from Morocco

Dear Deputy Minister Botes,

Trust this email finds you and your family well during these challenging and uncertain times.

I am writing this letter to send you my appreciation for your assistance in the repatriation of one of our employees, Mr Xwena Isadore Mshobelo and other South African citizens that were stuck in Morocco since March 2020, following President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement of the nation-wide lockdown and subsequent travel bans.

I further note that the South African nationals returned safely in South Africa on 17 May 2020; after numerous bilateral and multilateral engagements you and your department held with various stakeholders on the African continent, including Moroccan authorities. The diplomacy, negotiation and coordination effort you commanded in the relaxation of a key rule that does not allow any disembarkation of people; and allowing pilots to have a stayover in Morocco, has indubitably not gone unnoticed.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and personal interest shown and for acceding to our request for urgent intervention.

Looking forward to opportunities to drive collaboration with you and your constituency in the future; specifically in shared interests that match Hollard's values as a socially responsible corporate citizen.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Saka Ntombela
Group CEO: Hollard

Dear Mr Tloubatla,

We arrived safely at home and as you know the process at the airport since we had to go through the quarantine process, accommodation and all that stuff. How can we forget someone like you really for what you have done for us? We are home because of your efforts and really we want to thank you for that,

May God bless you abundantly. May the blessings of God rain upon you and all the people who helped us to be home and relieved us of the stress of not knowing what will happen next. It was through prayers and willing hearts of people like you guys that make it possible for us to be home tonight, keep it up and continue to help others in similar situations, you will be rewarded greatly by almighty God

Department of International Relations and Cooperation, SA
50 mins · 🌐

More South African 🇷🇺 citizens returned home from Gabon 🇬🇧 today, 23 May 2020 at 17:20 carrying 31 passengers.

They will all go into quarantine. Welcome back home!

#RepatriationSA #Day58ofLockdown #COVID19SA

Department of International Relations and Cooperation, SA
34 mins · 🌐

As the #COVID19 pandemic escalated, governments implemented national #lockdowns and closed borders. Some nationals got stuck in India.

After many negotiations, today they are en route to South Africa 🇷🇺

Also onboard are citizens of

- 🇱🇸 Lesotho
- 🇳🇦 Namibia
- 🇲🇶 Mozambique

#RepatriationSA #Day59ofLockdown

Dear Mr Edries

(See below) I just want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for your help, your effort and your understanding regarding Mr JJ Groenewald, my brother, to come home and to start his treatment in hospital.

May you be richly blessed, as words is really not enough!

Please let me know if I can help with anything regarding the ambulance. The person who helped me is Pieter from ER24. His number is 0718824363.

I keep on praying for you and your staff throughout the whole world who does amazing work towards our beloved South Africans.

Kind regards
Leana Hay

To Everyone involved,

I would just like to thank everyone involved in the arrangement of the repatriation flight which brought my wife back from the USA yesterday. Flight SA 2208 Sat 09 May. I would especially like to thank,

Mr Ebrahim Edries – Deputy Chief of State Protocol.
Sir, if it wasn't for your swift response to my mail, my wife would have never made the flight. A special thank you to you.

Ms Yoliswa Mvebe – Deputy Chief of Mission – Embassy of the Republic of South Africa.
Ms Yoliswa, for actually taking the initiative, phoning my daughter-in-law and speaking to my wife, and arranging the flight. A special thank-you to you.

"It doesn't matter who you are, when you come from. The ability to triumph begins with YOU. Always. – Oprah Winfrey.

Regards,
Mike Torr



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"As individuals, as families, as communities, it is you who will determine whether we experience the devastation that so many other countries have suffered, or whether we can spare our people, our society and our economy from the worst effects of this pandemic."

- President Cyril Ramaphosa
24 May 2020

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