



Regular report: Conversations about foreign nationals on South African social media

June 2022

Issue date: 14 July 2022

Introduction

This regular report assesses conversations about foreign nationals on South African social media. It covers the month of June 2022. This regular report follows a [Lay of the land](#) report that provided an overview of conversations about foreign nationals on South African social media from January to May 2022.

Xenophobia is among a variety of social themes that the work of the Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change (CABC) has covered. Themes include Covid-19, racism, extremism, xenophobia, public unrest, misogyny and gender-based violence. CABC has observed that there is a proliferation of scapegoating, polarising/divisive rhetoric and incitements to public disobedience, unrest and violence which presents a threat to social cohesion globally. The social themes that are the focus of our work represent areas of concern in the South African context and beyond. In the lay of the land report, we identified that Operation Dudula is a xenophobic influence operation whose reach is growing. This should be cause for continued concern because the campaign appears to be driving flare ups of xenophobic violence that are increasing in their regularity. The reports that follow this regular report for June 2022 will be produced on a fortnightly basis.

Research Methodology

To obtain the information that is presented in this report, CABC made use of social media listening tools. A sample of social media content that pertains to foreign nationals in South Africa was obtained for the month of June 2022. Keywords were gathered and a query created in advance of the lay of the land report being generated. Categories were created for themes in the conversation. The keywords for the query were kept the same as those used for January to May 2022.

Conversation volume and trends

The query returned a sample rate of 100% with a total mention volume of 448.04 thousand for the period 01 to 30 June 2022. These mentions were created by 86.97 thousand unique authors as shown in figure 1 below. The number of unique authors has risen slightly (by 1%) from 85.78 thousand unique authors in May 2022. The mention volume has remained more or less constant, decreasing by 1% from 454.15 thousand mentions in May to 448.04 mentions in June 2022.

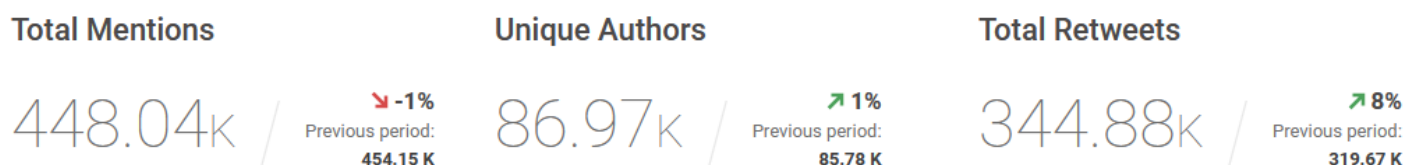


Figure 1: mentions and unique authors: 01 June 2022 - 30 June 2022

Although the mention volume remained similar, in May there were more pronounced peaks in the conversation than in June 2022.

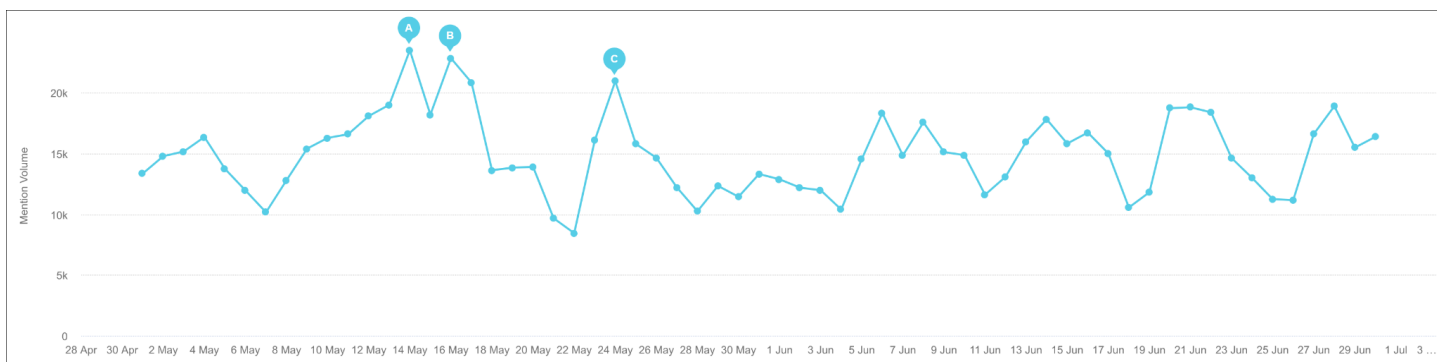


Figure 2: volume over time

The key content source for the conversation about foreign nationals in South Africa is Twitter, followed by news outlets and forums. By examining tweets closer, there is news content and videos that are tweeted as well, indicating that Twitter is also used to amplify what is on other channels.

