

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Departure from Namibia Regulation Act 34 of 1955, as amended in South Africa prior to Namibian independence  

Summary: This Act (originally published in [RSA GG 5509](#), also published in [OG 1920](#)) regulates the departure of persons from Namibia. More specifically, it prohibits departure without a passport or a permit, or at a place other than an official border post. It also makes it an offence to assist anyone to leave the country illegally. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Safety and Security has indicated that this statute is earmarked for repeal and replacement.

Applicability to SWA: Section 1 defines “Union” to include “the territory of South West Africa”. Section 10 of the original Act stated: “This Act shall apply also in the territory of South-West Africa.” Section 10, as amended by *Act 69 of 1962*, stated: “This Act and any amendment thereof shall apply also in the territory of South West Africa, including that portion thereof known as the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel.” These provisions were repealed after Namibian independence.

Transfer of administration to SWA: The relevant Transfer Proclamation is the Executive Powers (Interior) Transfer Proclamation (AG 17/1978), dated 30 March 1978. However, section 3(1)(6) of this Proclamation excluded the Act from the operation of section 3(1) of the General Proclamation, meaning that the administration of the Act was not transferred to SWA.

Amendments: The following pre-independence South African amendments applied to SWA –

- *Commonwealth Relations Act 69 of 1962* ([RSA GG 264](#))
- *Residence in the Republic Regulation Act 23 of 1964* ([RSA GG 746](#))
- *Border Control Act 61 of 1967* ([RSA GG 1745](#))
- *Admission of Persons to and Departure from the Republic Regulation Amendment Act 38 of 1969* ([RSA GG 2370](#))
- *Departure from the Union Regulation Amendment Act 7 of 1979* ([RSA GG 6340](#))
- *Aliens and Immigration Laws Amendment Act 49 of 1984* ([RSA GG 9182](#))
- *Transfer of Powers and Duties of the State President Act 97 of 1986* ([RSA GG 10438](#)).

Act 4/1993 ([GG 686](#)), which commenced on 22 September 1994 (GN 172/1994, [GG 925](#)), amends sections 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9; inserts section 6A; repeals section 10; and substitutes certain expressions and the long title. It also substitutes section 11 to change the name of the Act (from “Departure from the Union Regulation Act”).

Regulations: Pre-independence regulations have not been researched due to the anticipated repeal of the Act.

Post-independence regulations are contained in GN 136/1994 ([GG 895](#)),⁸⁷ as amended by GN 243/2013 ([GG 5284](#)) (which substitutes Regulation 2 and adds Annexure B), and by GN 7/2020 ([GG 7099](#)) (which substitutes Regulations 2 and 3, and Annexure B).

Cases:

S v Lofty-Eaton & Others (1) 1993 NR 370 (HC)

S v Malumo & Others (In re Ndala) 2014 (3) NR 690 (the question of whether this Act is applicable to the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel was put forward, but the Court ruled that the issue can be raised only after the conclusion of the trial in terms of section 319 of the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977).

⁸⁷ These regulations repeal the ones contained in RSA GN R.827/1963.

Namibian Citizenship Act 14 of 1990

Summary: This Act (originally published in [GG 65](#)) regulates the acquisition and loss of Namibian citizenship in accordance with Article 4 of the Constitution. It was brought into force with effect from 15 September 1990 by Proc. 13/1990 ([GG 72](#)).

Repeals: The Act repeals the *South African Citizenship Act 44 of 1949* and the *Residence of Certain Persons in South West Africa Regulation Act 33 of 1985*.

Amendments: The Immigration Control Act 7 ([GG 690](#)) of 1993, which was brought into force on 29 July 1994 (GN 133/1994, [GG 895](#)), amends section 29.

The Civil Registration and Identification Act 13 of 2024 ([GG 8547](#)), which has not yet been brought into force, will amend section 2, insert sections 2A and 2B and amend section 92; these changes all relate to citizenship in the context of adoption.

Regulations: There is no savings clause for regulations made in terms of the repealed laws.

