



**STATEMENT ON ACTS OF VIOLENCE DIRECTED TO FOREIGN NATIONALS,
DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL BY HONOURABLE
PREMIER SENZO MCHUNU TO THE LEGISLATURE ON 23 APRIL 2015**

Madame Speaker,
Deputy Speaker,
Leader of Government Business,
Members of Provincial Legislature,

The past few days have been a challenging one for our Province of KwaZulu-Natal in particular, and South Africa in general. In the eyes of the world, our humanity as a country came under question, and its long-standing stature as a symbol of civility and tolerance was undermined.

The latest visuals of a Mozambican man being stabbed and left to die in Alexandra Township, summed up the barbaric nature and gruesomeness of the violence that is engulfing our country. What is even sickening, is to learn that this fellow African man lost his life over unpaid cigarettes. This extreme barbarism, has brought our world renowned value of Ubuntu under question.

Madame Speaker and honourable members, indeed that was **our moment of shame**.

Our Province of KwaZulu-Natal has been thrust into the spotlight after the eruption of this violence directed to foreign nationals of African origin, mainly, in the townships around the City of eThekweni.

Not only have these attacks led to the loss of lives and the destruction of property, but they have created a blight on the reputational image of the Province and the country. It has resulted to a perception being created that the province and the country, is hostile to foreigners from the rest of Africa.



While no efforts should be spared to find the root causes of the attacks, the government of KwaZulu-Natal has the immediate duty to ensure that it moves with speed to nip this scourge in the bud and create a platform conducive to deal with the complexities of the challenge. We are not only the second contributor to the gross domestic product of the country, but an integral part of the global community and an investment destination of choice.

Critically, and owing to our comparative advantage of being home to two ports, our province is positioning itself as the gateway to the African continent. This, therefore, means that as provincial government we need to do everything possible to ensure that we project an image of political stability and solid leadership.

In this regard, a comprehensive communication campaign to deal with some of the above-mentioned challenges is underway and led by the Provincial Government Communication in the Office of the Premier. This to date has included a range of media engagements to ensure that we drive our message on efforts to diffuse this situation. We will be engaging on further community engagements through town hall meetings. In order for this anti-xenophobia campaign to gain traction, we have engaged Ladysmith Black Mambazo who as part of their 55th Anniversary celebration has joined forces with Malian international artist, Salif Keita to record a song on anti-xenophobia. This will be recorded in the coming week.

Earlier Responses

When the first incident was reported in our Province, which had initially led to a displacement of about 200 people in Isipingo, south of Durban, as the Executive Council government we moved swiftly in condemning these acts of violence in our statement issued on 2nd April 2015.



In that statement, we affirmed our commitment to observance of human rights. We were clear then, as we are clear now that the protection of life and end to any form of violence is paramount for the stability and development of our Province. We also moved to appoint a panel of experts that is led by the former United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Judge Navi Pillay and made of other prominent South Africans in the field of conflict resolution, business and civil society.

We did this fully cognisant of challenges facing our country especially - poverty, unemployment and inequality, which are partly the source of discontent for those feeling left behind in South Africa's growth story. It is precisely an appreciation of our current socio-economic challenges that our efforts at eliminating these challenges, are rooted on comprehensive approach to poverty eradication, economic development and social protection of the vulnerable in our society.

Whatever our issues, we have stated on several platforms since the outbreak of violence directed at foreign nationals that we embrace human rights as inalienable and indivisible. This means then that we have an obligation to promote, defend and fulfil human rights.

Madame Speaker,

We have listened to views from certain quarters of our society, which suggest that as government, **we have not done enough in addressing the evolving landscape** in township and informal business sectors. Whether or not there is truth in this assertion, is a matter for debate.

However, we do recognise that part of the challenge we have been going through as a country, points us to how a sense of economic exclusion in a society, can create a seed for discontent. It equally tells us how desperate the underlying social tensions in our country, are looking for an outlet for expression. Therefore, if this question is not settled, it will always breed conflict over competition for resources.



Madame Speaker,

We are of the view that there has been **serious progress in stabilising the situation** in our Province. This stability and calm is an outcome of integrated approach that we followed and closer cooperation between the provincial government and eThekweni Municipality. It is also as result of a week-long programme of action involving government, His Majesty, civil society and security agencies. On Monday 13th April 2015, a delegation of government met with His Majesty to engage on matters he had raised for the attention of government, in particular in as far as immigration and security is concerned.

On the 14th April 2015, we convened a meeting of African diplomats wherein the Premier was joined by Minister of Home Affairs to engage over issues of concern. We again expressed our regret for all the violence, looting and displacement of people that had happened. We visited hotspots in Phoenix, Verulam, KwaMashu, Isipingo and Chatsworth. We met with traders and small business operators to hear what their concerns could be, and interventions that government must implement as support for township economies.

We had the **Peace March** under the theme of “**Africa Unite**”. We had thousands of peace loving people who voted with their feet to say “No to Xenophobia”. We thank all those South Africans of goodwill who stepped in to assist all those who were displaced by this violence. We have no doubt that *imbizo* by Isilo Samabandla on the 20th April 2015, was a major milestone in our week-long programme of action. We thank His Majesty for convening that *imbizo*, and most importantly for calling for peace. His clarion call particularly to Amakhosi and Izinduna, is of serious significance.

We have been consistent in acknowledging that the issue of immigration has its own complexities. It cannot be disputed that there will be illegal immigrants that have no valid permits and documentation that may in the course of their stay in our country commit crime. It is nonetheless, dangerous to take a posture that generalises on such a sensitive and potentially explosive issue.



Having said that we must however, be clear that the authority of the state and its security, is a top priority of government. It is central to any government's ability to implement its policies and programme of action so that the lives of people are improved.

It is a given that there would always be externally and internally generated factors that determine state security at any given period. It is thus important that as citizens, our conduct is such that we protect our country from any threat of instability, and further that we act as citizen diplomats in order to protect the image of our country.

We cannot allow our country to be portrayed as murderous and violent, as this has far reaching implications on our standing in the world as well as on building viable economic relations with other nations of the world. We cannot allow to have our country portrayed as xenophobic, because we are not a country full of hatred for other people.

Madame Speaker and Honourable Members, we continue to call upon the citizens of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal to desist from acts of violence against fellow human beings. We are a nation whose freedom was attained through the support of international community and most particularly, of fellow African countries.

Our economic future as a country, lies in our integration with the rest of the African market. In the long run, this not only damages internal social relations between South Africans and foreign nationals, but the standing of South Africa among nations in the rest of Africa.

Ultimately, the true test of any intervention in this regard, would be how we build a society that values social cohesion and understand the virtues of diversity. A cycle of violence cannot be good for anyone, whether they are local or foreign national and it impacts negatively on the economy, thus undermining efforts to create jobs and environment for investment.



premier

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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

We want to emphasize the fact that there can be no justification for resorting to violence or taking human life. There are other ways of voicing our concerns and problems without violence. It is not Ubuntu to discriminate on the basis of race, nationality or ethnicity. It is not Ubuntu to discriminate on the basis of class and gender. Nor is Ubuntu to discriminate on the basis of physical, or any other form of disability.

Ubuntu Abande Ebantwini

I thank you.