

City of Johannesburg Press Statement by
Executive Mayor, Cllr Herman Mashaba

Protests against foreign nationals are not a cure for joblessness and crime

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I am deeply concerned to hear reports of xenophobic attacks and planned protests which aim to target foreign nationals residing within communities across Gauteng.

I would like to state outright that I condemn xenophobia and my administration will do everything in its power to prevent any outburst of xenophobic violence in our city.

There is no place for xenophobia in the City of Johannesburg.

This is a city built by and made up of migrants from all over the world. We are the pride of our country and continent and we cannot allow for foreign nationals to be scapegoated for the failures of previous administrations to fulfil its promises.

There are many people who out of desperation due to political, social and economic instability in their countries are seeking a better life in South Africa. It is essential that national government cleans up its act and ensures that there is quick and efficient processing of asylum seekers and refugees.

This would protect those who wish to legitimately enter our country from criminal elements, including slum lords and drug traffickers, who abuse their desperation and are able to evade the law.

I welcome foreign nationals into our city and country. Foreign nationals buy goods in our country, create businesses and stimulate economic growth. This is key to our vision of a prosperous and inclusive city.

I call on all residents living in our City, no matter where you are from, to respect the laws.

Rightfully, communities feel frustrated and burdened by the reality of not having jobs which permit them to support themselves and their loved ones and, of course, we must reject criminality in all its forms within our communities.

However, attacks on foreign nationals is an unfortunate misdirection of the community's demand for safety and jobs.

While I sympathise with the concerns of communities, we cannot condone partaking in xenophobic action that will endanger the safety of residents. To do so would be to open the door to attacks such as those seen in 2008 in which dozens of foreign nationals were senselessly killed.

South Africans have a right to be angry because government has not done enough to stimulate job creation and increase the number of opportunities for all within our economy.

Equally, we can never accept lawlessness in our city and any criminal, whether a South African national or a foreign national must be apprehended.

My administration in Johannesburg is doing everything in its power to turn the tide on high crime rates in our city and we have already made solid inroads through increased police visibility, intelligence-led policing and through the efforts of the K9-Narcotics Unit that I launched towards the end of last year.

I understand the frustration of our people and have witnessed it firsthand in engagements with communities. However, we cannot allow our communities to descend into lawlessness.

In my recent engagements with community members in Rosettenville I emphasized the need for residents not to take the law into their own hands and rather allow law enforcement to deal with matters of illegality and crime.

Foreign nationals are not our enemy. By working together with our foreign brothers and sisters and by all of us observing the rule of law, we can create safe, integrated and prosperous communities for mutual benefit.

Instead of planned xenophobic marches, the national government should be held to account for its failure to create meaningful and sustainable economic growth for our country and to secure our borders.

For those of us now in public office, it is our duty to ensure that we are a caring and responsive government that listens to the concerns of our people and work tirelessly to ensure that they are addressed.

Cllr Herman Mashaba
Executive Mayor
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