Regulations made in terms of the current Act are contained in GN 14/1991 ([GG 154](#)), as amended by GN 135/2018 ([GG 6647](#)) and by GN 152/2021 ([GG 7583](#)).

Cases:

Alberts v Government of Namibia & Another 1993 NR 85 (HC) (holding that the Constitution does not allow Parliament to enact legislation depriving a Namibian citizen by birth of his or her citizenship by reason of having served in the armed forces of another country; that the Act does not purport to do this; and that the Constitution may not be effectively altered by a policy decision)

Swart v Minister of Home Affairs 1997 NR 268 (HC) (section 5; addresses the application for citizenship by naturalisation of a South African citizen resident in Namibia at the time of independence, holding that he was lawfully domiciled in Namibia for this purpose under the relevant laws on immigration, without having to obtain a permanent residence permit; also holding that his failure to apply for citizenship by registration, which he could have done within one year after independence, did not prevent an application for citizenship by naturalisation)

Tlhoru v Minister of Home Affairs 2008 (1) NR 97 (HC) (section 5(1)(g) requiring renunciation of foreign citizenship in order to attain Namibian citizenship by naturalisation and section 26 prohibiting dual citizenship both held to be constitutional; judgment notes that section 26 must be interpreted in light of overall constitutional scheme for citizenship, meaning that citizenship by birth may not be regulated or derogated from by statutory provisions and that citizenship by descent may be regulated only by a requirement of registration)

Minister of Home Affairs v Dickson & Another 2008 (2) NR 665 (SC)(ordinary residence for purposes of acquiring citizenship by marriage means lawful residence)

Le Roux v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration & Others 2011 (2) NR 606 (HC) (endorsing and applying the *Tlhoru* holding that section 26 interpreted in light of the Namibian Constitution does not apply to Namibian citizens by birth)

Berker v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration & Others 2012 (1) NR 354 (HC) (refers to court order made by agreement between parties confirming that application of section 26 is unconstitutional insofar as it is applied to deprive Namibians by birth or descent of their Namibian citizenship; special costs awarded against respondents, because applicant's Namibian passport was unlawfully confiscated by immigration official on grounds that she also held a German passport and because she was "treated as foreigner in her own country")

Luehl [Lühl] v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration 2021 (4) NR 1104 (HC) (section 2 of Act read with Art 4(2) of Namibian Constitution; no proof of biological link to parent required for citizenship by descent where person is named as parent on a valid birth certificate); overturned on appeal by *Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration v Lühl* 2023 (2) NR 429 (SC), which

held that registration either inside or outside Namibia is a precondition for citizenship by descent under section 2(2) of Act and declined to discuss any other issues since there was no registration in the case at hand.

See also *MW v Minister of Home Affairs* 2014 (4) NR 1108 (HC), reversed on appeal 2016 (3) NR 707 (SC) (meaning of ordinary residence in Art 4(1)(d) of Namibian Constitution)

See also *Ex parte: Mukondomi* (HC-NLD-CIV-MOT-ALP-2020/00004) [2020] NAHCNLD 89 (20 July 2020) (deals with domicile rather than citizenship, for purposes of an application for admission as a legal practitioner, but discusses in some detail the concept of a good faith marriage as referred to in Art 4(3)(a)(aa) of the Namibian Constitution).

Commentary:

Faith Chipepera & Katharina G Ruppel-Schlichting, “Namibia: Children’s right to citizenship” in Oliver C Ruppel (ed), *Children’s Rights in Namibia*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2009, available [here](#)

Kaity Cooper & Dianne Hubbard, “By the Skin of its Teeth: How Namibia narrowly avoided a Constitutional crisis”, Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative blog post, 7 February 2017, available [here](#)

Leonard Tjiveze and Tapiwa Victor Warikandwa. “A critical examination of the meaning of the words ‘ordinarily resident’ in Article 4(1)(d) of the Namibian Constitution in relation to the acquisition of citizenship” in Tapiwa Victor Warikandwa & John Baloro, eds, *Namibia’s Supreme Court at 30 Years: A Review of the Superior Court’s Role in the Development of Namibia’s Jurisprudence in the Post-Independence Era*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2022, available [here](#).

