

UKZN COMMUNITY CONDEMNS XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent spate of xenophobic violence and hostility currently taking place in South Africa. Not only are the acts of violence inhumane but they are also unconstitutional. Human dignity, equality, mutual respect and fraternity are the values that underpin the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They are the core pillars on which our democracy stands. The vast majority of South Africans are committed to basic human rights, international law, tolerance, understanding and social- cohesion. Similarly, the vision, mission, core values and goals of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) support and create an extension of these core principles within the higher education sphere.

Being the Premier University of African Scholarship includes a commitment to producing knowledge that may be used for the development of the African continent and is based on identifiable outcomes, impacts positively on communities, contributes significantly to harmonious inter-cultural relations, as well as plays a role towards peace and stability as a fundamental base for the development agenda.

Our University community comprises of staff and students from all over the world and as a University, we are proud of our diversity. It is this quality that allows us to provide a globally connected environment necessary for an institution of Higher Learning. The University embraces a culture and spirit of Ubuntu, and fosters a welcoming and supportive environment to its international staff and students wherein diversity is respected and valued. As an institution, we are fundamentally opposed to discrimination and social exclusion, and believe that this sort of violence puts us all as a

society at risk and will ultimately leads us down the path of a lawlessness and chaotic society.

As we have seen, these xenophobic attacks have resulted in the displacement of thousands of human beings. Our fellow African brothers and sisters have had to abandon their homes and their economic enterprises, and be relocated to communal areas that lack even the most basic of essentials. Amidst the disarray, Brand South Africa and our economy have also been severely hampered. In solidarity with the non-violence campaign, the University community has been urged to participate in the various anti-xenophobia activities being arranged both in and around KwaZulu-Natal, as well as throughout South Africa. Further, I call upon all sectors of society to join us in rejecting and denouncing xenophobia and all related discrimination.

UKZN is home to almost 3 000 international students and many members of staff emanate from around the globe. The majority of our international students who have served to enrich the University life experience for us, hail from the Africa continent, notably SADC countries, and have shared their intellectual and cultural stance. Our commitment as the University of KwaZulu-Natal is to ensure that our international students and staff are welcomed as part of the University family and treated with respect and dignity as we have always done. We are committed to ensuring the safety and security of all members of the University community, and more especially at this time where fear, anxiety and the safety of foreign nationals is prevalent. The University also urges all stakeholders to work together in adopting a peaceful environment that embraces and values diversity.

The late President Nelson Mandela, has stated "...for to be free is not merely to cast off ones chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others".

This is a dictum by which we should all live.

***Dr Albert van Jaarsveld is the Vice-Chancellor and Principal
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