



Global Immigration alert

October 2025

South Africa

South Africa announces further extension of Zimbabwean and Lesotho Exemption Permits

Executive summary

On 3 October 2025, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) announced automatic extensions of all existing Zimbabwean Exemption Permits (ZEPs) and Lesotho Exemption Permits (LEPs) until 28 May 2027.

Background

The DHA introduced the ZEP in 2017 for eligible nationals of Zimbabwe who were living in South Africa on a Zimbabwean Dispensation Permit. In December 2021, the DHA discontinued the ZEP and set a deadline of 31 December 2022 for holders of valid ZEPs to switch to another immigration category. Pursuant to legal challenges, the DHA extended the deadline several times, with the latest extension being valid until 28 November 2025. Meanwhile, LEPs were valid for a maximum period of four years, from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2023, with the latest extension being valid until 28 November 2025.

Key developments

Based on the DHA's recent announcement, individuals holding valid ZEPs and LEPs may remain and work in South Africa until 28 May 2027. They may also exit and re-enter the country on or before this date, provided they meet all other entry and exit requirements.

Impact on employers

The extension is expected to benefit employers by minimizing business disruptions in connection with processing delays. Companies in South Africa may continue to employ ZEP and LEP holders until further notice.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.



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