

21 April 2015

The Honourable Jacob Zuma
President of the Republic of South Africa
The Presidency
Union Buildings

By Hand

Dear Mr President,

A CALL FOR AN URGENT ENQUIRY INTO ALL VIOLENT ATTACKS ON NON-SOUTH AFRICANS SINCE MAY 2008

1. We the undersigned are moved to action as witnesses to the vile and abhorrent acts of tyranny meted out against our non-South African brothers and sisters from the rest of Africa and elsewhere within our borders. We are united in our resolve to end these acts of barbarism and to declare to the world that this is not done in our name.
2. All within our borders must be afforded the protection of our Constitution. This protection should be afforded to everyone, regardless of their legal status. Thus far, our failure to vigorously exercise the mettle of our Constitution in the protection of the rights of our fellow Africans and other immigrants in our country defiles the tenets on which our free country was built and the ideals of human dignity for which our people fought. It is our view that the perpetrators represent a minority and do not speak to the desires of the majority of our people. We, the signatories, believe we speak for the majority of our people, in accordance with the principals of Ubuntu deeply embedded in our culture, "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu!"
3. The immediate response must therefore focus on quelling all violent attacks on non-South Africans expeditiously. We support any accelerated initiatives by South African authorities to bring all perpetrators to book; and where security forces are found derelict in their duties we trust that the South African Government will act firmly and promptly to correct matters. We commend the actions already taken by the government, led by the President, political parties, faith-based organisations, trade unions, private sector and other civil society structures to demonstrate support and solidarity with non-South Africans living and working within our country. Decisive action will make it clear to the people, governments and civil society organisations on our continent and the world that these abhorrent acts will not be tolerated.
4. We are acutely aware of the critical role that the African continent has played in helping to liberate South Africa, specifically the front line states, making sacrifices for the benefit of all South Africans. At times when these countries were overwhelmed with their own challenges, they harboured, trained and educated South African freedom fighters. Their own liberation organisations and many of their citizens were our allies, fighting alongside or supporting us and demonstrating their solidarity through many years of struggle. Angola and Mozambique endured many attacks from the apartheid military machine because of their support for the ANC; Zimbabwe, Zambia and Tanzania also gave us military bases, refuge and support; people died in Botswana and Lesotho.... We should always remind our people that other Africans also fought and sacrificed for our freedom.

WE ARE AFRICANS FIRST!

5. We South Africans should remember that, first of all, we are Africans. Only next are we South Africans. These borders we observe were artificially imposed, so our nationality ranks second. We are Africans First! An attack on an African brother, sister, mother, father, child or grandchild is an attack on all of us. In this context we call on our brothers and sisters on the continent not to take retaliatory action against South Africa and further inflame the situation; but rather we ask you to help us to work together across the continent to resolve this situation. Please lend your assistance and support to finding a resolution with the utmost urgency.
6. South Africa can only realise its full socio-economic potential if the rest of the continent also grows and develops its enormous human and natural resources. We should also remember that migrant workers from our neighbouring countries have for decades helped to create and build South Africa's wealth. It is in the best interest of South Africa to seek more trade and investments within Africa and closer and better working relationships with the rest of the continent.
7. It is our government's stated policy and commitment to work towards a comprehensive, united and cohesive SADC region. In the context of working towards the free movement of capital, goods and services in the region, we have to plan without delay for the free movement of people and labour also. Post-apartheid South Africa has a long-standing commitment to African unity, pan-African cohesion, building a strong continent, finding African solutions for African problems... If we are unable to deal with such attacks against non-South Africans no-one on the continent will respect or believe in our commitment. These attacks severely distort the South African voice on the continent.
8. Since the dark days of May 2008 to today, although suppressed for some of the time, South Africa has experienced sporadic unchecked and ongoing violence against non-South Africans. We only have a superficial understanding of the root causes of these crimes. Before we are able to work towards finding a sustainable solution, to ensuring these crimes do not repeat themselves, government, political parties (across all party political positions), civil society structures, trade union movements and businesses require a much deeper understanding of the key drivers and triggers behind these attacks. This can only be gleaned from a diligent and thorough official Enquiry.
9. Concurrently with the Enquiry strong action must be taken against all minority perpetrators of violence, destruction, looting and personal threats and attacks; and communities must be protected by the full might of the law from any further harm. We call on people of good conscience to unite to demonstrate openly their sense of social responsibility to combat racial, ethnic and national chauvinism and nurture a society which is open-minded, tolerant, progressive and humane.
10. We call on you, Mr President, to order an Enquiry into all violent attacks on non-South Africans since May 2008, leading to proposals to end this scourge permanently. All proposals should incorporate decisive plans of action with measurable objectives and clear lines of accountability. We ask that the Enquiry be confined to a concise timeline, as the children of this continent deserve answers and a way forward.

Yours sincerely,

WE ARE AFRICANS FIRST!

We, the undersigned, have read the accompanying letter to the Honourable President of the Republic of South Africa and fully support the initiative to have an urgent enquiry into violent attacks against non-South Africans, which is to present a report that will be completed and made public without delay.