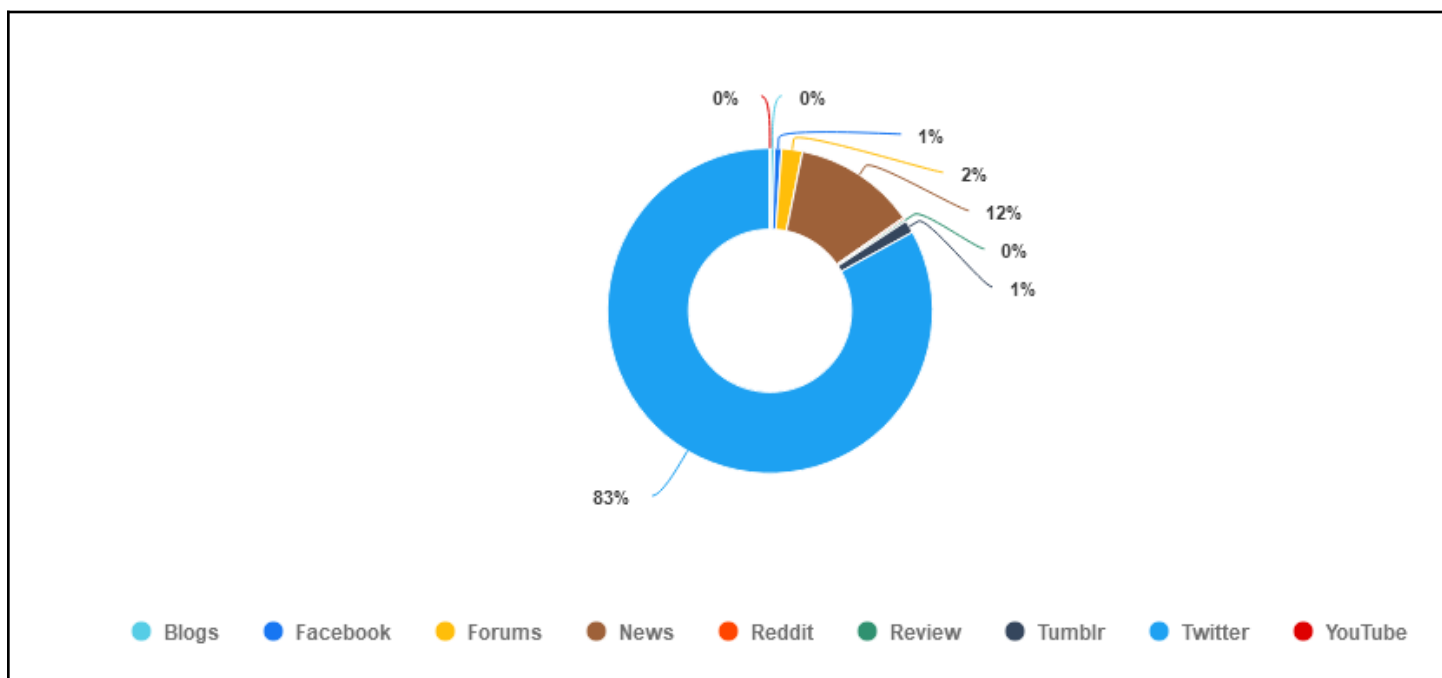


Figure 3: Content sources breakdown for June 2022

To demonstrate this, when looking at the most mentioned URLs, the top mention is of a Sunday World news article about a Home Affairs official who issued a fraudulent passport to a Bangladeshi being arrested. Thereafter, the next most mentioned URL is a WhatsApp link which is aimed at job seekers and a link to an application for a radio station called Vibe FM. Articles from Power 987 and Eye Witness News are also among the most mentioned URLs. Among the top URLs is a Twitter space invitation - which is where a conversation is held on Twitter. Inviting well known figures to be in Twitter space conversations appears to be a feature of the xenophobic conversation.











URL	▼ Mentions
 https://sundayworld.co.za/news/official-who-issued-a-passport-to-lebogang-from-bangladesh-has-been-arrested/	904
 https://api.whatsapp.com/message/H6W5ECCXN2XK1?autoload=1&app_absent=0	872
 https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=app.com.vibefm	764
 https://api.whatsapp.com/message/YBFHSQWDMROME1?autoload=1&app_absent=0	709
 https://www.power987.co.za/featured/listen-nigeria-reports-21-cases-of-monkeypox/	599
 https://ewn.co.za/2022/06/07/id-fraud?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter	448
 https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.magadlela.ilanga	411
 https://apps.apple.com/app/ilanga/id1624347291	402
 https://twitter.com/i/spaces/1mnGedQDpOrKX	391
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSPERM3E1oE&feature=youtu.be	385

Figure 4: Most shared URLs

The tweet below (figure 5) is a retweet of the Sunday World article about the passport that contained the name ‘Lebogang Ndlovu’ that was issued to a man from Bangladesh by a Home Affairs official who has been arrested for suspected fraud in connection with the matter:

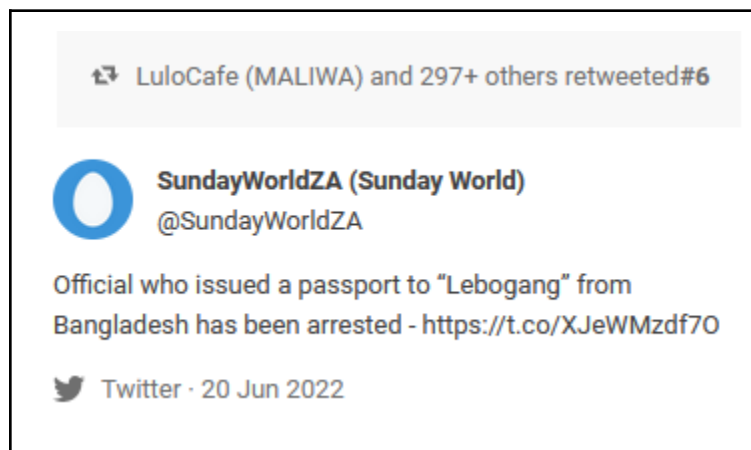


Figure 5: retweet of Sunday World article

During June 2022 the key hashtags in the conversation about foreign nationals were #operationdudula, #putsouthafricansfirst and putsouthafricansfirst (see figure 6). The landscape report also highlighted that Operation Dudula was the most prominent hashtag in the conversation. In contrast (compared to the first five months of 2022) in June 2022 #nhlanhlalux, #nhlanhla_lux and #operationfiela do not appear in the top hashtags. #voetsekeff was also in the key hashtags for the first five months of 2022, with #voetsekanc coming into greater prominence in the June 2022 conversation. Hashtags that moved to prominence that were not top in the conversation earlier are: #nationalshutdown, #phalaphalagate and #ramaphosamustgo.



Figure 6: Hashtags

Illustrative of the shift in topics over time, figure 7 below shows fading topics in grey on the left and the trending topics in orange on the right.



Figure 7: Trending topics

Within the conversation, there is negative sentiment directed at primarily foreign nationals. A prominent - and very negative form of nationalism - is conveyed in the use of the term/topic 'South Africans' in the conversation. This creates a cohesive 'us' that is pitted against 'illegal immigrants/foreigners'.

A considerable component of the conversation entails scapegoating foreign nationals for the social ills occurring in South Africa, including crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, usurping jobs and violence against women. While there are some commentators who make the distinction between criminal activities carried out by persons of any nationality as being a challenge, there is a deliberate conflation within the conversation that entails labelling foreigners as being particularly responsible for criminal acts.

In addition there is negative sentiment directed towards specific political parties, particularly the EFF and ANC. And there is negative sentiment that is directed at the South African media, most noticeably towards Daily Maverick, News24, ENCA and Newzroom 405.

The sentiment of the conversation is more negative than positive as figure 8 below shows. The tool tracks sentiment at around 65% accuracy - this is considered high for sentiment tracking according to industry standards. In June 2022, there were fewer extreme spikes in sentiment than in the prior period. These spikes coincided with instances of outbreaks of xenophobic violence as described in the landscape report.

