MEDIA STATEMENT

14 November 2026

TO ALL MEDIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PREMIER DR RAMATHUBA WELCOMES ARREST OF SUSPECTED FOREIGN NATIONAL FOR ALLEGED FRAUDULENT ACQUISITION OF SOUTH AFRICAN IDENTITY DOCUMENT

The Premier of Limpopo, Dr Phophi Ramathuba, has welcomed the arrest of a 50-year-old man suspected of fraudulently acquiring a South African identity document despite allegedly being a Zimbabwean national. The suspect, identified as a Zimbabwean National, who is also a Pastor, who resides at Juju Valley in Seshego, is facing charges of fraud and misrepresentation following investigations by the Department of Home Affairs.

The suspect is charged in terms of Section 31(1)(b) of the Birth and Death Registration Act 51 of 1998,Section 48(1)(a) of the Identification Act,68 of 1997 as amended and further charges with Section 49(1)(a) of the Immigration Act 13 of the 2002 as Amended.

The arrest on 13 November 2026, follows an alert received by the Premier from a concerned resident on 16 September 2026, raising allegations that a foreign national, reportedly a pastor, had fraudulently obtained South African citizenship and an identity document. Acting on this information, the Premier referred the matter to the Department of Home Affairs for urgent investigation.

The Provincial Manager of the Department of Home Affairs, Mr Albert Matsaung, confirmed that officials from the department, working together with Seshego Immigration Services and the Counter Corruption and Security Services unit within the Province, conducted investigations which culminated in the suspect's arrest. The department has since confirmed that charges of fraud and misrepresentation have been preferred against him.

Preliminary investigations have reportedly established that the suspect was born in Zimbabwe in the village of Tsherekie in BeitBridge area in Zimbabwe and came illegally through border crossing to South Africa in the early 1997. Investigations confirm that he subsequently entered into a relationship with a South African woman, with whom he has a child. It is further confirmed that, with the assistance of an elderly South African woman who was their neighbour at the time, arrangements were made to fraudulently register him as a South African citizen.

According to the investigation, the elderly woman allegedly presented herself as his mother, enabling him to apply for late registration of birth at the Department of Home Affairs' Polokwane office in 2004. This subsequently allowed him to obtain a green bar-coded identity document and, later, a smart identity card.

Investigators reportedly established discrepancies in the information submitted during the application process. These include an alleged fraudulent school confirmation letter purportedly issued by Makgwareng Primary School at Mamadila village in Moletjie. A verification exercise conducted at the school, with the assistance of the principal, reportedly found no record of the suspect having attended the institution. The school's alleged involvement in the issuance of the document is also under investigation.

The department further obtained an affidavit from those who knew the suspect at the time, in which they allegedly detailed how the fraudulent registration was facilitated. Members of the deceased elderly women's family have also reportedly denied knowing the suspect as their sibling and or family member, contradicting the identity information used in the late registration process.

Premier Dr Ramathuba has congratulated the Department of Home Affairs, particularly its Provincial Management, Counter Corruption and Security Services and immigration officials, for their diligence and decisive action in pursuing this matter.

The Premier said the arrest demonstrates the importance of cooperation and collaboration between government and communities in protecting the integrity of the country's identity and citizenship systems.

"South African identity documents are not commodities that can be acquired through fraudulent means. They represent the identity, rights and responsibilities of our people and must be protected against abuse. We commend the resident who brought this matter to our attention and the officials who acted swiftly to investigate the allegations and ensure that the law takes its course.".

The Premier emphasised that government will not tolerate the deliberate manipulation of public institutions and processes to obtain identity documents unlawfully. She called on communities to remain vigilant and report suspected identity fraud, corruption and other criminal activities to the relevant authorities.

She further stressed that the investigation must be allowed to run its course and that anyone found to have participated in the alleged fraud, including those who may have assisted in facilitating the fraudulent documentation, must be held accountable in accordance with the law.

"This further confirms that certain South African citizens are complicit in enabling illegal immigration by willingly allowing their identities to be used to facilitate and legitimise the unlawful stay of foreign nationals in the country," Premier Dr Ramathuba concluded.

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Issued by the Limpopo Provincial Government