

ISO, DIS to screen foreigners arrested over illegal entry

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KAMPALA. The government yesterday said foreign nationals recently arrested for operating illegally in the country and engaging in suspected subversive activities will undergo rigorous screening and processing.

The announcement was made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs spokesperson, Mr Simon Peter Mundeysi, with security officials indicating that the vetting process will take about seven days.

In a departure from previous practice, security sources said the screening will involve operatives from the Internal Security Organisation (ISO) and the Defence Intelligence and Security (DIS), formerly known as Chieftancy of Military Intelligence (CMI), to establish how the suspects entered the country.

Addressing journalists in Kampala yesterday, Mr Mundeysi said the National Citizenship and Immigration

Control (NCIC) had carried out two major operations targeting irregular migration.

He said enforcement teams arrested 62 Nigerian nationals in Adjumani District on April 27. The group was reportedly operating without valid work permits and were engaged in many activities, including running a church.

In a separate operation conducted on the night of April 27 to April 28 in the Bukoto-Ntinda area of Kampala, officers detained 169 foreign nationals found living in an apartment complex without valid immigration status.

The group, which included 36 women, was operating from a highly restricted, self-contained facility with its own restaurant and internal systems designed to limit movement.

A search of the premises led to the recovery of computers and other IT equipment allegedly used in illegal gaming, betting and organised online fraud.

"All 231 individuals arrested across these two operations are undergoing

rigorous screening and processing. Those found in violation of Uganda's immigration laws will be prosecuted. Cases involving suspected trafficking or criminal activity will be referred to the relevant law enforcement agencies," Mr Mundeysi said.

Preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Internal Affairs indicate that some suspects claim they were trafficked into Uganda with promises of employment, while others are believed to have been involved in cyber fraud. Authorities also recovered materials suggesting involvement in other criminal activities.

In recent years, government has intensified enforcement against undocumented foreign workers, particularly in urban centres and border districts, citing national security concerns and the need to regulate the labour market.

The law

Section 59 of the Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act prohib-

its the employment of non-Ugandans without valid entry permits.

Any person who engages in employment without authorisation, or employs a foreign national in contravention of the law, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding 150 currency points or imprisonment of up to two years, or both.

Growing trend

According to the 2024 report by the Coordination Office to Prevent Trafficking in Persons (COPTIP), Uganda recorded 1,055 human trafficking cases, up from 1,006 in 2023.

Government prosecuted 967 suspected traffickers in 784 cases in 2024, compared with 589 suspects in 494 cases the previous year.

Of those charged, 602 were linked to sex trafficking, 212 to labour trafficking, and 153 to unspecified forms.

Courts also secured 101 convictions under the anti-trafficking law in 2024, down from 130 convictions in 2023.