

## SAfricans Asked To Check If They Are Legally Alive

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South Africans are being urged to confirm whether they are officially alive, as the beleaguered home affairs department attempts to do away with "fraudulent deaths", government said Tuesday.

"We really call upon citizens to confirm your alive status," local government minister Richard Baloyi told a press conference.

A special call centre has been set up for South Africans to check if they have been wrongly declared dead -- an increasingly common problem with identity theft by criminals trying to benefit from life insurance, he said.

Baloyi also urged citizens to check if they legally married, as criminals are also engaging in identity theft to arrange fake marriages for migrants seeking citizenship.

"You may find out you are married more than once," he said.

South Africa's home affairs department has been crippled by corruption and inefficiency.

In 2005 a young man won the sympathy of many South Africans when he held a home affairs official hostage, with a fake gun, demanding his identity document after a two-year wait for the ID book which is vital in every aspect of daily life.

Concerns that South African passports could be easily obtained by bribing officials recently led Britain to impose a visa requirement on its former colony.

Source : Sapa-AFP /ts/ml

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