MATRIXVISA INC.
www.matrixvisa.com
Immigration Law and International Recruitment

Minister of Immigration Citizenship and Refugees Canada (IRCC)
Honourable Sean Fraser, MP
Attention: Director of Policy: Ms Olga Radchenko
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

Delivered via email to Olga.Radchenko@cic.gc.ca

29 November 2021

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA

Dear Ms. Radchenko

Background about Matrixvisa

Matrixvisa Inc is a Canadian immigration law consultancy that was established in March 2002. The Managing Director has been in the immigration industry for about 20 years and a member in Good Standing of the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants. The case manager recently became a Member in Good Standing of the Law Society of Ontario. Matrixvisa has 9 employees and have been providing Canadian immigration law services to the Southern African community (Republic of South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe) for almost 20 years. We also represent clients from Iran, New Zealand, India, Ireland, Australia, United Arab Emirates, Germany and the Philippines.

Travel Ban

On Friday 26 November 2021 the Minister of Transport, the Honourable Omar Alghabra and the Minister of Health, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, announced that all travellers who have been in the Southern Africa region — including South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe,

Mozambique, and Namibia— are prohibited from entering Canada until at least end of January 2022 due to the prevalence of the Covid variant B.1.1.529 dubbed Omicron.

Reports in the Media

On Friday 26 November 2021 it was reported in the National Post that a person in Hong Kong was infected with the Omicron variant after this person travelled from Canada. The person was not in Southern Africa.

On Sunday 28 November 2021 the following was reported by the CBC:
Quote
The World Health Organization (WHO) on Sunday urged countries around the world not to impose flight bans on southern African nations due to concerns over the new omicron variant.
WHO's regional director for Africa, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, called on countries to follow science and international health regulations in order to avoid using travel restrictions.
"Travel restrictions may play a role in slightly reducing the spread of COVID-19 but place a heavy burden on lives and livelihoods," Moeti said in a statement. "If restrictions are implemented, they should not be unnecessarily invasive or intrusive, and should be scientifically based, according to the International Health Regulations, which is a legally binding instrument of international law recognized by over 190 nations.
Moeti praised South Africa for following international health regulations and informing WHO as soon as its national laboratory identified the omicron variant."
Unquote

On Saturday 27 November 2021 the following was reported in the National Post:

- This mutation named Omicron, has been detected in Britain, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Botswana, Israel, Netherlands and Hong Kong.
- The French president said the expectation is that the Omicron virus is also in France.
- Dr. Angelique Coetzee, the South African Doctor, that first alerted authorities to this variant said the symptoms are mild. She referred to a 6 year old that recovered without hospitalization. She also mentioned that, quote in total, about two dozen of her patients have tested positive for COVID-19 with symptoms of the new variant. They were mostly healthy men who turned up "feeling so tired". About half of them were unvaccinated. Unqoute"

On Saturday 28 November 2021 the following was reported by the CBC:

- Dr. Peter Singer, a Canadian and a special adviser to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization said "*the WHO has maintained that travel restrictions should be "risk-based and time-limited," part of a comprehensive package, rather than the only measure taken to mitigate the risk of a new variant* ".

On Sunday 29 November 2021 the following was reported in the Globe and Mail:

- The omicron variant was discovered in Israel.
- Patients with omicron can be treated at home and no major drop on oxygen levels have been experienced.

On 24 January 2021 the following was reported in the CBC:

- An international panel of researchers led by Dr. Karen Grépin, a Canadian-born public health professor at the University of Hong Kong, conducted a detailed review of the various travel restrictions employed around the world last year. The panel found that implementing travel restrictions early in an epidemic did reduce transmission, but the researchers also concluded that "the effectiveness of these measures was short-lived," adding the caveat that the overall body of evidence remains thin.

A South African, Mr Graeme Codringon, a TEDx Speaker, an author and futurist, last week mentioned the following on social media: Quote: South Africa has one of the most sophisticated and advanced infectious diseases infrastructure on the planet. Some of the world's leading epidemiologists work in South Africa. We've had to develop these capabilities to deal with TB and AIDS and other diseases ravaging our continent.It is no surprise that our medical system is the first in the world to identify new Covid variants. It is no surprise that we led the world in clinical trials of vaccines. What is a surprise is how lazy journalists write headlines: "New Covid variant in South Africa". No, this new Covid variant has been found in New Zealand, England, Brazil, France, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and other places. South African scientists isolated, sequenced and understood it first. Report that fact, but don't start all over again with putting "South Africa is unsafe" into people's heads. Unquote

Effect of the Travel Ban

There are foreign workers that was turned around at the airport and others are due to travel from Southern Africa to Canada within hours and other within days. They are without accommodation, without transport and without employment.

Canadian employers are waiting for these foreign nationals to do work that Canadians are not available to do.

The ban on allowing foreign nationals to enter Canada from Southern Africa is called "vaccine apartheid" in the media. We also find it discriminatory.

Why would Canada prevent travel only from Southern Africa and not from Europe ?

Suggestions

In stead of using discriminatory travel bans:

- Allow exemptions for those with job offers from Canadian Employers
- Ensure testing before a flight and after arrival of a flight.
- Enforce quarantines after arrival and testing just before the quarantine period ends.

We understand that IRCC does not make travel policy and health policy. It is requested that these suggestions are communicated with the relevant federal departments.

Respectfully yours

Cobus (Jacobus) Kriek
Member in Good Standing of College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants,
cobus@mattrixvisa.com
403-710-7156 cell