

Calls for greater action from the South African government following rise in violence against women and xenophobic attacks

As leaders of ActionAid programmes across Africa, we are gravely concerned, shocked and grieved by the continuing wave of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. As South African civil society organisations (CSOs) mark today (Friday, 13th September) as “the real black Friday” with protests calling for an end to violence against women, we stand with South African CSOs to condemn prejudice, incitements and acts of violence, including perennial femicide, gender based violence and the xenophobic attacks that are directed at migrants, people seeking asylum, refugees and citizens of other African countries within South Africa.

“Anti-immigrant sentiment from right-wing populists across the globe are diverting attention from governments’ failure to offer decent work to citizens, by blaming migrants for lack of jobs and economic insecurity. Violence against migrants in South Africa, especially from other African countries, continues to result in deaths, serious injuries, looting and destruction of businesses and properties. This has fostered an environment of fear and uncertainty, resulting from the total impunity for perpetrators and slow action of law enforcement.”

We call for a greater action by South African Government on security and in ensuring the respect and fulfillment of peoples’ human rights. We reiterate that these are crimes against humanity and the South African and other African governments have duty to address the structural drivers which are inequality and lack of opportunities for young people on the continent.

We further unequivocally condemn the reprisal attacks that have risen in other African countries including Nigeria, Zambia, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We note too that these countries are even more non-responsive to issues of femicide and gender based violence. We find those governments equally responsible and accountable for the loss to lives and properties of both their own citizens and of South African related businesses.

We call on the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC) and other regional bodies to address the xenophobic attacks and underlying socio-economic conditions that ferment negative sentiments towards migrants and hold as intolerable such xenophobic attacks. We remind the AU of the aspirations of Agenda 2063 for an integrated continent; politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa’s renaissance and with good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

We call on citizens across Africa and their institutions to work on building relationships and solidarity, recognizing that failures in many governance systems have led to a welling up of hate and fear of difference. Awareness, understanding and the exchange of similar experiences facilitates a bridge of friendship and fosters partnerships across nations. We urge citizens to reject fake news and false information on social media until they have confirmed its authenticity before taking action.

ActionAid is a global federation that works closely with citizens, civil society organizations and social movements to empower people living in poverty and exclusion to fight for women’s rights, social justice and an end to poverty. At ActionAid, we help people use their own power to bring about real change for women, communities and societies. We are present in 46 countries, 19 of which are in Africa.

Signed:

Executive Directors and Country Directors of ActionAid programmes in Africa:

ActionAid Burundi

ActionAid DRC

ActionAid Ethiopia

ActionAid Ghana

ActionAid Kenya

ActionAid Liberia

ActionAid Malawi

ActionAid Mozambique

ActionAid Nigeria

ActionAid Rwanda

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