



Media Statement: Oxfam South Africa reacts to Anti-Migrant tensions

Attention: Editors

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oxfam South Africa calls for calm, dignity and justice amid rising anti-migrant tensions.

Oxfam South Africa is deeply concerned by the growing wave of anti-migrant mobilisation, intimidation, and violence unfolding in parts of South Africa, including incidents associated with the so-called “March to March” movement and related actions targeting foreign nationals and migrant-owned businesses.

South Africa is facing a profound social and economic crisis. Communities across the country are living through high unemployment, deepening poverty, rising inequality, failing public services, and widespread insecurity. These frustrations are real, legitimate, and cannot be dismissed.

However, migrants and refugees are not the cause of South Africa’s structural problems.

At a time of rising hardship, there is a growing risk that public anger is being redirected toward vulnerable communities rather than toward the systemic failures and inequalities that continue to shape life in South Africa. History has repeatedly shown that when economic frustration is politicised through exclusion, scapegoating, and fear, the consequences are devastating for social cohesion, democracy, and human rights.

Oxfam South Africa believes it is possible, and necessary, to hold two truths at once:

- Communities have genuine concerns around jobs, safety, service delivery, and economic exclusion;
- Those concerns must never be addressed through xenophobia, violence, discrimination, collective punishment, or the erosion of constitutional rights.

South Africa's Constitution and democratic values demand that all people living within the country be treated with dignity and protected under the rule of law, regardless of nationality or migration status.

We are particularly concerned by the normalisation of rhetoric that frames migrants as responsible for unemployment, crime, or state failure without credible evidence. Such narratives oversimplify deeply rooted structural problems while placing vulnerable people at risk.

South Africa's inequality crisis did not begin with migration. It is rooted in decades of exclusion, unemployment, unequal access to wealth and opportunity, austerity, spatial injustice, and economic systems that continue to leave millions behind. Addressing these realities requires bold social and economic policy interventions; not hostility toward poor and marginalised communities.

Oxfam South Africa therefore calls for:

- An immediate end to all forms of xenophobic violence, intimidation, and hate speech;
- Political leaders and public figures to act responsibly and avoid inflammatory rhetoric;
- Government to strengthen lawful, rights-based responses to migration and social grievances;
- Greater investment in jobs, social protection, public services, and local economic development;
- Civil society, faith leaders, labour movements, and communities to actively promote social cohesion and solidarity.

We also urge media platforms and public commentators to report responsibly and avoid language that fuels fear, panic, or division.

South Africa's future cannot be built through exclusion. It must be built through justice, dignity, equality, and collective solutions to shared challenges.

In moments of social tension, we must resist the temptation to turn against one another and instead confront the structural inequalities that continue to deny millions of people, South Africans and migrants alike, the opportunity to live with dignity.

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