



20 November 2019

Commissioners Solomon Ayele Dersso and Maya Sahli-Fadel,

**JOINT LETTER OF URGENT APPEAL BY THE COMMISSIONER RAPPOREUR  
ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AND  
THE SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS,  
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND MIGRANTS IN AFRICA,  
REGARDING THE XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS ON MIGRANTS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

I have received your letter of appeal following the incidents of violence involving South Africans and foreign nationals in South Africa.

At the outset, let me reiterate that, the Government and People of South Africa condemns, in the strongest terms, the acts of violence directed at foreign nationals and South African citizens. South Africa is a constitutional democracy that is governed by the rule of law. Deeply enshrined in our Constitution is respect for, the promotion and protection of human rights of all peoples within the borders of South Africa irrespective of their citizenship or nationality.

My Government has strongly condemned the unfortunate loss of lives of 12 people (10 of whom were South African citizens and two foreign nationals), following the sporadic outbreak of violence in parts of the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal Provinces of South Africa. In order to prevent and forestall the recurrence of these unfortunate events, the South African Parliament has approved the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance which has been developed through a comprehensive consultation process involving government, Chapter 9 Institutions and civil society. The National Action Plan commits all sectors of our society to the promotion and protection of human rights and to raising awareness of anti-discrimination.

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation has also engaged with African diplomats accredited to South Africa and members of the African diaspora regarding the wellbeing of foreign nationals in order to seek collaborative solutions to this problem. I have also approached eminent African personalities, namely former Presidents Joaquim Chissano and Jakaya Kikwete, to lead investigations to identify the root causes of the recent turmoil.

In September 2019, I dispatched a team of special envoys which visited fellow countries on the Continent to explain what happened and the remedial action that the South African government is taking to address the recent events.


Honourable Commissioners, there remains a complex set of socio-economic issues relating to migration, immigration and the effective administration of these which need to be addressed by all AU Member States including South Africa.

In this regard, it is my firm view that the incidents in South Africa also reflect the need to have dialogue on issues related to irregular migration, and its challenges, which are related to peace and stability. In order to find lasting solutions to this challenge, we seek the cooperation of our fellow African Union Member States to jointly and effectively combat the push and pull factors that are driving migration. The dialogue should also endeavour to address the myriad challenges faced by receiving states, as well as responsibilities of sending and transit states.

Honourable Commissioners, the Government of South Africa reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the safety and dignity of all persons living within its border, as guaranteed under its Constitution. A more comprehensive report on the specific measures taken by South Africa will be forwarded to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights timeously.

Please accept, the renewed assurances of my highest regards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Cyril M Ramaphosa', written over a horizontal line.

**Mr Matamela Cyril M Ramaphosa**  
**President of the Republic of South Africa**

Commissioners Solomon Ayele Dersso and Maya Sahli-Fadel  
African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights  
**BANJUL**