

## International

# South Africa's woes fuel rise of anti-immigrant leader

## Majority of problems in terms of criminality come from illegal foreigners

**SOWETO, South Africa:** Dressed in fatigues and a bulletproof vest, Nhlanhla Lux Mohlauli has marshalled the frustrations of ordinary South Africans into a militant new anti-immigrant movement. Dubbed Operation Dudula, meaning "Push Back" in Zulu, the movement has since January given a new level of organisation to the xenophobic violence that has wracked South Africa for years. Quickly, but professionally assembled protests have drawn thousands of people into the streets of Johannesburg, harnessing anger at rising crime and unemployment against foreigners living in the country.

"The objective is simple: Fight against criminal elements in our communities," Mohlauli told AFP. "And it so happens that the majority of the problems in terms of criminality come from illegal foreigners." He was born in Soweto in the twilight years of white rule but he says he went to "the richest white schools".

On the upper floor of his Soweto home, he takes calls non-stop as a small entourage appear comfortable in a house that has a gym, sauna, and — so he says — a weapons cache. Officially, four million foreigners live in South Africa. But the government has no reliable estimates of how many people do not have visas.

Unemployment is at a record 35 per-

cent, but is even higher among blacks, women and youths. Yet the dream of wealth in the continent's most advanced economy continues to draw migrants.

### Confidential

In March, Mohlauli was arrested for housebreaking. For him, that's not a transgression, but a tactic. One of Dudula's strategies is to raid homes based on tips that thieves or drug dealers are inside. These tips come through



**We guarantee confidentiality**

closed messaging groups that have hundreds of members who greet each other in military terms.

Mohlauli insists that Dudula works with the South African Police Service (SAPS), not as vigilantes. "The South African police is always appealing to anyone with any information on any

criminality," police source told AFP. "We are not going to give out names or confirm any individual that gives the SAPS any information because we guarantee confidentiality."

Things don't always unfold that way. A man was killed in early April in a township north of Johannesburg, where police said militants went banging on doors demanding to see residents' visas. Elvis Nyathi, a 44-year-old Zimbabwean, tried to run away. He was burned alive.

Two weeks later, Operation Dudula members staged a patrol to prevent the theft of electrical cables. Chronic theft of cables is one cause of South Africa's recurring blackouts. But that evening, gunfire broke out, leaving one person dead and six wounded.

"All of the victims are reported to be South Africans. The nationality of the suspects is yet to be determined as they did not have any proof of identity," police said. Such incidents ignite fears that violence could spread. In 2008, 62 people were killed in anti-immigrant riots. Other bouts of violence erupted 2015, 2016 and again in 2019.

### Bigger and healthier

Scholarships and sports helped Mohlauli get through university and into



**SOWETO, South Africa:** Nhlanhla Lux Mohlauli of Operation Dudula gestures while posing for a portrait at his home in Pimville, Soweto. Nhlanhla Lux Mohlauli has marshalled the frustrations of ordinary South Africans into a militant new anti-migrant movement. — AFP

the golf business. He says he earned enough money in golf and doesn't need to work now. His mother made sure that he received a good education. She cleaned shops owned by whites, and made sure that he went to the same schools as their children.

"I saw kids carrying lunch boxes that were far bigger and healthier than anything my own family would eat at night," he said. His first big moment in the spot-

light came during the riots that erupted in July, when more than 350 people were killed. He organised his community to defend a shopping mall in Soweto against looters. His own videos of this effort went viral, and an interview replayed on news stations for days. "Nhlanhla speaks what we want to hear. We want somebody bold enough to say 'close the borders,'" said one of his followers, Thabang Moloi, 54. — AFP

## Student's death stokes anger over Mexican femicide crisis

**MEXICO CITY:** The death of an 18-year-old Mexican student has unleashed anger against authorities accused of negligence over the murders and disappearances of thousands of women each year, few of which receive as much attention.

The case of Debanhi Escobar has generated unusually intense media interest in a country where nearly 100,000 people are missing and most homicides fail to make national headlines. Escobar's body was found on April 21 in a motel water tank, nearly two weeks after she disappeared on the outskirts of Monterrey, capital of the northern state of Nuevo Leon.

Prosecutors said they were not ruling anything out in her case, which has generated international attention from South America to the United States and Europe. An eerie photo taken on the night she disappeared showing Escobar standing in the dark went

viral, and she quickly became a symbol for an angry women's rights movement.

Wearing a white top, long skirt and high-top sneakers, a handbag over her shoulder and her hair let down, she looked almost like any other young woman on a night out. Except that she was alone and vulnerable, waiting by the side of a road in a country where around 10 women are murdered every day.

"Debanhi, I lend you my voice" and "We want justice," women shouted at a protest in Mexico City, following similar demonstrations in Monterrey. "Young people are disappearing because of deeds, omission or indolence," political scientist Denise Dresser wrote in an editorial about the case entitled "mass grave."