Namibian Citizenship Special Conferment Act 14 of 1991

Summary: This Act ([GG 311](#)) makes provision for the conferment of Namibian citizenship upon certain descendants of persons who left Namibia because of persecution by the colonial government.

Regulations: The Act makes no provision for regulations.

Immigration Control Act 7 of 1993

Summary: This Act ([GG 690](#)) regulates and controls the entry of persons into Namibia and their residence inside the country. It also provides for the removal from Namibia of certain immigrants. It was brought into force on 29 July 1994 by GN 133/1994 ([GG 895](#)). The Ministry of Home Affairs, Safety and Security has indicated that this statute is earmarked for replacement by a new law.

Repeals: The Act repeals the *Aliens Control Act 30 of 1963*, *Aliens Registration Act 26 of 1939*, *Residence in the Republic Regulation Act 23 of 1964* and *Admission of Persons to Namibia Regulation Act 59 of 1972*, as well as most of the *Aliens Act 1 of 1937*.

Regulations: Regulations made in terms of the repealed legislation survive in terms of section 60(3) of this Act, but pre-independence regulations have not been comprehensively researched due to the anticipated repeal of the Act.

Immigration Regulations made in terms of the current Act are contained in GN 134/1994 ([GG 895](#)).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ The Government Notice which issues these regulations repeals the regulations made under the *Aliens Act 1 of 1937* and published in RSA GN R.337/1964 ([RSA GG 739](#)). The repealed regulations were amended by RSA GN R.289/1964, RSA GN R.1711/1967, RSA GN R.82/1969, RSA GN R.3933/1969, RSA GN R.878/1970, RSA GN R.1350/1972 and Government Notice 100/1986 ([OG 5218](#)). These 1964 regulations are made in substitution for the regulations published in SA GN 161/1937, as amended.

The portions of the regulations relating to fees for various visas and permits are amended by GN 82/2008 ([GG 4029](#)).

Regulation 13 on “Contagious infections or viruses or diseases” and Regulation 24 on visa fees were substituted by GN 133/2010 ([GG 4514](#)), which also amended Annexure I of the regulations by deleting item 10.

Regulation 13 is amended to add ebola to the list of prescribed diseases by GN 145/2014 ([GG 5556](#)), but this amendment ignores the substitution of Regulation 13 by GN 133/2010 and does not make sense in respect of the substituted regulation.

These regulations are also amended by GN 138/2018 ([GG 6647](#)) (substitution of Regulation 24 on fees, substitution of Annexure H, and amendment of Annexure I).

Note that there is some contradictory overlap between regulation 24 and regulation 29 as a result of this amendment.

These regulations are further amended by GN 8/2020 ([GG 7099](#)) (amendment of regulation 2, insertion of regulation 2A, and insertion of Annexure AF to update ports of entry).

GN 153/2021 ([GG 7583](#)) amends regulation 24 in respect of fees.

GN 153/2021 incorrectly states that the regulations were previously amended by GN 82/2008 of 15 July 2008, whereas the date of publication of that notice was actually 15 April 2008.

The regulations are also amended by GN 327/2023 ([GG 8225](#)) (substitution of regulation 5 and addition of new Annexure C1).

GN 379/2024 ([GG 8529](#)) amends regulation 1 and substitutes regulation 2 and Annexure A.

GN 389/2024 ([GG 8538](#)) inserts regulation 30 and Annexures AG-AH.

GN 399/2024 omits mention of the previous amendment in GN 379/2024.

GN 88/2025 ([GG 8613](#)) amends regulation 24.

Notices: Maximum amounts in terms of section 11(2)(a) are set in GN 135/1994 ([GG 895](#)).

