

SADC-CNGO



Southern African Development Community – Council of Non-Governmental Organisations

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MEDIA STATEMENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Civil Society Calls on SADC to Take Urgent Action on the Violence in South Africa

The recent outbreak of violence in the Republic of South Africa is a matter of grave concern for South Africa, the SADC region and Africa as a whole.

Unfortunately these new wave of attacks against people perceived as “foreign” are not isolated actions by a few criminal elements. It is undeniable that a prevailing atmosphere of racist anti-African xenophobia has arisen in South Africa.

It is a matter of great alarm that political parties in South Africa, without exception, have pandered to narrow, vulgar and distorted nationalism which is not only legitimising prejudice and bias but feeds the cycle of hate and racism.

It is also apparent that poor South Africans are suffering greatly from a lack of dignity, human rights and opportunities for self-development. The structural inequalities in South Africa exacerbate the psychosis of violence which society has not addressed in the more than twenty years since the transition to majority rule. The deep and systemic violence produced by Apartheid and Colonialism has not been adequately addressed by the democratic government. The everyday violence experienced by the majority of people living in South Africa – violence against women, children and men; structural racism and sexism; homophobia and attacks on lesbians and transgendered persons – and the violence of poverty and social exclusion are clearly inextricably linked and contributes to the scapegoating of Africans for the ills and woes of the poor.

The semi-orchestrated nature of this recent wave of attacks is a further alarming development, indicating an increasing level of targeting of non-nationals. The South African body politic, stakeholders and government must end the denialism of the racist xenophobia that is being expressed through this violence and recognise that far from being sporadic, isolated acts of criminality, these are indeed organised acts of violence born of hatred.

The continued violence in South Africa is a matter of grave concern for all Africans and must be placed urgently on the agenda of SADC to assist the government of the Republic of South Africa to intervene in this situation.

At our recent Civil Society Forum, trade unions, NGOs and faith-based organisations in the region stated clearly:

“The 15th CSF notes with alarm the recent and continued attacks on foreign nationals, particularly in South Africa. We condemn these attacks and once more call on SADC member states to unequivocally condemn the recent and continued Xenophobia attacks and rhetoric in South Africa. The South African Government and all SADC Member States must guarantee the safety and respect for human rights of all foreign nationals present within their borders.” (15 August 2019, emphasis in the original)

The SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs must be seized with the violence gripping South Africa and urgently convene itself to receive a through report from the Government of the Republic of South Africa, and agree on necessary support and assistance to be provided to SADC and African citizens and peoples within its borders. We call on the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Government of Zimbabwe to take the necessary leadership within SADC to ensure a speedy response is put in place.

We express our solidarity with all civil society organisations efforts at prevention, mediation and victim support as well as solidarity now being undertaken by our brothers and sisters in South Africa and assure them our full support in these efforts.

We urgently call on the President of South Africa to meet responsible representatives of the affected communities and constituencies and to publicly re-affirm his government’s condemnation of racist xenophobia.

Issued by Glenn Farred, Executive Director on behalf of the SADC-Council of NGOs, Gaborone, Botswana

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