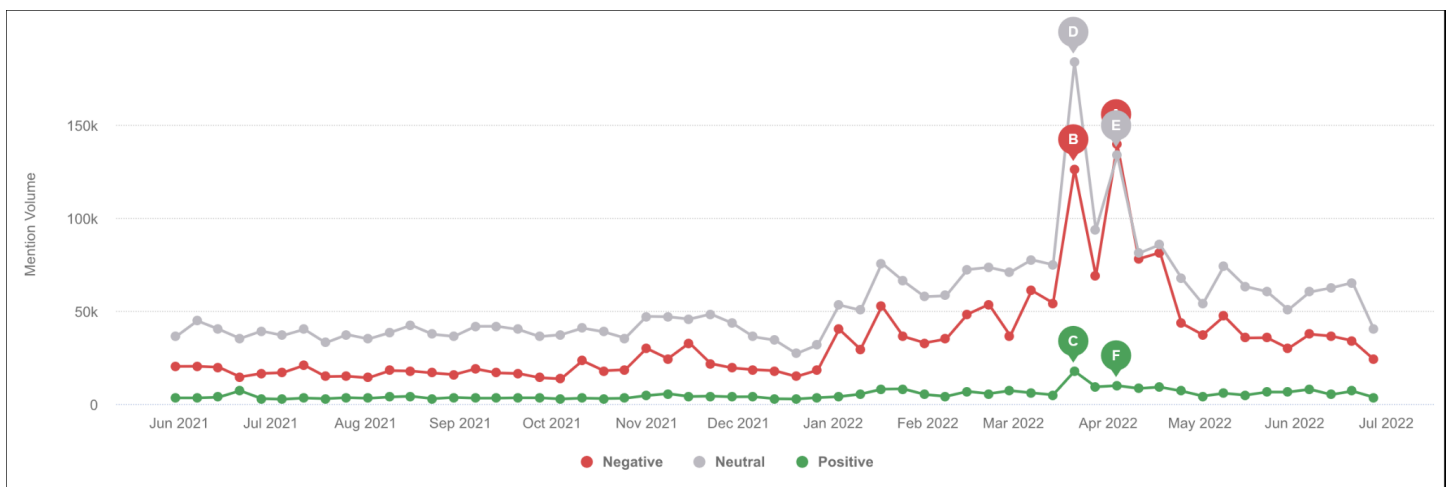


Figure 8: Sentiment over time

During June 2022, the hashtag #ramaphosamustgo intersected with the conversation about foreign nationals in South Africa. When the organisations and people who are mentioned are analysed, during June 2022, there has been strongly negative sentiment directed towards President Cyril Ramaphosa after Arthur Fraser laid charges against him in relation to a robbery that took place at his Phala Phala game farm in 2020. There are processes underway to establish the factual basis of what occurred. It has been pointed out that the timing of the charges being laid was shortly before the completion of the final volume of the State Capture Commission report in which there are recommendations relating to allegations against Fraser.

President Ramaphosa is the person who is garnering the most discussion in the conversation (see figure 9). Former President, Jacob Zuma is among the persons featured in the topics. Minister of Home Affairs, Aaron Motsoaledi also features as a key person in the topics. As is the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and labour.



Figure 9: Organisations and people

As Twitter is the communication channel which is generating a large component of the public conversation that contains Afrophobic and Xenophobic sentiments, it is of interest to look at the top tweeters.

