**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1768**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: FRIDAY, 20 AUGUST 2021**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 17– 2021**

**1768. Ms E L Powell (DA) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

What (a) assistance, (b) mediation, (c) repatriation and/or (d) deportation is being offered by and (e) steps are being taken by his department to deal with the refugees currently occupying 24544-RE, Cape Town, which is owned by the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure? NW1857E

**REPLY:**

(a) The assistance provided includes tents, electricity and ablution facilities.

(b) Engagements with the occupants of the shelter have been done by government officials, the United High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), civil society and the Portfolio Committee. All engagements have encouraged the occupants to either re-integrate into communities or to voluntarily repatriate to their home countries.

(c) The option of voluntary repatriation has been offered to the occupants. Between 1 January and 21 March 2021, 305 individuals have voluntarily departed South Africa to their countries of origin.

 According to the UNHCR, it has provided assistance for persons willing to reintegrate back to the local communities or repatriate to their countries of origin as part of their mandate.

 On local reintegration the UNHCR offered a reintegration package to cover basic rentals and necessities for three months, as well as counselling support for those choosing to reintegrate. The project which was originally intended to end on 30 April 2021 was then extended to 15 May 2021, following requests by some of the refugees. With many registering at the eleventh hour. The UNHCR consulted with Department of Home Affairs to continue with the reintegration process for those who registered by the deadline of May 15. UNHCR’s implementing partner, Adonis Musati, assisted with the implementation of the reintegration project that has now reached completion.

 The status report of the reintegration indicated that 810 persons have reintegrated back into their communities. A total 761 persons were from Wingfield, and 49 persons were from Paint City. Of the 810 persons, the vast majority were from Democratic republic of Congo, (739 persons), followed by 26 persons from Congo Brazzaville, Burundi (15 persons), Zimbabwe (8 persons), Angola (6 persons), Cameroon (5 persons), Zambia (4 persons), Somalia (2 persons), and a few single persons from Mozambique, Malawi, Cote d’Ivoire, Tanzania and Nigeria. In terms of gender breakdown, 427 persons are male and 383 persons are female. 334 persons under the age of 18 years and 43 persons have benefitted from a small livelihoods component in the programme.

An additional 50 persons have voluntarily returned to their country of origin, all but 2 are from Paint City and these are mostly women and children. Of this number, 48 persons returned to Burundi, 1 to Democratic Republic of Congo and 1 to Cote d’Ivoire.

 In total, in Cape Town, UNHCR project has assisted 860 persons from two sites this year, either to reintegrate or voluntary return to their country of origin. The UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation programme remains active and all new persons at the two sites of Wingfield and Paint City who still wish to reintegrate back into their communities will now be referred back to UNHCR’s regular programme where the partner will conduct individual needs assessments to determine eligibility for assistance.

(d) Deportation remains an option for those who are found to be illegal or have failed in their asylum applications and have no further grounds to remain in South Africa. So far 32 people have been deported from these shelters.

(e) The department is finalising the asylum applications of the occupants in these facilities.

**END**