"They are disappearing because society still discusses whether it was their fault, for going out alone and at dawn," she added.

Even before his daughter's body was found, Escobar's father had accused authorities of mistakes in the initial search and investigation, fueling media interest. "This case has greater visibility because the media decided so," psychosocial support specialist Valeria Moscoso told AFP, lamenting that other victims had not received the same attention despite also speaking out. — AFP

## Iraqi Communists raise flag for women's rights

**BAGHDAD:** The Iraqi Communist Party may have seen its red star fade but it hopes to come back by advocating what remain radical ideas in the country: women's rights and secular politics. For now the movement with the hammer-and-sickle banner and the peace dove logo-Iraq's oldest active political party, founded in 1934 — claims only a few thousand members and no deputies in parliament.

The party, which on Sunday marks the May 1 Labour Day, boycotted last October's election to protest against the country's "corrupt ethno-sectarian power-sharing system that was installed after the US war and occupation of the country in 2003".

Iraq's other parties represent religious and ethnic groups: Shiite Muslims, who by convention hold the prime ministership, Sunnis who take the parliamentary speaker's post, and Kurds who control the presidency. The ICP, by contrast, advocates a political system independent of religion—a remote prospect for now in the

country of 40 million where Christian and Turkmen minorities also have their own, small parties.

"The rhetoric around the separation of mosque and state in Iraq is still very weak," said political scientist Marsin Alshamary, with the Middle East Initiative project. For now political power is concentrated in the majority Shiite camp, split between firebrand cleric Moqtada Sadr's bloc and a rival alliance of pro-Iran groups, the Coordination Framework. "The religious parties that control the country make life hard for women and for young people who want freedom," said one ICP supporter, Zeinab Aziz, a 53-year-old civil servant. "The Communist Party is the first to defend women."

The ICP may be on the margins now, with only two MPs in the previous parliament, but in Iraq's turbulent history, it has had its moments of glory. In the 1940s and 1950s, it "promoted social justice, anti-imperialism and gave a voice to the underprivileged," said Tareq Ismael, political scientist at the Canadian University of Calgary.

After the revolution of July 14, 1958 which overthrew the monarchy, Communist support for Abdelkarim Qassem, the country's first president, was decisive. The ICP suffered repression in the 1970s under the ruling Baath party of Saddam Hussein, but was reborn in the wake of the US-led invasion and the fall of the dictator. — AFP

## Iran-Saudi Arabia tensions...

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On Tuesday, the spokesman for Iraq's Foreign Ministry, Ahmed al-Sahaf, said the talks "are continuing... and could perhaps lead to a restoration of diplomatic representation between Iran and Saudi Arabia", state news agency INA reported. In March,

Iranian media said that Tehran had suspended participation in the talks after Saudi Arabia announced it had executed a record 81 people in just one day.

They had been convicted of various crimes related to "terrorism", and included men linked to Yemen's Houthi rebels. But in early March, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said his country and Iran were "neighbors forever", and that it was "better for both of us to work it out and to look for ways in which we can coexist". Talks resumed on April 2021 between senior security officials from the two countries. — AFP

## Balance between the body...

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• Getting involved in a volunteer organization or activism group. We should use our voice or talents to do some good in the world. We're all connected, and it's incredible to experience that connectedness when we work toward a common goal. When we use our abilities to help others, our souls certainly feel at peace.

• Fueling our passions. We can set aside some time each day to do what makes our souls happy. Many of us work so much that we forget how great it feels to paint, write, garden, or swim.

• Being grateful. Take some time each day to write or think about the things we're grateful for, like family, friends, pets, food, shelter, health, or the beauty of nature.

• Being kind to everyone. This includes ourselves!

• Rewarding ourselves for accomplishing a remarkable achievement.

• Do not overburden yourself.

• Do not blame yourself for what went wrong. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "... be keen to do or say what is beneficial to you, seek help from Allah (SWT) and do not despair. And if any trouble afflicts you, do not say, 'Had I done such and such, it wouldn't have happened.' Rather say, 'Allah preordained it and He does what

He wills.' Indeed, (the statement) 'had I done such and such,' opens the door for Satan to tempt you." (Muslim # 2, 664)

• Slowing down. A little rest and relaxation when we're used to spending lots of time on the go can replenish our minds and bodies.

• Stop people-pleasing. If we spend too much time worrying about what others will think, we'll lose ourselves and end up feeling miserable.

• Avoiding gossip and drama. Judging our neighbors and co-workers doesn't make us superior; it just makes us hard to trust.

• Laughing often. If we take life too seriously, we're going to miss out on a whole lot of good times.

• Traveling and learning about other cultures. Do this as much as you can!

• Forgiving ourselves for our past mistakes. Learn from the past, but don't let it destroy you.

• Opting for natural remedies whenever possible. With the guidance of a holistic health practitioner, herbs, the right foods, and essential oils can be very healing and have fewer dangerous side effects (refer to [www.doyou.com](http://www.doyou.com)).

