



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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TO: HEADS OF PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

DISTRICT DIRECTORS

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

CIRCULAR NO S7 OF 2026

PROHIBITION OF VIGILANTISM AND VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS AND PROTECTION OF LEARNERS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES FROM HARM

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. On 04 November 2025, the Gauteng High Court issued an interdictory order against a vigilante group, prohibiting it from interfering with access to or the operations of schools and intimidating or harassing learners, teachers or parents at schools.

1.2. The High Court among other things interdicted the following:

1.2.1. Intimidating, harassing and/or assaulting any individual whom they identify as being a foreign national [including learners and school staff members].

2. While the judgment relates to a matter that emanated in Gauteng and specific to a vigilante group, it provides legal clarity and certainty for the protection of learners and school staff against violence and vigilante activities.

3. DIRECTIVE TO PROHIBIT VIGILANTISM AND VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

3.1. This judgment is in line with the Regulations for Safety Measures in Public Schools (hereafter referred to as School Safety Regulations) as contained in

the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. Regulation 4 of the School Safety Regulations declared schools a violence-free environment. Accordingly, in view of the Gauteng High Court judgment, read together with School Safety Regulations, any acts of violence, including vigilante activities, are strictly prohibited in and around school environments. School communities are reminded that any acts of violence, including vigilantism against all learners, including foreign national learners and school staff members, are prosecutable.

- 3.2. Furthermore, the National Schools Safety Framework encourages schools to collaborate with nearby police stations to curb violence in schools. Accordingly, the Department of Basic Education encourages all schools to work with their nearby police stations to report any incidents of violence, including vigilante activities.
- 3.3. School communities are reminded that every child in South Africa has the constitutional right to basic education irrespective of nationality or documentation status, and no learner may be denied access to schooling on the basis of being undocumented.
- 3.4. In line with the National School Safety Framework, School Safety Committees must proactively identify and manage risks and threats of violence, including risks of intimidation, discrimination, vigilantism, xenophobia, and afrophobia in and around schools. School-based Structures for the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) are encouraged to support the work of School Safety Committees in ensuring a rights-based, safe, socially inclusive and cohesive school environment, as per the DBE operational framework on Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL).
- 3.5. Schools are to ensure that their School Safety Plans include measures to prevent, deter, report, and respond to threats, intimidation, discrimination, violence, vigilantism, xenophobia, and afrophobia directed at any learner, including migrant and undocumented learners.
- 3.6. The Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2024 – 2029 mandates Provincial Education Departments to hold *School Community Engagements to combat racism, sexism, hate speech, gender-based violence and other forms of intolerance, while addressing inter-generational violence and trauma across society*. Working with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, a

toolkit to guide these community engagements, including key messaging, was already disseminated to provinces. Therefore, Provincial Education Departments are encouraged to prioritise these School Community Engagements as a way of prebunking and debunking anti-foreigner narratives and sentiments.

- 3.7. Where incidents of violence, intimidation, discrimination or vigilantism occur, schools should report such incidents through the appropriate law enforcement agencies and facilitate access to psychosocial support and other appropriate services for affected learners.
- 3.8. All schools across South Africa are advised to enforce the implementation of School Safety Regulations and the National School Safety Framework.

Your sincerely,



Mr HM Mveli

Director-General

Department of Basic Education

Date: 1 July 2026