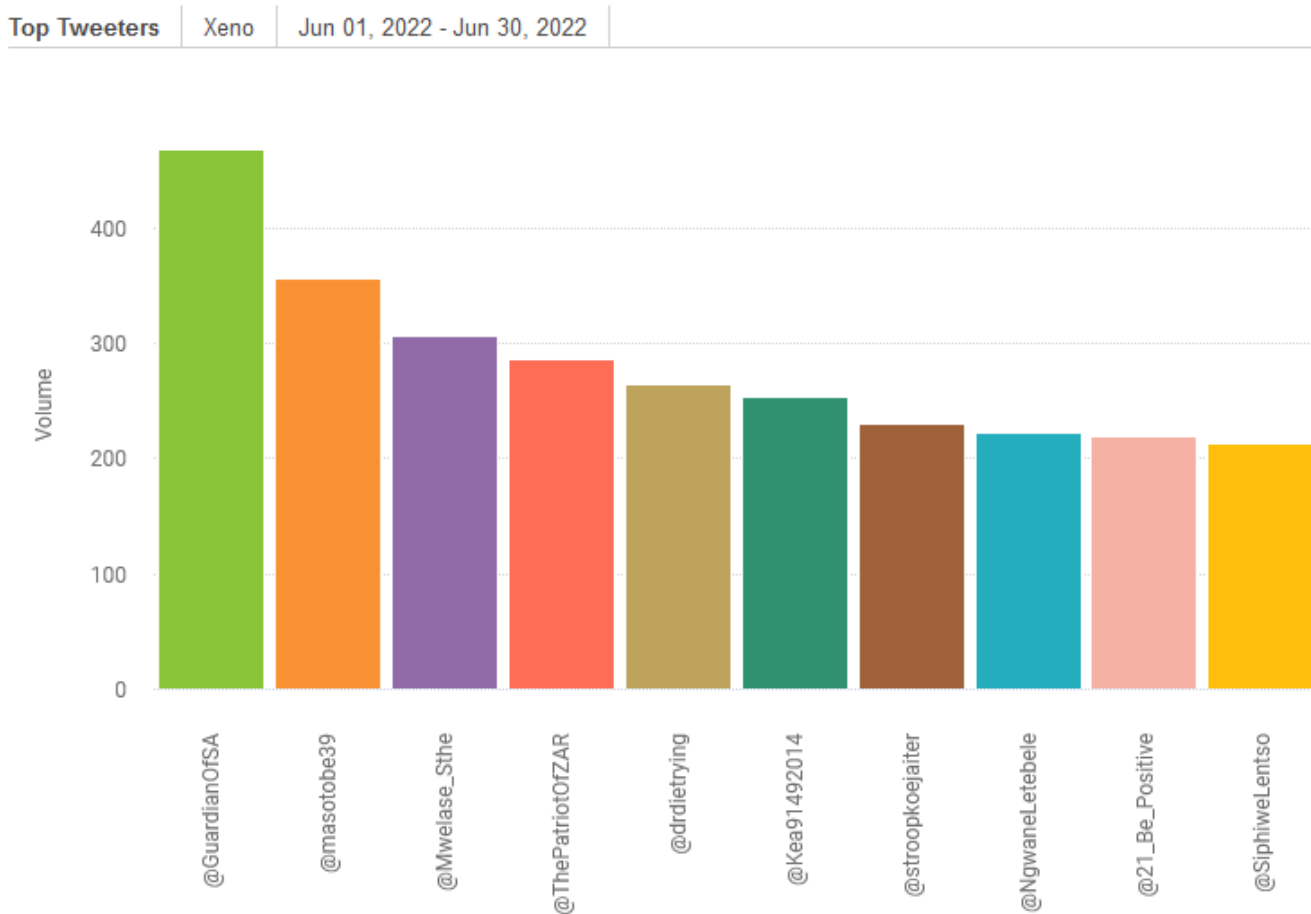


Figure 10: Top tweeters by volume for June 2022

Figure 11 below shows the accounts of the top tweeters in Figure 10. During June 2022, these accounts produced the most original tweets within the search query¹. That most accounts refer to patriotism stands out.

Lolo Bee 🐝🐝🐝
@GuardianOfSA

I am a SouthAfrican before African!! A Nationalist a Patriot

Joined February 2022

2 102 Following 2 707 Followers

Followed by MrsB, Marguerite Doig Gander, Kea, and 24 others

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

Pinned Tweet

Lolo Bee 🐝🐝🐝 @GuardianOfSA · 2d
Replying to @Alfonso54743626 and @TheFarEastFiles
They are expecting him to #Gaytonise

2 2 35

Lolo Bee 🐝🐝🐝 retweeted

BLACKMAN 🇳🇷 via iOS 🍏🇳🇷 · 3h
Here's an example of why people vote for the ANC and how innocent they are the lack of understanding. You and the role to educate them

Concerned Citizen.... 🇳🇷🇸🇦🇸🇦🇸🇦
@masotobe39

#PutSouthAfricansFirst 🇳🇷. God the Omnipresent...Former Correctional Officer...Business woman

© Johannesburg, South Africa

Joined March 2017

4 751 Following 4 776 Followers

Followed by MrsB, Kea 🇳🇷🇸🇦🇸🇦, Nicolas Nkosiyo Mbobo 🇳🇷, and 33 others

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

Concerned Citizen.... 🇳🇷🇸🇦🇸🇦🇸🇦 retweeted

Judiciary Capture in SA @Black... · 8h
Let's make Gayton Mckenzie president of South Africa

Malema does not want to be president

Kenny Kunene @Kenny_T_Ku... · 11h
Truth be told. Salute Patriots.

Put South Africans First 🇳🇷
@Mwelase_Sthe

Family comes first 🏡👨👩👧👦 Graduate 🎓 Patriotic 🇳🇷
I'm xenophobic 🙄

Joined May 2022

1 162 Following 1 221 Followers

Followed by MrsB, Kea 🇳🇷🇸🇦🇸🇦, Put South Africans First (SA for South Africans), and 19 others

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

Pinned Tweet

Put South Africans First ... · 01 Jul
I did the same thing at the age of 28 I bought my first house in soweto protea glen GP and when I was 30 years I bought my second property in Greymont North cliff GP ❤️. Today I'm only 31 years old having two properties in Gauteng . Black child please invest in property 🙄🏡

LESEDI @Hybreed_ · 01 Jul
Content is killing the youth.

¹ Refer to Appendix A for the search terms used in the query



Figure 11: Accounts of top tweeters

The handle that is tweeting the greatest volume, @GuardianOfSA (Lolo Bee) has a write up as their profile picture (figure 12). What is noteworthy within this write up is that it says:

There's been a trend of Twitter Spaces for many countries and one can tell alot about a country based on the topics and spaces held in those countries by it's citizens at home and abroad, South African spaces are vastly orientated around Social ills and Politics that affect their everyday lives, on these spaces you can expect some of the best talent the country has when it comes to voicing concerns and getting points across.



Figure 12: Profile photos of top tweeter

This aligns with the observation that twitter space conversations appear to be a feature of the xenophobic conversation. It is therefore important to monitor what Twitter Spaces are being hosted. The write up specifically speaks about social ills. It is a repeated insight in CABC's analysis of xenophobic utterances that there is a scapegoating of foreign nationals for social ills. CABC has previously likened this to electioneering tactics used in the United States. In this regard, it is worth noting that the second most prolific tweeter (@masotobe39 / Concerned Citizen) says "MAKE mZAnsi GREAT AGAIN" on a red cap, reminiscent of Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' campaign.



Figure 13: Twitter banner of Concerned Citizen

Themes and subthemes

The key themes include PutSouthAfricansFirst, South Africa, Operation Dudula, Foreigners, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. When compared to the thematic segmentation contained in the 'lay of the land' report, what has changed is that Nigeria has become part of the conversation, while during the first five months the focus had been mostly on Zimbabwe.

