

SAYAS STATEMENT ON XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS



As members of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS), we express our shock at the recent violence that has been directed at fellow Africans living in our country. We reject these acts and the philosophies upon which they are based in the strongest possible terms. We do so firstly based on humanitarian grounds. These acts not only violate basic human rights, but do so in an extreme way, targeting very vulnerable people.

We also reject any form of xenophobia from our position as scientists who actively encourage and depend upon collaboration with colleagues from around the world, including other African countries. As young scientists, we work in close collaboration with foreign nationals every day on issues that are of vital importance to society and the economy in South Africa. Indeed, many of us are foreign nationals ourselves and passionately contribute our scarce skills and specialised knowledge towards the development of South Africa and Africa as a whole.

Science, is by its very nature, a collaborative exercise. The complexity of the challenges that we face, not only as a nation, but also globally, requires an expansion and strengthening of diverse relationships that allow for shared knowledge and skills. Apart from solving problems, it is also clear that South Africa cannot be internationally competitive in a global knowledge economy without these networks. Any message to the world and to Africa that foreign nationals are not welcome in our country, will significantly damage our competitiveness as a nation.

We undertake to participate as actively as possible in efforts that call for an end to discrimination and violence against foreign nationals in South Africa. We also commit to assist those affected as best we can. We call on other scientists in South Africa to support this call through their institutions and networks.

We also recognize the efforts of the South African Government and call on them to do everything in their power to protect foreign nationals living in this country.

Finally, we also strongly support the statement from the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) to condemn xenophobic attacks, originally prepared and released in October 2008, and recently re-circulated.

Issued by Prof Voster Muchenje and Dr Tolullah Oni, Co-Chairs, on behalf of the South African Young Academy of Science