



KWAZULU-NATAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

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Church leaders' statement on foreign nationals and xenophobia

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In September of 2019 Church Leaders in KwaZulu/Natal [issued a statement](#) condemning the xenophobic violence occurring at that time. Today with the pressures of Covid-19 adding to the already unbearable burden of poverty and unemployment, we find it necessary to lament the rise in xenophobic attitudes and the outbreak of violence.

We therefore affirm clearly and unequivocally:

- that all people, (regardless of nationality or country of birth or ethnic origin), are children of God, created in his image and likeness and therefore having the same innate dignity, value and worth;
- that fear and prejudice or hatred for people of differing origins (xenophobia) is unbiblical and directly opposed to the teaching of Christ that we must respect, accept and love one another;
- that we stand and advocate with the poor and marginalised – both South African and other nationalities. As we look first at ourselves, we decry the fact that an unacceptably high number of our South African brothers and sisters are suffering from extreme poverty, hunger, homelessness and unemployment.
- that notwithstanding this, our foreign national sisters and brothers are not the right target for South Africans anger, frustration and disappointment arising from the economic and social injustices they are experiencing. We strongly condemn all violence and discrimination, in particular that against those of foreign origin. Such violence is unjust and further foments anger, frustration and hopelessness among our own poor and unemployed;
- that we strongly advocate for dialogue, mutual acceptance and collaboration as God's way of enabling South Africans and Foreign Nationals to rise above their dire circumstances. This principle is evident in both the Old and the New Testaments, from Moses to Jesus and his Apostles;
- that as live out this injunction of Scripture:
 - we encourage all South Africans to practice Ubuntu (Solidarity) with our foreign brothers and sisters, modelled on the words of Leviticus 19:33-34: "Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land. Treat them like [fellow Black Africans] and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once [treated as] foreigners [during the days of Apartheid]. I am the Lord your God". Since we believe that black lives matter, no matter the country of origin, we will work to consolidate reconciliation and hospitality.

- In the same way we encourage all foreign national brothers and sisters to respond to this challenge by Jeremiah to the Hebrews living as Foreign Nationals in exile in Babylon: *“Work for peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it; for its welfare will determine your welfare.” (Jer 29:7)*. As highlighted in this text, together with the examples of Joseph, Daniel and Esther among others, foreigners living in other lands have a key role to play in building up the peace and prosperity of all. Respect for and observation of the rule of law is underlined in these words: *“native born [South Africans] and foreigners are equal before the Lord and are subject to the same decrees” (Numbers 15:15)*.
- that we appeal to all political, business, civic and religious leaders across KZN & South Africa to remember that victimising foreign nationals undermines & contradicts our own struggle for liberation from colonial occupation and racial oppression in which many of our African sisters and brothers supported and sustained us at great cost to themselves.
- that we urge our political leaders in particular, to take a moral and humanitarian stand for justice, peace and reconciliation, in short Ubuntu, which is basic human love and solidarity.
 - Business leaders, we urge you to use your positions of economic advantage to lobby and work towards workers’ rights and protections and that you speak out when you see fellow employers taking advantage of workers who are so desperate that they accept inhumanly low wages. Such practices are not only unethical, but they fuel xenophobic attitudes and behaviours.
 - We urge political leaders to take a moral and humanitarian stand for justice, peace and reconciliation, in short Ubuntu. We remind you of the “Report of the Special Reference Group on Migration and Community Integration in KZN”. Written in 2015 this document contains honest, even frightening, findings as well as exceptionally demanding and important recommendations.
- that the impact of Covid-19 and its Lockdowns have been extremely hard on all of us, but none more so than on the marginalised, both South African and foreign nationals, accordingly we urge our political leaders to be guided by justice and equity and:
 - Remember that relief is needed by all poor people including foreign nationals
 - Make the vaccine available to everyone, including foreign nationals
 - Re-open the Refugee Reception Centres to provide services to all who need assistance. Many refugees are faced with expired documents and are therefore placed in extremely vulnerable circumstances with regards to access to banking, education, livelihood opportunities, housing and medical care. These need to be opened as a matter of urgency. We further call for the re-opening of police stations, such as the Workshop and Commercial Road Police Stations in eThekweni to service these areas which have been particularly affected.
- we commit ourselves to ongoing work and dialogue around this issue in the places and spaces where we lead and have influence in particular, we commit to;
 - Developing a theology of reconciliation and hospitality in and through all our Churches;

- o Continuing to provide relief to both South Africans and foreign nationals who are in need as we have the means;
- o Praying for peace and transformation in our communities;
- o Making our communities into safe places where local people and foreigners can integrate and connect with each other.

In closing our prayer to the God of justice, peace and hospitality remains: Bless Africa, Guard our children, Guide our leaders and Give us peace. Amen!

Signed:

+ Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, OFM, Catholic Archbishop of Durban and Chairperson of the KwaZulu Natal Church Leaders Group

Bishop Nkosinathi Myaka, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, Chairperson of the KwaZulu Natal Christian Council

Bishop Nathi Zondi, TrueVine Family of Churches.

Apostle Collins Dhlomo, Senior Pastor Of Covenant Fellowship Church International and Chairperson of the Alliance of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of RSA

Bishop Linda Mandindi, Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Natal Coastal Synod

Archdeacon Mervyn Singh, Representing the Vicar General of the Diocese of Natal, Anglican Church.

Major Thataetsile P Semeno, The Salvation Army

Rev Siphso Sokhela, National General Secretary South Africa YMCA.

Grant John Crawford, Senior pastor to Onelife family of churches and an Apostolic leader of New Covenant ministries International

Bishop B Mchunu, President Church Leaders Council of South Africa (CLCSA)

Bishop KE Khomo, President Interdenominational African Ministers Association in Southern Africa (IDAMASA)

Pastor Aaron Munsamy, CARES / CityConnect

Dr Francois Neethling, Dutch Reformed Church

Rev Musa Zondi, Chairperson of Diakonia Council of Churches

Rev SW Sikhosana, Chairperson of the Thukela, Amajuba & Mzinyathi Christian Council

Bishop BM Buthelezi, Chairperson of the KwaZulu Region Christian Council

Archbishop Sthembiso BB Ngcamu, Chairperson of the Southern KwaZulu Natal Christian Council

Pastor Robert Ntuli, Board Member of City Story, Durban