



*PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 1 APRIL 2015*

### **Diakonia calls for immediate cessation of xenophobic violence in Isipingo**

Diakonia Council of Churches expresses deep concern about the continuing xenophobic related violent attacks against foreign nationals in Isipingo, Umlazi and Malukazi.

Hundreds of people have been affected. Some have had their businesses and properties looted and many injured. Several have been left homeless. There are reports of some abductions and missing persons.

We lament that most of the victims are law-abiding migrants seeking a safe and better life for their families in South Africa. We are gravely concerned at the prospect of further escalation of violence especially against the most vulnerable, including women and children.

Such xenophobic violence is in direct contradiction of our nation's professed belief in *ubuntu*. The violence has laid bare the aching soul of our nation and revealed that we are a nation in need of healing. The violence is symptomatic of the deep structural problems in South Africa and foreign nationals have become scapegoats. Reducing the humanity in them makes violence against them easier and even 'justified'.

We lend our voice to the condemnation of the senseless violence and implore the law enforcement agencies, together with community and religious leaders, to bring these attacks to an immediate cessation and to offer full protection for all persons affected.

We strongly urge communities in Isipingo, Umlazi and Malukazi to live the spirit of *ubuntu* which is fundamental to our coexistence as equal human beings living in an open, free and democratic country.

The Book of Leviticus (19:34) urges us: "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself."

We therefore call for:

- \* All those involved in these criminal acts to refrain from targeting vulnerable sectors of the community and victimising foreign nationals in their community.
- \* Use of full force of the law to clamp down on xenophobic attacks and bring perpetrators to justice.
- \* People in positions of authority to refrain from making reckless and inflammatory statements that may be taken as an excuse by criminal elements.
- \* Community dialogue between religious leaders, community leaders, local businesses and foreign nationals to explore ways of working together and peaceful co-existence.

\* Government to embark upon systematic civic education on the positive social and economical contribution migrants make to South Africa.

Revd Ian Booth, Chairperson, Diakonia Council of Churches