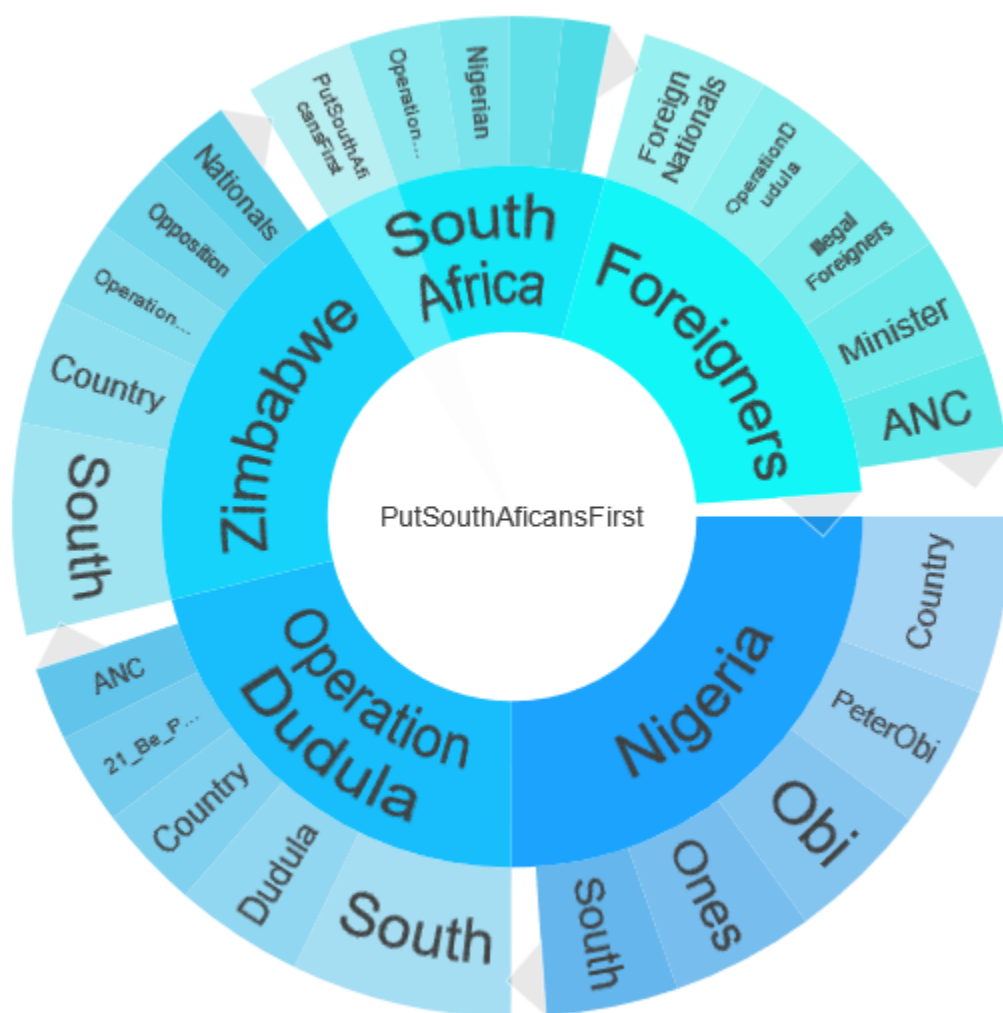


Figure 14: Subthemes in the conversation

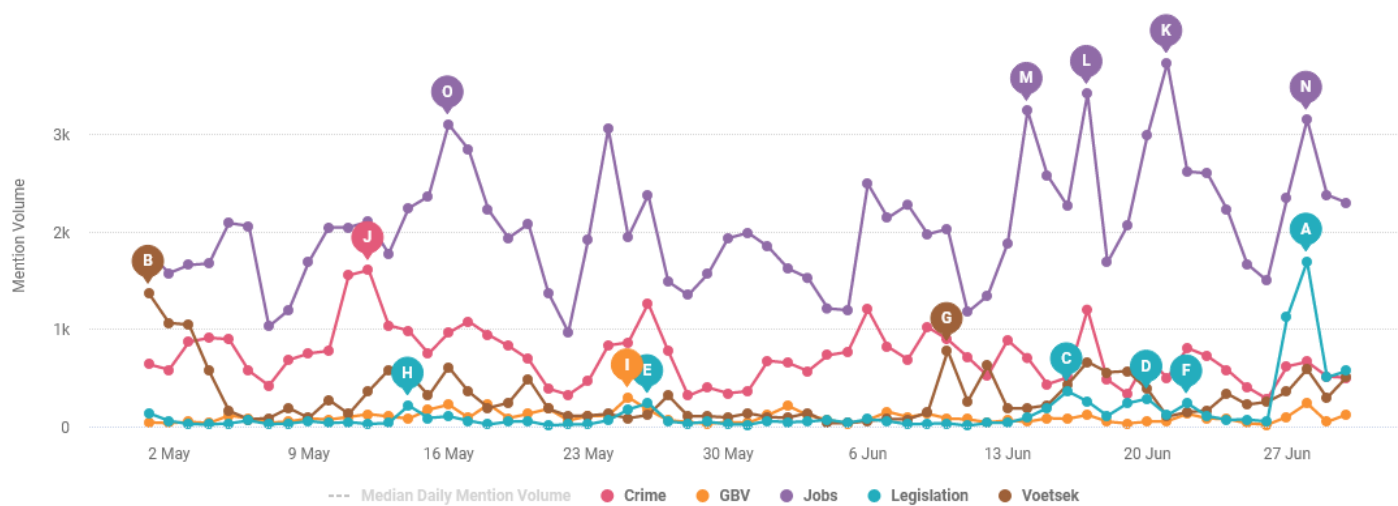


Figure 15: mention volume broken down by categories

CABC is monitoring subthemes in the conversation. The sub theme categories are crime, Gender-Based Violence, jobs, legislation and hashtags containing the term 'voetsek' (an offensive, informal expression used in South Africa to mean 'go away'). During June 2022, there were ten peaks in the subthemes that CABC is monitoring. In contrast, in May 2022 there were 5 peaks.

To elaborate on the peaks:

Peak A - legislation: Zimbabwean Exemption Permits

Mention volume was 2974% higher. The top three drivers of this being:

- 794 retweets of this tweet:

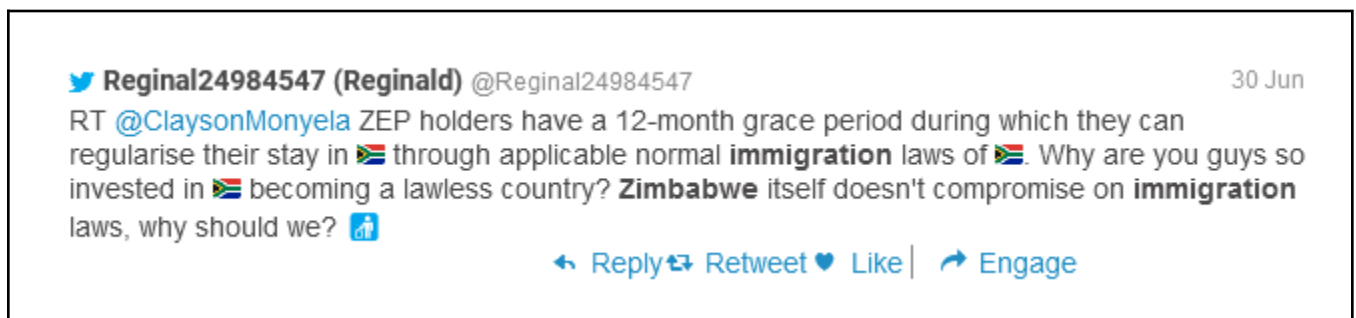


Figure 16: tweet with top volume of retweets in Peak A

- 336 mentions sharing a link from The Citizen.
- 334 retweets of this tweet:

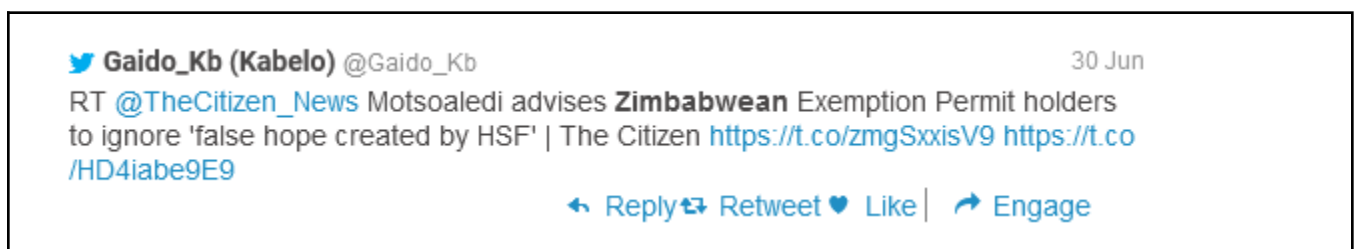


Figure 17: tweet with second highest volume of retweets in Peak A

Peak C - legislation: Zimbabwean Exemption Permits

Volume was 556% higher. The top three drivers of this being:

- 95 retweets of this tweet:

 **kubza10 (kubi)** @kubza10

17 Jun

RT @Benizela Helen Suzan Foundation should not try us please. South Africa is not a refugee camp and a dumping site for **illegal immigrants**. Zimbabweans should go home when their Zim Permits gets revoked.

 Reply  Retweet  Like |  Engage

Figure 18: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak C

- 63 retweets of this tweet:

 **ForeignersGo (Tomato sauce ZA)** @ForeignersGo

17 Jun

RT @TopThestreets Apparently @Nicole_Fritz is allegedly to have fraudulently obtained a South African ID, their support for ZEP's which were **illegal** in the first place comes from labor brokers who are a evading UIF, **Tax** etc @ClaysonMonyela @HomeAffairsSA @deptoflabour #NoToZimWorkPermit <https://t.co/297YP6Rdzi>

Figure 19: tweet with second highest volume of retweets in Peak C

- 32 retweets of this tweet:

 **ToriOregan (Victoria O'Regan)** @ToriOregan

17 Jun

RT @SAfmnews Helen Suzman Foundation intends to launch legal challenge against government decision to terminate **Zimbabwean** Exemption Permit. It argues permit-holders contribute immensely to the economy and most of them have built lives and careers in this country and cannot just be abandoned.

Figure 20: tweet with third highest volume of retweets in Peak C

Peak D - legislation: Zimbabwean Exemption Permits

Volume was 420% higher than usual, driven by:

- 148 retweets of this Tweet:

 **ObzenBuckzen (Obzen Buck)** @ObzenBuckzen

20 Jun

RT @AfricaFactsZone 178,000 Zimbabweans **immigrants** living in South Africa face **deportation**. South Africa introduced **Zimbabwe** Exemption Permit (ZEP) to house Zimbabweans fleeing crisis in 2009. ZEP **visa** allows them to live & **work** in South Africa for 5 years. South Africa terminated it last year.

Figure 21: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak D

- 58 retweets of this Tweet:

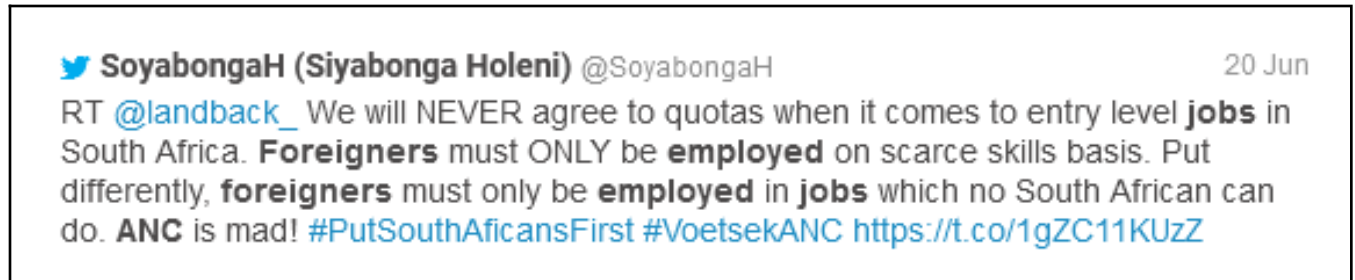


Figure 22: tweet with second highest volume of retweets in Peak D

- 65 mentions using the hashtag #putsouthafricansfirst

Peak F - Legislation: Zimbabwean Exemption Permits

Volume was 330% higher than usual, driven by:

- 79 mentions using the hashtag #notozimworkpermits
- 54 retweets of this tweet:

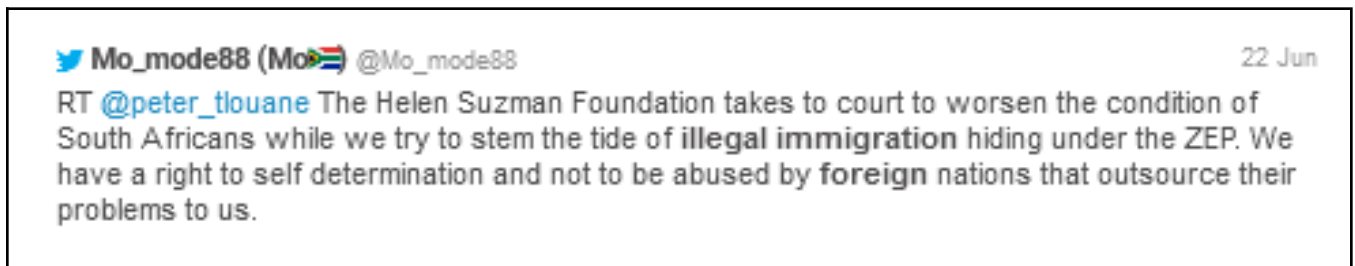


Figure 23: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak F

- 11 retweets of this tweet:

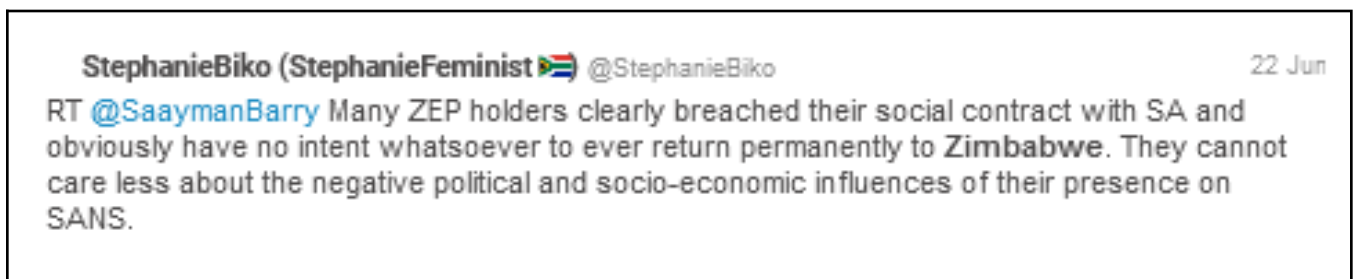


Figure 24: tweet with second highest volume of retweets in Peak F

Peak G - 'Voetsek' - directed at major political parties

Volume was 301% higher than usual, driven by:

- 624 mentions using the hashtag #voetsekeff

- 166 retweets of this tweet:

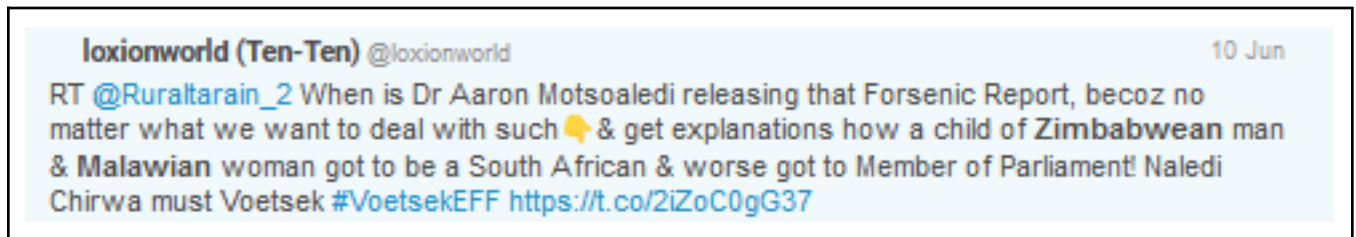


Figure 25: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak G

- 113 retweets of this tweet:



Figure 26: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak G

Peak K - jobs: employers hiring illegal immigrants

Volume was 84% higher. The top three drivers of this being:

- 659 retweets of this tweet:



Figure 27: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak K

- 424 mentions using the hashtag #sowetoshutdown
- 438 retweets of this tweet:



Figure 28: tweet with second highest volume of retweets in Peak K

Peak L - Jobs: subtheme of reserving jobs for South Africans over foreign nationals

Volume was 68% higher than usual, driven by:

- 356 mentions using the hashtag #putsouthafricansfirst
- 238 retweets of this tweet:

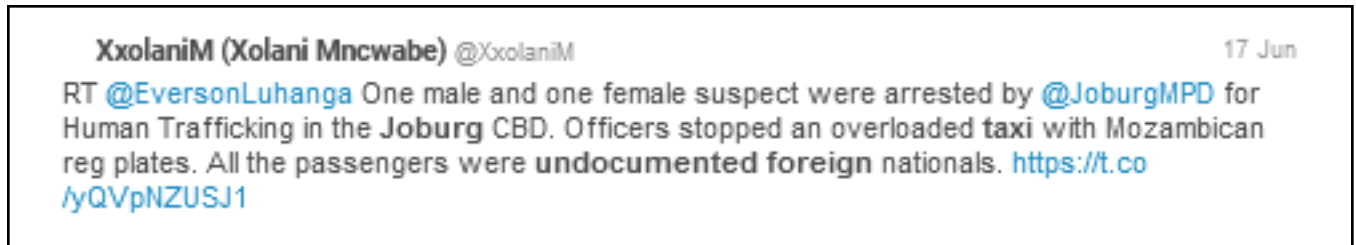


Figure 29: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak L

- 350 mentions using the hashtag #putsouthafricansfirst

Peak M - Jobs

Volume was 59% higher than usual, driven by:

- 531 retweets of this tweet:

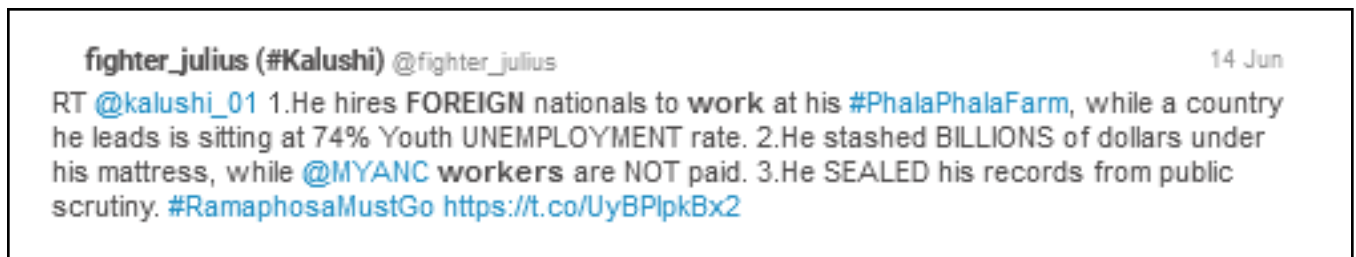


Figure 30: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak M

- 534 mentions using the hashtag #operationdudula
- 455 mentions using the hashtag #putsouthafricansfirst

Peak N - Jobs: critique of media reporting on employment of foreign nationals in South Africa

Volume was 55% higher than usual, driven by:

- 192 retweets of this tweet:

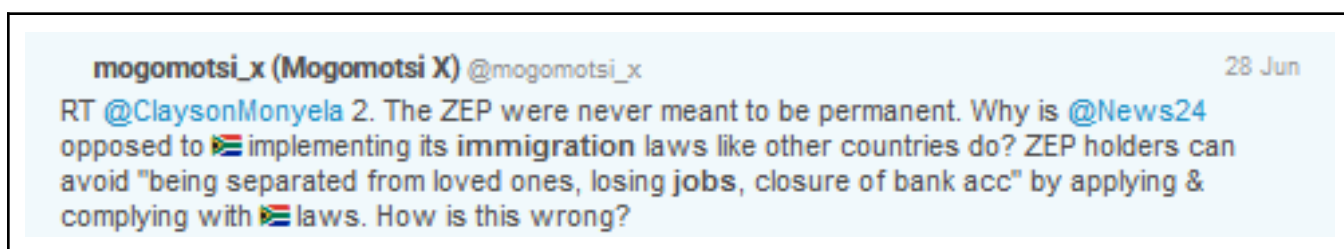


Figure 31: tweet with highest volume of retweets in Peak N

- 170 retweets of this tweet:

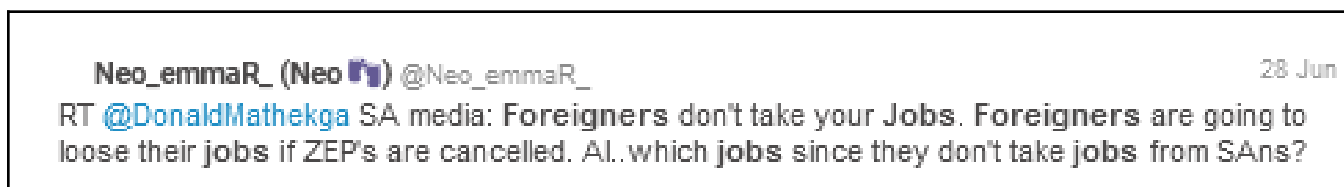


Figure 32: tweet with second highest volume of retweets in Peak N

- 147 retweets of this tweet:



Figure 33: tweet with third highest volume of retweets in Peak N

Conclusion

This regular report has shown how the conversation about foreign nationals in South Africa has evolved during the month of June 2022. The sentiment in the conversation is more negative than positive. Operation Dudula, a xenophobic influence operation whose reach is growing continues to dominate the conversation. More than being an online influence operation, Operation Dudula also engages in paramilitary activities. The campaign being driven by Operation Dudula continues to focus on actively influencing policy and implementation decisions, including with respect to labour legislation and Home Affairs positions and actions. This poses a threat to democratic stability and social cohesion in South Africa. It appears that right wing American campaign tactics such as those used in the 'Make America Great Again' campaign overlap with South African xenophobic campaigns. Future reports will explore this further.

Appendix A: search terms used in query

afrophobi* OR amagrigamba OR amakula OR amakwerekwere OR amashangaan OR grigamba OR
kwerekwere OR "kwere kwere" OR makwerekwere OR amasomalia OR "ama zimbabwe" OR "vala iborder"
OR awaywithborderlessa OR fraudentlyobtainedgohome OR nigeriansmustfutsek OR nigeriansmustvoetsek
OR nofreeeducationforforeigners OR nofreeeducationtoforeigners OR putsouthafricafirst OR
putsouthafricansfirst OR shangaan OR voetsekafricanscarceskills OR voetsemployerswhohireforeigners OR
foreignersmustleavesa OR voetsekhomeaffairs OR illegalforeignersgohome OR anchatessouthafricans OR
massdeportation2021 OR 2021cleansa OR southafricansarepeopletoo OR putsacitizensfirst OR "put south
africa first" OR "put south africans first" OR notozimpermits OR putsouthafricansfirst OR voetsekwimbabweans
OR foreignersmustgohome OR nigeriansmustgo OR saimigrants OR "consortium for refugees" OR dudula OR
employsouthafricans OR saisnotforsale OR notozimworkpermits OR psaf OR putsafirst OR
southafricansarenotlazy OR operationdudula OR "operation dudula" OR safirs* OR closebeitbridge* OR
"zimbabwean immigration" OR onsbaizanie OR operationfiela OR dudulamovement OR mzabalazo OR
"patriotic SAns" OR "Foreigners Must Voetsek" OR NoChineseinSAParlia* OR Someone tells south africa OR
AvoidxenoAndleaveSa OR y3y3AmaGhana OR InfluxOfImmigrantsMustStop OR FightBackToSaveSouthAfrica
OR FightBackForSouthAfrica OR MzansiCitizensFirst OR DefendSouthAfrica OR amakwirikwiri OR Amanaija
OR Amagweja OR "SA First" OR "hambani ngoku" OR "abana possport" OR amanaija OR amagweja OR
amazayizayi OR mochapere OR amavambo OR amaghana OR amavezandlebe OR amarhanuka OR
amagrigamba OR amarhanuka OR amaqaba OR amazim OR abasezim OR ngalamagweja OR "asinifuni
apha" OR "hambani apha" OR igweja OR "elizweni lethu" OR "basithathela umsebenzi" OR mabaphume OR
mabagoduke OR asinifuni OR "bangapha kwecingo" OR arrestronnymarhule OR CleanSA OR fake-ugee OR
DeportANCleaders OR DeportNigeriansInRSA OR ShutDownHomeAffairs OR dudula202* OR "Operation
dudula" OR Sowetoupriasing OR "Elvis Nyathi" OR "Phambili Dudula" OR "Nhlanhla Lux" OR nhlanhlalux OR
OperationDudulaKZN OR "Viva dudula" OR "SA citizens" OR "Diepsloot 7" OR "south africans are tired" OR
"A dump squib" OR "#AkayiNdawo" OR maputjuputju OR "go diragalang" OR "officer mabena" OR
southafricawillbegreatagain

OR

((foreign*) AND (("ANC" OR "African National Congress") OR ("EFF" OR "Economic Freedom Fighters") OR
("PA" OR "Patriotic Alliance") OR ("ActionSA" OR "Action SA")))

OR

((((foreign* NEAR/5f (employ* OR job* OR tax* OR welfare OR work* OR illegal)) OR (immigra* AND (employ*
OR job* OR tax* OR welfare OR work* OR illegal)) OR (visa OR identification OR passport OR ID) OR
(uprisingagainstforeigndomination OR "border security" OR wewantourcountryback OR
releasehomeaffairsauditnow OR "Close the borders" OR ISAYNoToillegalimmigrants OR "Take back our
country" OR "We will get our country back" OR "permanent residence audit" OR 15millionillegalimmigrants OR

rejectcriticalskillslist OR takehomeaffairstocourt OR notoxen* OR "Return to your country") OR chinese OR malawi* OR mozambabwean OR mozambique OR nigeria OR somali OR zimbabwean OR zimbabwe OR swazi OR (xenophob* OR afrophob* OR undocumented OR deport*) AND country:ZAF)

NOT ("GAIT ACC ID" OR djsbu OR skeemsaam OR dstv403 OR thewifeshowmax OR afcon2021)