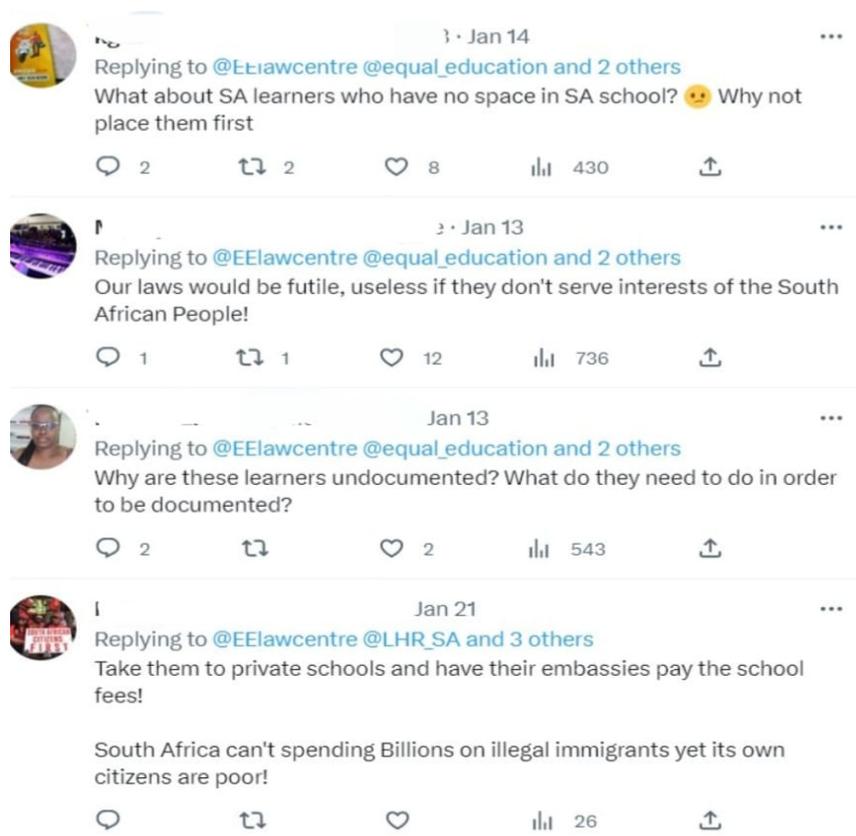


6 February 2023

**Joint statement: Equal Education and Equal Education Law Centre strongly condemn Operation Dudula's campaign to remove young migrant children from schools**

Equal Education (EE) and Equal Education Law Centre (EELC) are dismayed to have received reports that Operation Dudula has launched a [campaign](#) to remove migrant children from schools in Diepsloot, Johannesburg. Information received shows that the Diepsloot branch of Operation Dudula has circulated a message with xenophobic undertones on social media platforms. The message implied that migrant children were being unfairly placed in public schools at the expense of South African children. This message is dangerous and incites a culture of thinking that fuels xenophobia. This is visible in the worrying comments that were made on Equal Education Law Centre's social media post that was meant to empower undocumented learners:



Adults marching through the streets, entering school premises and classrooms, and asking for innocent children to be removed from school based on their nationality is an all-time low for our country. Actions

of this nature not only pit nationals against migrant children and foster othering, but they also amount to bullying and intimidation. **We strongly condemn this thinking and behaviour and stand firmly in solidarity with all migrant children.**

We also condemn Operation Dudula's behaviour that creates a culture of xenophobia in schools by engaging in such actions, as well as any potential spillover effects. Schools already face challenges in preventing discrimination against vulnerable learners, fostering diversity and inclusivity, and providing a secure learning environment for all children. Operation Dudula's ideas—whether they are carried out or not—support and promote discrimination and violence and foster an atmosphere in which xenophobia can flourish. The hostile environment that it creates also means that migrant children—and even other children who are at risk of discrimination—will live and learn in fear.

The right to basic education is a human right that is extended to all who live in our country. This means that **all** children in South Africa, regardless of where they come from and what their documentation status is, have an equal right to education. Interference with the enjoyment of this right by Operation Dudula must be viewed in this context—not only do their actions constitute bullying and intimidation, but they also constitute an outright violation of these learners' right to basic education, which is illegal and unlawful.

We, therefore, urgently call on the Department of Basic Education to:

- publicly condemn Operation Dudula's call and reiterate the right of migrant children, regardless of their documentation status, to access schooling in South Africa;
- ensure that appropriate safety measures are put in place in schools that are at risk of intimidation by Operation Dudula as well as schools that migrant children are placed back into;
- ensure that any children who may be removed from school as a result of any actions by Operation Dudula are put back in school;
- re-release Circular 1 of 2020 regarding the right of undocumented learners to education;
- ensure that **all** remaining unplaced learners in Gauteng are placed in schools; and
- liaise with the South African Police Services and National Prosecuting Authority to ensure that the campaign is investigated and where necessary, members of Operation Dudula are prosecuted.

**[END]**

**To arrange a media interview, contact:**

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