Pursuant to section 40(1) of the Act, GN 318/2020 ([GG 7420](#)) provides an exemption from section 39(2)(h) (on prohibited immigrants) for any person whose stay in Namibia has exceeded the period stipulated in the relevant permit, subject to the condition that the person in question leaves Namibia on or before 28 February 2021.

Cases: The following cases concern the current Act –

Swart v Minister of Home Affairs 1997 NR 268 (HC) (sections 1, 2(1)(b), 22; also discusses section 1 of the previous *Admission of Persons to the Republic Regulation Act 59 of 1972* and section 3(2)(b) of the previous *Residence of Certain Persons in South West Africa Regulation Act 33 of 1985*)

S v Ithilenga 1997 NR 239 (HC) (section 56(d))

Correia v Commanding Officer, Windhoek Prison & Another 1999 NR 48 (SC) (sections 24, 36, 39(2)(h), 41, 42(4)(b)(i))

S v Russel 1999 HR 39 (HC) (section 30(1)(a) - meaning of “employment”)

Frank & Another v Chairperson of the Immigration Selection Board 1999 NR 257 (HC); 2001 NR 107 (SC) (Immigration Selection Board as an administrative body subject to Article 18 of the Constitution; interpretation of section 26(3)(e); factors relevant to decision on permanent residence); criticised in *Digashu & Others v Government of the Republic of Namibia & Others* 2022 (1) NR 156 (HC)

Sikunda v Government of the Republic of Namibia (3) 2001 NR 181 (HC) (section 49); *Government of*

the Republic of Namibia v Sikunda 2002 NR 203 (SC) (section 49; Composition of the Security Commission pursuant to Article 114 of the Constitution; Security Commission as subject to Articles 18 and 12 of the Constitution)

Lalandii (Pty) Ltd v Butshingi NLLP 2002 (2) 409 NLC (no legal obligation on potential employer to furnish letter of motivation in support of application to regularise immigration status)

Miller & Paschke v The Law Society of Namibia NLLP 2002 (2) 328 NHC (discussion of application of Act to non-Namibians married to Namibian citizens and domiciled in Namibia)

Mulopo v Minister of Home Affairs 2004 NR 164 (HC) (right to fair administrative action based on valid reasons, failure to establish right to residence based on Namibian citizenship of children and effect of failure to join Immigration Selection Board)

Zhu v Minister of Home Affairs & Another 2004 NR 170 (HC) (deportation cannot be imminent without a directive from an immigration tribunal)

S v Mushwena & Others 2004 NR 276 (SC)

Note that this case was reversed in part by *S v Likanyi* 2017 (3) NR 771 (SC). However, the *Likanyi* case does not discuss this Act.

S v Ngono 2005 NR 34 (HC) (section 12)

S v Makonde, Case No 123/2005 (appropriate sentence for contravention of section 29(5); quoted in *S v Jeremani* 2009 (1) NR 149 (HC)

S v Cambinda; S v Agostino; S v Carvalho 2006 (2) NR 550 (HC) (appropriate sentences for offences under Act)

S v Koch 2006 (2) NR 513 (SC) (section 47 of Act discussed in *dicta* at 525-26)

S v Marisa 2006 (2) NR 586 (HC) (sentence imposed under section 29(5) confirmed)

Getachew v Government of the Republic of Namibia 2006 (2) NR 720 (HC), 2008 (1) NR 1 (SC) (sections 22, 24, 35 and 42)

Minister of Home Affairs v Dickson & Another 2008 (2) NR 665 (SC) (section 22)

S v Jeremani 2009 (1) NR 149 (HC) (appropriate sentence for contravention of section 29(5))

S v Willem; S v Nkomo 2009 (1) NR 352 (HC) (formulation of charges under section 12(1) and (4))

S v Mbele 2011 (1) NR 357 (HC) (section 29(1)(a))

Berker v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration & Others 2012 (1) NR 354 (HC) (refers to court order made by agreement between parties confirming that application of limits of entry into, and residence in, Namibia in Part V of Act to Namibian citizens is unlawful)

