**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1254**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 13 – 2022**

**1254. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

In light of the fact that a gang of criminals with fake South African passports are allegedly being investigated for crimes in Birmingham in the United Kingdom and further considering that the passport of the Republic has lost its international standing and credibility and with regard to his announcement that officials in his department and a Pakistani national have been arrested for running a syndicate that sells fake passports, what number of (a)(i) fraudulent identity documents and (ii) passports are currently in circulation, (b)(i) Pakistani, (ii) Indian and (iii) Bangladeshi nationals are currently in possession of South African passports and (c) officials of his department have been uncovered in the past decade for selling South African documents?NW1510E

**Reply**:

(a&b) The arrest of members of the syndicate in Krugersdorp is indicative the net is closing in on all the corrupt Home Affairs officials and their associates be they South African or foreign nationals who are undermining the country’s laws. A multi-disciplinary law enforcement team is keeping a beady eye on a number of corrupt Home Affairs officials and syndicates and more arrests are imminent.

(a)(i) Furthermore, it is impractical to ascertain the number fraudulent documents in the hands of criminals and of those being produced through illegal means.

(b(i)-(iiI) There is currently an investigation taking place with regards to the matter.

 However, the Branch Counter Corruption and Security Services, through investigations undertaken, intercepted the suspected fake passports issued through the process of photo swap. During the investigations on passport photo swaps, it was found that SA citizens who participated in the scam, are still in possession of their Identity Documents. It was only their passports that were required by foreign nationals. The suspected fake passports are from the following offices:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Home Affairs Office** | **Number of passports issued to foreign nationals** |
|  |  |
| Benoni  | 101 |
| White River  | 30 |
| Burgersfort  | 45 |
| Maponya Mall  | 20 |
| Germiston  | 25 |
| Prospecton  | 30 |
| Ndwendwe  | 40 |
| Tongaat  | 15 |
| Umgungundlovu  | 18 |
| Commercial Road | 10 |

When fraudulent documents are detected the Branch Civic Services refers such cases to the Branch: Counter Corruption and Security Services if it involves the Departments officials and/or to Branch: Immigration Services (Inspectorate division) if it entails investigation of foreign nationals. Otherwise cases are referred to the South African Police Services (SAPS) and other law enforcement agencies.

Upon conclusion of the investigations conducted by the above institutions, and when the outcome renders the enabling documents to be fraudulent, the Department follows a process to set markers to block, nullify and to cancel the fraudulently issued identity documents and passports on the National Population Register(NPR) as a means to maintain the credibility of the system in the Republic.

Furthermore, the Immigration Service Branch within the Department is also involved to flag such documents on the Movement Control System (MCS). As a result, a note verbale is also published and circulated through the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) as a means to communicate to foreign countries regarding fake or fraudulently issued passports and identity documents.

(c) From 2013 to date, 396 officials have been investigated for selling South African documents.

**END**