*Courtesy of the TIES Center: As one of the projects funded and managed by Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue, TIES aims at empowering Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or e-mail: [info@tiescenter.net](mailto:info@tiescenter.net).*

interplanetary mission. The Emirates also has its sights on the moon and has said it plans to launch an unmanned rover to the moon by 2024. Sheikh Mohammed said in September 2020 the lunar mission was part of the country's space strategy to build new knowledge-based and scientific capabilities. It will be an integral part of efforts to build the first settlement on Mars in 2117 — one of the UAE's most ambitious plans, said the Dubai Media Office at the time. — AFP

## UAE to send astronaut on...

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probe destined for Mars, in the Arab world's first

## Violence rocks Jerusalem and...

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down towards the Western Wall, the sacred Jewish site below Al-Aqsa.

Police said officers used "riot dispersal means" to contain the unrest and that two people had been arrested, one for throwing stones and the other one for "inciting the mob". An AFP journalist said Zionist police fired rubber-coated bullets while a witness said they also used tear gas. An uneasy calm had been restored at the compound following the unrest that surrounded morning prayers, but tensions remained high. In the early afternoon, a crowd of Muslim worshippers gathered at Al-Aqsa. Some people waved Palestinian flags and the colors of the Gaza Strip-

## Amir sends Eid greetings...

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Eid Al-Fitr is celebrated to commemorate the end of the fasting month of Ramadan and takes place over three days. Eid Al-Fitr means "the cele-

## Saudi, Turkey reset...

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Prior to flying to Saudi Arabia, Erdogan said he hoped "to launch a new era" in bilateral ties. "We believe enhancing cooperation in areas including defense and finance is in our mutual interest," Erdogan said. Saudi agents killed and dismembered Khashoggi, an insider turned critic, in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October 2018. His remains have never been found.

The gruesome act risked isolating Saudi Arabia while escalating Riyadh's regional rivalry with Ankara. Turkey infuriated the Saudis by pressing ahead with an investigation into the murder of The Washington Post contributing columnist. Erdogan said the "highest levels" of the Saudi government ordered the killing. Saudi Arabia responded by unofficially putting pressure on Turkey's economy through a boycott of Turkish imports.

But trade between the two has been gradually improving, and in January Erdogan said he was planning a visit to Saudi Arabia. Earlier this month, an Istanbul

based Hamas militant group, an AFP journalist said.

Over the past two weeks, nearly 300 Palestinians have been hurt in clashes at the Al-Aqsa compound, Islam's third-holiest site. It is also Judaism's holiest place, known to Jews as the Temple Mount. The site is in east Jerusalem, which Zionists captured in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed, in a move not recognized by most of the international community.

Zionist incursions into the compound during Ramadan met widespread condemnation and raised fears of inflaming persistent Zionist-Palestinian tensions across Jerusalem. But Zionist entity has insisted it has been compelled to act against operatives from Islamist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad. It says the militants threaten Muslim worshippers at Al-Aqsa and Jews praying at the Western Wall. In an apparent attempt to ease tensions, Zionist Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has stressed that the government is committed to the status quo at the compound, meaning an adherence to long-standing convention that only Muslims are allowed to pray there. — AFP

bration of breaking the fast." Ramadan marks the time when the Quran, the Muslim holy book, was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The religious holiday is celebrated by Muslims worldwide because it marks the end of the month-long dawn-to-sunset fasting of Ramadan. It falls on the first day of Shawwal in the Islamic calendar. This does not always fall on the same Gregorian day, as the start of any lunar Hijri month varies based on when the new moon is sighted by local religious authorities.

court halted the trial in absentia of 26 Saudi suspects linked to Khashoggi's death, transferring the case to Riyadh. The Turkish decision infuriated human rights campaigners and Khashoggi's widow Hatice Cengiz, who vowed to appeal it in a higher court.

Fallout from the Khashoggi killing continues to mar Saudi Arabia's image, especially in the United States. Erdogan's visit will be seen as a win by Saudi officials keen to move on, said Saudi political analyst Ali Shihabi. "Of course it is a vindication," Shihabi said. "Erdogan was isolated and paid a high economic price in massive economic losses resulting from an economic and travel boycott, which is why he is the one coming to Saudi". Both countries stand to benefit, he added, as Erdogan "needs the trade and tourism flows from Saudi, and Saudi would prefer to have him 'on side' on a variety of regional issues—and may be open to buy arms from Turkey."

Economic interests are "a major, major driver" of Erdogan's visit, said Dina Esfandiary, senior Middle East adviser for the International Crisis Group. "It looks like Turkey's forgotten about Khashoggi, and I'm sure the Saudis appreciate that," Esfandiary said. Turkey has suffered an annual inflation rate topping 60 percent and a wave of winter street protests, that have hurt Erdogan's popularity ahead of a general election next year. — AFP