
PRESS RELEASE:

A MIXTURE OF RELIEF AND FEAR AS ANGOLAN FORMER REFUGEES ARE ISSUED NEW PERMITS

Angolan former refugees, who have been living in South Africa for decades, are being issued Angolan Special Permits (ASP) by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) following years of precarious legality in the country. Whilst we welcome and celebrate the issuance of ASPs, we share the concerns of these former refugees around their futures - the ASPs expire in 2021 and are non-renewable.

Fleeing in the late 1990s, Angolans were some of the first refugees in post-apartheid South Africa. In 2013, they were the first refugees in South Africa to have had their status ceased. Upon this cessation, 'Angolan Cessation Permits' (ACP) were issued. These permits expired in 2015, upon which the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town (SCCT) entered into negotiations with DHA to consider permanent residency for the group. This resulted in a [Court Order](#) issued by the Western Cape High Court, in which ACP permit holders were asked to provide the Minister of Home Affairs with documentation proving their socio-economic integration into South Africa and outlining their reasons for wanting to remain permanently in the country. The applications were made in terms of Section 31(2)(b) of the Immigration Act, and included police clearance certificates, bank statements, employment contracts and support letters. On 15 February 2017, the SCCT [handed in](#) 160 lever-arch files to DHA, documenting the lives of 1,757 Angolan applicants. In July 2017, the Minister of Home Affairs issued a [decision](#) to grant rights of permanent residency to the majority of Angolan applicants. DHA is now beginning to issue these applicants with ASPs.

There are four conditions attached to the ASP. The holder has the right to work and study. However, the holder cannot apply for permanent residency, the permit is not extendable or renewable and the conditions of the permit cannot be changed. Each ASP expires at the end of 2021.

The SCCT welcomes the granting of work and study rights, and is thankful that that ASP holders can now access bank accounts, and other rights afforded to citizens (except for voting and establishing a political party). We are relieved by DHA's decision to document this small, integrated and economically active group. However, the fact that ASPs expire in 2021 creates great uncertainty regarding the future of this group of people, who have integrated economically and socially over the last twenty years in South Africa. Indeed, data analysis of ASP applicants shows a high rate of economic activity (91% of adult applicants were employed) and entrepreneurship (19% of applicants run their own businesses in South Africa). A quarter of these applicants have South African partners, whilst 21% have both South African partners and South African children. This level of socio-economic integration displayed in these applications likely contributed to DHA's positive decision.



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We hope that the DHA will consider extension of the permits in 2018 or granting of permanency as a more durable solution for this specific group of former refugees.

Background to Cessation

Read more about the background to Cessation [here](#).

About Scalabrini

Perceiving migration as an opportunity, the SCCT is committed to alleviating poverty and promoting development in the Western Cape while fostering integration between migrants, refugees and South Africans. We provide specialised services including advocacy, welfare, employment assistance and outreach programmes. Read more at www.scalabrini.org.za.

Contact

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