



IRRA
INTERNATIONAL
Refugee Rights Association
Uluslararası Mülteci Hakları Derneği



PUBLIC STATEMENT

On the Rising Anti-Migrant Violence and Risk of Human Rights Violations in South Africa

30 June 2026

As the International Refugee Rights Association (Uluslararası Mülteci Hakları Derneği), we are deeply concerned by the recent rise in xenophobia-driven developments targeting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers across various parts of South Africa. We are particularly alarmed by the events that have unfolded following the unofficial “leave the country” calls issued by certain anti-migrant groups ahead of 30 June 2026.

Reports from international media outlets, statements by human rights organizations, and information emerging from affected communities indicate an increase in threats directed at migrant and refugee populations. In several areas, incidents involving forced evictions, attacks on businesses, looting, intimidation, and physical violence have been reported. Many individuals have reportedly been compelled to leave their homes due to security concerns, while several countries have taken emergency measures to facilitate the return of their nationals.

Amid the growing anti-migrant rhetoric, information emerging from the ground suggests that not only undocumented migrants, but also refugees, asylum seekers, and even individuals perceived to be foreign nationals have become targets of hostility. The collective blaming, stigmatization, and targeting of people on the basis of their nationality, origin, or migration status is unacceptable and incompatible with fundamental human rights principles.

No economic, social, or political challenge can justify actions that threaten the right to life, personal security, and human dignity. Migrants and refugees must not be used as scapegoats for structural challenges facing a country. Hate speech, xenophobia, and discrimination do not resolve social problems; rather, they deepen divisions and create conditions for further human rights violations and humanitarian harm.

We are also concerned by reports indicating obstacles to migrants' and refugees' access to essential services, including healthcare, education, and housing. Such practices undermine internationally recognized human rights standards and the principle of equal treatment before the law.

In this context, we call upon the Government of South Africa to:

- Ensure the safety and protection of all migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers residing within its territory;
- Take effective measures to prevent hate crimes, xenophobic violence, and acts of intimidation;
- Uphold the rule of law and prevent any non-state actors or vigilante groups from exercising unlawful control, coercion, or enforcement functions;
- Conduct prompt, impartial, and effective investigations into reported human rights violations and ensure accountability for those responsible;
- Guarantee access to healthcare, education, housing, and other essential services without discrimination.

We also call upon human rights organizations, refugee and migrant rights groups, trade unions, professional associations, academic institutions, and civil society actors in South Africa and internationally to closely monitor developments, strengthen solidarity efforts, and take a principled stand against xenophobia, discrimination, and violence.

Human rights are universal. A person's nationality, ethnicity, or migration status must never determine the level of protection they receive, nor should it diminish their right to safety, dignity, and equal treatment.