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Film Release: Sanctuary Lost

For immediate release

South Africa's plans to construct refugee camps explored in a new exclusive documentary

[Trailer](#) (3 minutes)

[Full version](#) (10 minutes)

Over time, South Africa's progressive refugee system has descended into a state of crisis. In response, the government now plans to construct detention camps on its northern borders, and a main tenet of the South African constitution – freedom of movement – is set to be compromised.

Sanctuary Lost, an unprecedented documentary, combines expert, academic and refugee voices to track the rise and collapse of South Africa's unique refugee landscape.

Storyboard

In the oppressive context of apartheid, few refugees sought asylum in South Africa. Through archive footage and exclusive interviews, Sanctuary Lost traces the history behind the 1998 Refugees Act, which transformed South Africa from a refugee-producing to a refugee-receiving country. Fast-forward to 2018, and South Africa's refugee system has descended into a state of crisis. Sanctuary Lost explores the human impact of the imploding system, where huge numbers of asylum applicants, corruption and limited capacity have resulted in asylum seekers being stuck in administrative limbo for up to fifteen years. The government's closure of several Refugee Reception Offices – and [refusal](#) to reopen them - has added more pressure to the struggling system.

In what are described as 'the camps of the future', the South African government has responded by [planning](#) to construct 'asylum processing centres'. In a series of plans that are reminiscent of Australia's asylum system (and South Africa's history of restricted human movement) asylum applicants will not have the right to work and face detention in uncertain circumstances. Only those granted refugee status will be 'released' into South African society. It is [not](#) clear how these centers will be run, or who will fund them.

'My guess is that, in ten years' time, these camps won't exist anymore - but not before a lot of damage is done to peoples' lives'. Loren Landau, African Centre for Migration Studies

Sanctuary Lost seeks to raise awareness around the complex history – and worrying future – of South Africa's refugee system. Whilst the asylum system is under immense pressure, there are a variety of solutions to relieve this and allow for the Refugees Act to be properly implemented. Constructing r efugee camps is not only unnecessary; it is a costly, inhumane way to process South Africa's refugees.

Contacts

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