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Corruption Watch looks forward to improved services at revamped Marabastad RRO

Corruption Watch supports the new and improved systems launched today at the refurbished Marabastad Refugee Reception Office in Pretoria. The revamp is intended to address queue management and security concerns, among other issues, and introduce an automated booking system and paperless processes. These changes are long overdue as in the past, this office has been beset by overcrowding, corruption, and failures in the efficient processing of documentation, which have frequently led to unrest.

While the organisation acknowledges the Department of Home Affairs' (DHA) initiative which aims to address corruption at the centre, there is still a need to ensure that all refugee and asylum seekers are able to go through the application process without encountering corruption.

Corruption Watch stresses that concerted efforts and collaboration with relevant stakeholders will assist the DHA to uproot and limit incidents of corruption at the centre.

"Good systems are better than bad systems," said David Lewis, executive director at Corruption Watch. "However, good systems need to be complemented by strong co-operative partnerships. We are looking forward to collaborating with the DHA to make meaningful contributions," he added.

Corruption Watch's report, [Project Lokisa: Asylum at a Price](#), launched in November last year, highlighted multiple points at which opportunities for corruption occur – most commonly when foreign nationals present documents to law enforcement officials, apply for work permits, or seek asylum and refugee status. The report also underlined the widespread soliciting of bribes from home affairs, SAPS and security officials as cause for concern.

Whistle-blowers confirmed to Corruption Watch that as refugees and asylum seekers they would not report corruption via DHA's reporting channels for fear of reprisal and the effect on their application or status in the country. To counter this mistrust, Corruption Watch put forward a [proposal](#) that it run a complaints handling mechanism as a way of assisting the DHA in the short and long term to gather corruption complaints – a proposal that the DHA declined to take up.

The organisation would like the DHA to reconsider collaborating on the complaints handling system, as this would only strengthen the department's commitment to improving the refugee application process.

Following the findings of our investigations into allegations of extortion, threats and bribery by government officials at Marabastad Refugee Reception Office, Corruption Watch laid criminal cases at the Johannesburg Central Police station last year against three individuals implicated in corrupt activities, case numbers: 934/11/16; 935/11/16 and 936/11/16.

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