



Southern African People's Solidarity Network

XENOPHOBIA OR AFROPHOBIA – NEED FOR URGENT ACTION AGAINST THE ATTACKS ON FOREIGN NATIONALS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) which has just concluded its SADC People's Summit that ran parallel to the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government in Dar Es Salaam has learned with shock about the inhumane violence levelled against fellow African brothers and sisters in South Africa and condemns it in the strongest terms.

SAPSN finds these acts as criminal, inhumane and barbaric. Not so many decades ago, South Africans dispersed by apartheid were housed all over the continent. SAPSN, therefore wishes to remind South Africans of what their former President Thabo Mbeki said in 2001 to highlight how the country is indebted to fellow nations for the support they rendered towards the liberation of the Southern African country. He had this to say ***“No country in the region was immune from paying heavily to help liberate South Africa and therefore South Africans are indebted to them permanently for their support”***. Africans need to unite and liberate themselves from the global neo-liberal economic orthodoxy whose hegemonic coercion has irrevocably separated leaders from the masses. Accusing fellow Africans for stealing South Africa's economy can only dissuade civil society from reclaiming the radical nationalist rhetoric that the whole liberation struggle was based upon.

SAPSN finds the reaction of the government of South Africa not commensurate to the challenge. It is SAPSN's view that, if the situation in South Africa is not given the attention it deserves, it has the potential to destabilize the whole region. The probability is high that in retaliation, innocent South Africans in other countries may be similarly victimized. As citizens of Southern Africa and as a network whose existence is hinged upon solidarity among SADC people, SAPSN is disappointed by the lackadaisical approach adopted by regional leaders and the regional body, SADC, to resolve the xenophobia attacks. The xenophobic attacks are an emergency issue that calls for urgent action.

SAPSN also finds it irresponsible, utterances by Hon. Bongani Mkongi, Deputy Minister of Police in South Africa saying some towns in South Africa are captured by foreign nationals, something which South Africans would not do in other countries. This is a reckless statement that deserve retraction as a matter of urgency.

SAPSN commends South African civil society organisations including the Lawyers for Human Rights, Southern African Federation of Trade Unions and Right to Know which rose to challenge the ongoing attacks.

Therefore, SAPSN calls upon:

- The SADC Chair on Regional Organ for Politics, Defence and Security, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Emmerson D. Mnangagwa to call for an extraordinary meeting to execute the organ's mandate on mediating in the affairs of member states that face instability.
- South Africans to support the said civil society organisations to stop the ongoing attacks;
- South African government to act with resolve to curb this criminality mindful of its international obligation under the international migration convention that all people in the country irrespective of their nationality and immigration standards still have rights;
- President of South Africa to compel the Deputy Minister Police to withdraw his statement and offer public apology;
- All SADC member states and AU to make their views known on this matter and convene as a matter of urgency to map the way forward on how to stop South Africans from disrupting unity that Africans need so desperately;
- All SAPSN members in their respective country to find ways of dealing with this problem, devise rapid campaigns that will compel regional leaders in their respective countries to do more than they are comfortable with to address this challenge.

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