

Gaborone, Botswana, September 12 (Infosplusgabon) - The Botswana Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security has refuted claims of forcible deportation of children of former Namibian refugees who were schooling in the country.

“We wish to correct the allegations circulating in the media about children of former Namibian refugees who have had to be withdrawn from school to join their parents who are being processed for deportation. These children have had to be withdrawn from school to join their parents who are scheduled to leave Botswana on deportation. There has not been any forceful removal of former Namibian refugee students from school by any member of the Special Support Group,” says Pearl Ramokoka, Acting Permanent Secretary with Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security.

She said as a matter of fact that the Court of Appeal Judgment of 26 July 2019 confirmed the position that former Namibian refugees had to return to Namibia because they ceased to be refugees in 2015.

In preparation for their return to Namibia, a grace period of one month was given for their voluntary registration for repatriation.

Ms. Ramokoka said the legal implication of the Court of Appeal decision is that the former

Namibian refugees are now classified as illegal immigrants. "As a result, they have to be treated as such under the Immigration Act and accordingly be deported."

She said unfortunately, the former Namibian refugees failed to take advantage of the dispensation extended to them to register for repatriation under the Tripartite Agreement between Botswana Government, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Namibian Government.

Their registration for voluntary repatriation would have, among other things, entitled them to repatriation packages from the UNHCR in the form of resettlement allowances and associated benefits as well as consideration for their children's educational placement upon resettlement in Namibia.

"Regrettably, only three former Namibian refugee families out of 855 former Namibian refugees registered to be repatriated under the Tripartite Agreement," said Ms. Ramokoka.

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