S v Okuani 2014 (1) NR 16 (HC) (formulation of criminal charge under section 12 of Act)

Fernandes v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration & Another 2015 (3) NR 805 (HC) (section 27(2)(b); administrative body bound by reasons for decisions given to applicant at the relevant time, and must provide facts on which decision is based if such are not generally well known)

Namrights Inc v Nicodemus & Others 2016 (2) NR 596 (LC) (applicability of sections 24 and 27 to person with refugee status)

S v Munuma & Others 2016 (4) NR 954 (SC) (inapplicability of sections 7 and 9 to persons involuntarily deported back to Namibia)

Viljoen v Chairperson of the Immigration Selection Board & Another 2017 (1) NR 132 (HC) ((a) the words “permanently resident in Namibia” in section 26(3)(g) cannot be taken to mean the holder of a permanent residence permit; (b) a person who is domiciled in Namibia is “permanently resident in Namibia” for the purposes of that provision; (c) the Board abused its discretion in its consideration of whether the daughter in question was “able” to maintain her mother, which cannot be equated with “proof of ability to maintain”. Also, where an administrative decision is unlawful and the unlawfulness is “gravely material” and has undermined the statutory remedies provided, this constitutes exceptional circumstances which justify the court in supplanting the statutory remedies, proceeding with the judicial review process and ordering the administrative body to grant the outcome sought by the applicant within a specified time period; for a contrasting decision on exhaustion of statutory remedies, see *Four Three Five Development Companies (Pty) Ltd v Namibia Airports Company & Others* 2017 (1) NR 142 (HC)).

Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration v Holtmann & Others 2020 (2) NR 303 (SC) (section 22(1)(d) as limited by section 22(2); interpretation of “only” in section 22(2)(b); Namibian domicile cannot be acquired while present in Namibia only on a work permit, even if the permit holder has a subjective intention to remain in the country indefinitely; any other interpretation would undermine State’s power to regulate entry into and residence in Namibia); overruling *Prollius*

v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration & Others & One Similar Case 2018 (1) NR 118 (HC); see also *Castañeda v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration & Another* 2022 (2) NR 313 (SC) (re-affirming *Holtzmann*)

Ex parte: Mukondomi (HC-NLD-CIV-MOT-ALP-2020/00004) [2020] NAHCNLD 89 (20 July 2020) (sections 2(1) and 22(1); follows holding of *Miller & Paschke v The Law Society of Namibia* that applicants domiciled in Namibia by virtue of good faith marriage do not require permits under Act and discusses requirements of good faith marriage)

S v Miguel & Others 2018 (4) NR 946 (HC) (sufficient evidence of contravention of section 7)

Prosecutor-General v Paulo & Another 2021 (2) NR 423 (HC) (section 30 of Act at paras 43-54), confirmed on appeal in *Prosecutor-General v Paulo & Another* 2023 (2) NR 477 (SC) (section 30 of Act discussed at paras 48-50)

Digashu & Others v Government of The Republic of Namibia and Others 2023 (2) NR 358 (SC), overturning *Digashu & Others v Government of the Republic of Namibia & Others* 2022 (1) NR 156 (HC) (Supreme Court: failure to recognise the foreign spouse of Namibia citizen lawfully married outside Namibia as a “spouse” for purposes of section 2(1)(c) of Act violates the constitutional rights to dignity and equality; the statements on same-sex relationships in *Frank & Another v Chairperson of the Immigration Selection Board* 2001 NR 107 (SC) were *dicta* and that case’s approach to the term “spouse” is expressly disapproved here; moreover, the facts in the *Frank* case are distinguishable; Mainga J dissented)

Castañeda v Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration & Another 2022 (2) NR 313 (SC) (section 38 certificate cannot confer domicile; on review, refusal of section 38 certificate set aside due to failure to inform applicant of outcome and failure to take proper steps to deport him; lack of application procedure for section 38 certificate is a lacuna in Act that should be remedied)

