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SA scores highly on parking-ticket corruption indicator

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The average South African diplomat in New York has 34 unpaid parking tickets, indicating our country is the world's 26th most corrupt, according to two United States economists.

In a paper titled *Cultures of Corruption: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets*, Columbia University's Ray Fisman and Berkeley's Edward Miguel used parking violation data from the thousands of foreign government officials stationed at the United Nations in New York as a barometer of how corrupt their home countries are.

"Diplomatic immunity means there was essentially zero legal enforcement of diplomatic parking violations, allowing us to examine the role of cultural norms alone," the study said. "This generates a revealed preference measure of corruption based on real-world behaviour for government officials all acting in the same setting."

The results of their experiment tallied fairly closely with Transparency International's corruption index and similar surveys. Kuwait scored worst, with 246 unpaid parking tickets per diplomat. Egypt came a distant second with 140, followed by Chad and Sudan.

Countries in the Middle East and North Africa came out looking worst in this corruption index, but most Southern African countries were also in the top 20. Mozambique's UN mission averaged 111 unpaid parking fines each, placing it sixth. Angola was eighth, Zambia 12th, and Zimbabwe 18th.

Namibian diplomats were rated the most honest in Southern Africa with 4,2 unpaid tickets each, placing that country 90 out of the UN's 146 member countries.

Diplomats of 22 countries either always parked legally or paid their fines. A tie-breaking system was used for zero-violations nations. This took into account how large a UN mission the country fielded (each member state gets two legal parking bays, irrespective of how many government officials it sends to New York) and how many parking tickets were paid despite diplomatic immunity.

Turkey emerged as the surprise winner, beating Sweden.



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