



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
ON THE VIOLENCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL DIRECTED AT FOREIGN NATIONALS
16 APRIL 2015**

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Deputy Speaker,
Hon Deputy President,
Honourable Members,
Fellow South Africans,

During the past week we have witnessed shocking and unacceptable incidents of violence directed at foreign nationals in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal, which has now spread to some parts of Gauteng. Similar incidents had taken place in Soweto in January.

No amount of frustration or anger can ever justify the attacks on foreign nationals and the looting of their shops.

We condemn the violence in the strongest possible terms. The attacks violate all the values that South Africa embodies, especially the respect for human life, human rights, human dignity and Ubuntu.

Our country stands firmly against all intolerances such as racism, xenophobia, homophobia and sexism.

We extend our condolences to the families of all who have lost their lives and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

We appeal for calm, an end to the violence and restraint. Criminal elements should not be allowed to take advantage of the concerns of citizens to sow mayhem and destruction.

Any problems or issues of concern to South African citizens must be resolved peacefully and through dialogue.

The police have been directed to work round the clock to protect both foreign nationals and citizens and to arrest looters and those committing acts of violence.

We urge communities to assist the police by providing information on the incidents that have taken place in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice.

We thank religious leaders, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders who are providing humanitarian assistance to the displaced people.

While we strongly condemn the attacks, we are aware of, and are sympathetic to some of the issues that have been raised by affected South African citizens.

We reiterate our view that South Africans are generally not xenophobic. If they were, we would not have such a high number of foreign nationals who have been successfully integrated into communities all over our country, in towns, cities and villages.

There are socio-economic issues that have been raised which are being attended to.

These include complaints about illegal and undocumented immigrants in the country, the increase in the number of shops or small businesses that have been taken over by foreign nationals and also perceptions that foreign nationals commit or perpetrate crime.

We wish to emphasise that while some foreign nationals have been arrested for various crimes, it is misleading and wrong to label or regard all foreign nationals as being involved in crime in the country.

In addition, not all foreign nationals who reside in our country are here illegally.

Many are in the country legally and contribute to the economy and social development of the country. Many bring skills that are scarce that help us to develop the economy and are most welcome to live our country.

Others came to South Africa as refugees having run away from conflict or wars in their countries of origin, in the same way that many South Africans left this country at some point and lived in other countries in the continent and beyond.

We were treated with generosity, dignity and respect by our brothers and sisters from the rest of the continent. We will never forget that hospitality and solidarity.

The support of the Frontline states in Southern Africa and that of the Organisation for African Unity was critical to the achievement of the freedom and democracy we are enjoying today.

In this regard, Government will continue to play its role and fulfil our responsibilities and obligations as members of the African Union and the United Nations.

Refugees and asylum seekers will be accorded support in line with international law and protocols, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

We appeal to our people to support and protect refugees and asylum seekers.

During the weekend, I deployed the Ministers of Police, State Security and Home Affairs to work with the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial government to quell the violence and bring the situation to normality. They have done well but the problem requires a much more comprehensive and sustainable long-term intervention.

I have therefore assigned the entire Justice Crime Prevention and Security Cluster to work on this issue intensively, joined by the Ministers of Social Development, Trade and Industry and Small Business Development.

The security cluster and economic departments had already begun working on this matter, following the Soweto incidents in January.

I have now directed them to work faster and to engage affected communities, organisations representing foreign nationals, business, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders to attend to the concerns raised on both sides.

The objective is to avoid future incidents by improving relations and promoting peaceful co-existence between citizens and our brothers and sisters within the continent, as well as other foreign nationals.

We will also be seeking cooperation and support from the affected foreign missions based in South Africa. The Minister of Home Affairs met with African Heads of Missions last week.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation will take these discussions forward as well in her engagements with the African Heads of Missions as well tomorrow, on the 17th of April.

We request Members of Parliament to work with us as well, in their constituencies, to improve relations and promote peaceful co-existence between our people and foreign nationals.

Measures are also being put in place to improve controls and better regulate immigration into our country.

In this regard, Government is making progress with establishing the Border Management Agency, which will manage the border environment and all ports of entry.

The capacity of the Department of Home Affairs is being improved to enable it to better handle migration issues especially at border posts.

In this regard, the SANDF will transfer three hundred and fifty soldiers to Home Affairs, to work as immigration officers at border posts.

Furthermore, the SANDF has deployed military personnel along the border line in seven provinces to prevent border crime activities and illegal border crossings.

Fellow South Africans,

We urge all of you to exercise calm and restraint.

We also urge those who use social media, to refrain from fanning the flames of violence on Facebook, *twitter* and other platforms.

We all have a responsibility to promote social cohesion, peaceful co-existence and good relations in the country.

Foreign nationals help us to develop a cosmopolitan atmosphere and we welcome their presence. We also want to see an increase in tourism figures from countries in the continent and to share a lot of business opportunities as part of promoting sustainable economic development in the continent.

The upcoming Africa Month celebrations in May provide an opportunity for us to further promote our African identity and good relations with our brothers and sisters from the continent.

We look forward to the celebrations of Africa Day in every province on the 25th of May.

Bakwethu, siyakhuzisa sithi asehliseni imimoya.

Ukuhlaselwa kwabantu bokufika kulelizwe akwemukelekile neze.

Sathola usizo emazweni amaningi ngesikhathi silwela inkululeko. Abazange basixoshe noma basihlukumeze.

Siyazizwa izinkinga ezibekwayo njengokuthi abanye abangabokufika abanamvume yokuba seNingizimu Africa.

Kubuye kukhalwe nangobugebengu obenziwa ngabanye bokufika kanye nokuthatha amathuba okuhweba nemisebenzi.

Siyazizwa lezizikhalazo futhi sizozilungisa. Kodwa siyagcizelela ukuthi akukho okungenza udlame lolu lwamukeleke. Siyalugxeka kakhulu.

Njengohulumeni siyayisebenza indaba yokuqinisa ezokuphepha emingceleni ukuze abantu bangangeni ngokungekho emthethweni ezweni. Sesitshale namasosha ukuze asize umnyango wezasekhaya, kuloludaba.

Honourable Members,

Let us work together to provide support to all foreign nationals who have been affected by this violence.

The Freedom Charter says there shall be peace and friendship. Our responsibility is to promote this legacy of peaceful coexistence and take it forward.

We also reaffirm our responsibility to contribute to a better Africa and a better world.

Let us work together to make our country a better place for all who live in it.

I thank you.