



The Office of the Municipal Manager

P O Box 116
33 Forbes Street

LADYSMITH 3370

Tel (036) 638 5149

Fax (036) 638 5126

Fax2email 086 461 0862

E- mail: jmkhonza@uthukela.gov.za

Media Statement

10 July 2026

UTHUKELA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY LEADS A JOINT COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

UThukela District Municipality, led by Mayor Inkosi NB Shabalala, together with its local municipalities, South African Police Service (SAPS) and government stakeholders, held a joint community awareness programme on illegal immigration at Ezakheni in Alfred Duma Municipality, Khethani in Okhahlamba and Wembezi in Inkosi Langalibalele over a period of three days. This initiative followed calls for action from civic organisations against undocumented foreign nationals. It also sought to educate communities on immigration laws, strengthen enforcement of municipal by-laws, and promote cooperation between government, law enforcement and residents.

Addressing the community, Alfred Duma Municipality Mayor Cllr Zama Sibisi said all enforcement must take place within the confines of the law. He reaffirmed the municipality's commitment to enforcing by-laws, conducting regular business inspections with the SAPS, and ensuring all traders possess valid permits. He also urged residents to report unlawful business activities and highlighted municipal programmes supporting local economic development.

Okhahlamba Local Municipality Mayor, Cllr Vika Mlotshwa did not mince his words when he made it clear that the community don't want any illegal immigrants in their places of residence. "Only those with correct papers are welcomed. We have conducted a campaign against illegal migrants in the past and we found that most of these people are in the country illegally. And they will always say they are still waiting for their documents to be processed by the department of Home Affairs. It cannot be like that forever", said Mayor Mlotshwa.

Inkosi Langalibalele Local Municipality Mayor, Cllr Mduduzi Myeza called for a unified approach to by-laws enforcement across the district, stressing that all businesses must comply with legal requirements. "The issue of illegal foreign nationals in our country is troubling us all. This calls for a united front against this issue. Ours is to listen to your voice as what needs to be done to address this urgent matter, but we must also do it within the framework of the law. We need not take the law in our own hands," said Mayor Myeza.

There are circulating reports alleging that one Malawian man killed a woman because of their disagreement related to their relationship. A Pakistani national is also alleged to have raped a child in Wembezi. According to sources, more than 35 000 illegal immigrants have been deported in Durban since the beginning of the protests. There is also a case of a landlord who chased away an illegal Pakistani immigrant who was renting out his house. Mayor Myeza

committed that his municipality will deliver the stock to a homeowner to enable him to start his own business.

Representing the Department of Home Affairs, Ms Minka Van der Merwe outlined the department's immigration enforcement role, noting that 42 joint operations conducted during the 2025/26 financial year resulted in the deportation of 50 undocumented foreign nationals. She also explained the distinction between asylum seekers and economic migrants and reminded residents that immigration officials are empowered by law to verify immigration status and detain undocumented persons for due legal processes.

Residents raised concerns about the operation of some foreign-owned businesses. Another concern was inconsistent enforcement of municipal by-laws, allegations of corruption, and the need for greater support for local entrepreneurs as they lack basic skills to run a successful enterprise. Entrepreneurial skills will be addressed through each municipality's LED programmes aimed at giving support to local entrepreneurs.

Responding to these concerns, Mayor Shabalala encouraged residents to formally report any allegations of misconduct or criminality to the relevant authorities, emphasising that government can only act effectively when incidents are officially reported. He also assured residents that they are welcome to report any challenges affecting their communities directly to him and his office, where every matter raised will be diligently followed up.

The SAPS led by UThukela District Commissioner Major General Gonya, also participated in the programme, and assured these communities that the police would continue working closely with them, listening to their concerns, and then responding to issues raised in partnership with other government stakeholders to ensure that the law is upheld.

Meanwhile, KwaZulu-Natal Premier Honourable Thamsanqa Ntuli has called for harsher penalties, including imprisonment, for employers found guilty of employing undocumented foreign nationals. The Premier said inspections at workplaces and businesses across the province will be intensified to identify employers contravening immigration and labour laws, urging all employers to ensure their employees are legally authorized to work in South Africa.

-Ends

Issued by: Jabulani Mkhonza and Nomfundo Mazibuko
Communications Unit
UThukela District Municipality
Cell: 072 175 5659
For enquiries:
S Masoka
Cell: 072 623 9171



UThukela District Mayor Inkosi Shabalala



UThukela District Commissioner, Major General Gonya



Alfred Duma Mayor Cllr Z Sibisi



Inkosi Langalibalele Mayor Cllr M Myeza



Okhahlamba Mayor Cllr V Mlotshwa



Mayors deliberating during the event



Community members who participated in all outreach campaigns (Photos A & B)

