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Created 2008/05/17 - 1:48pm

17 May, 2008 - 13:48 ? moderator

Xenophobia is rife in South Africa. Foreign nationals have been attacked in Alexandra and Diepsloot during the last week, with several people dying. However, repression of immigrants, refugees and undocumented people goes beyond naked violence in poor communities. Earlier this year, police raided the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg, beating up and arresting immigrants, mainly from Zimbabwe. The state systematically abuses the rights of immigrants: health workers deny treatment, home affairs officials demand bribes and police harass immigrants regularly. Then there are institutions like Lindela, where people are incarcerated in ghastly conditions before being deported despite not having committed any crime. This all goes on while the South African government absurdly refuses to recognise that people fleeing from Zimbabwe are refugees.

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The [25th issue of Equal Treatment \(June 2008\)](#) contains a special report on the systematic abuse of the rights of immigrants. We hope that it galvanises South Africans to stand up against xenophobia, both by the state and in our communities.

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