Kitching & Another v Chairperson of the Immigration Selection Board & Others 2023 (1) NR 121 (HC) (the three components of section 26(3)(d) must be read disjunctively; the Board based its decision on permanent residence on unmentioned facts or assumptions, and the applicants should have been given an opportunity to make representations regarding their financial position and immovable property before the Board made a final decision)

S v DJJ & Another 2023 (4) NR 1098 (SC) (section 27(1) discussed)

Dausab v Minister of Justice & Others 2024 (3) NR 791 (HC) (inclusion of crime of sodomy in Schedule 1 of Act is unconstitutional and invalid).

The following cases were decided under this Act’s predecessor, the *Admission of Persons to the Republic Regulation Act 59 of 1972* –

Djama v Government of the Republic of Namibia 1992 NR 37 (HC)
S v Luanda & Another 1993 NR 287 (HC).

Namibia Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act 2 of 1999

Summary: This Act ([GG 2065](#)) concerns the recognition and control of refugees in Namibia and gives effect to certain provisions of international conventions on refugees to which Namibia is party. It was brought into force on 22 September 2000 by GN 234/2000 ([GG 2412](#)).

Regulations: Namibia Refugees (Recognition and Control) Regulations are contained in GN 236/2000 ([GG 2412](#)), as amended by GN 156/2021 ([GG 7583](#)).

Notices: Osire was declared as a reception area for refugees and others in GN 235/2000 ([GG 2412](#)).

Cases: *S v Isaac* 2004 NR 122 (HC); *Namrights Inc v Nicodemus & Others* 2016 (2) NR 596 (LC) (section 18; UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Articles 2 and 26).

Related international agreements: The statute gives effect to certain provisions of the *United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951*, the *Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (New York Protocol), 1967* and the *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee*

Problems in Africa, 1969; and to provide for matters incidental thereto

The Namibia Refugees (Recognition and Control) Regulations make reference to compliance with Article 35 of the *UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951* and Article II of the *Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (New York Protocol), 1967*.

See also *SADC Declaration on Refugee Protection within Southern Africa, 1998* (not legally-binding).

Namibian Citizenship (Second) Special Conferment Act 6 of 2015

Summary: This Act ([GG 5775](#)) makes provision for the conferment of Namibian citizenship upon certain descendants of persons who left Namibia because of persecution by the colonial government. It contains provisions similar to those in the Namibian Citizenship Special Conferment Act 14 of 1991 ([GG 311](#)). However, the time period covered by the 1991 Act has expired; the 2015 Act covers an additional time period.

Regulations: Regulations are authorised by section 5 of the Act, but none have yet been promulgated.

One-Stop Border Posts Control Act 8 of 2017

Summary: This Act ([GG 6423](#)) provides for the conclusion of agreements between Namibia and adjoining countries on the establishment and implementation of one-stop border posts which are jointly managed.

Regulations: Regulations are authorised by section 9 of the Act, but none have yet been promulgated.

***Regularisation of Status of Certain Residents of Namibia, their Descendants and Foreign Spouses Act 15 of 2024**

Summary: This Act ([GG 8549](#)) provides a process for acquisition of Namibian citizenship by naturalisation for holders of South West Africa identification documents, many of whom would otherwise be stateless. It also makes provision for the acquisition of Namibian citizenship by descendants and foreign spouses of such persons. The Act will be brought into force on a date set by the Minister in the *Gazette*.

Regulations: Regulations are authorised by section 7 of the Act, but none have yet been promulgated.

INTERNATIONAL LAW

****African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), 2009**

****African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention), 2014**

Constitution of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 1953

Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention), 2000

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951

Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (New York Protocol), 1967

****OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, 1969**

***SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons, 2005**

Cases on international law: *S v Mushwena & Others* 2004 NR 276 (SC) (*per* minority opinion of O’Linn, AJA) refers to the “Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons as Supplemented by the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees” (confirming that Namibia acceded to the Protocol on 17 February 1995) and the OAU Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.