

**MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA**  
**(For Immediate release- 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2019)**

On the behalf of the **Southern African Chapter of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Africa (PAOA)**, representing a constituency of over 4000 congregations in 10 SADC countries and the **Northmead Assembly of God Church**, we wish to condemn the attacks on foreign nationals as witnessed in some parts of the Republic of South Africa in the past few days. We are deeply saddened by the reported loss of lives and destruction of property in that country. We do recognize that some of our members currently engaged in Christian ministry and other humanitarian activities in South Africa are potentially at risk, given the seemingly volatile situation.

We therefore seize this trying moment to advise the government of South Africa to do more in restoring peace, tolerance and safety to both its citizens and foreign nationals, some of whom are contributing significantly towards the development of that country.

We further implore governments in Sub-Saharan Africa to use this time, difficult as it may be, to investigate the underlying causes of Xenophobia such as poverty, unemployment and the rise in crime, with the hope of resolving these challenges under the existing protocols of both the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). If the continent has to leverage its vast opportunities and effectively drive innovative initiatives like the **One-Visa** campaign, then all countries have to be seen to promote a culture of tolerance, civility, peaceful co-existence, love and acceptance. In this vein, we commend and encourage the Zambian Government's current efforts to resolve the situation in question through the SADC Troika Organ for Politics, Defence and Security. Equally, we welcome the calls for unity by various political and religious leaders as well as Civil Society Organisations across the continent.

It is our earnest appeal that as a continent, we go back to the drawing board and reinvent ourselves by summoning the sense of solidarity that made Africa stand as one people against *imperialism, colonialism and apartheid*. We can equally stand as one people against poverty, unemployment, crime and any other vice.

It is on this backdrop that we also call for calm and tolerance among citizens of countries that may be tempted to retaliate the xenophobic attacks that have directly impacted their compatriots. An *eye for an eye* is not the way to respond, in this case. Two wrongs do not make a right. Therefore, any civic response to voice concerns on the matter at hand, should be undertaken lawfully and peacefully. Acting in retaliation is contrary to the **Ubuntu** spirit espoused by our galant Pan-Africanists and founding Fathers, whose sacrificial and selfless efforts formed the core of the quest for the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), now AU. Thus, retaliatory actions significantly undermine diplomatic discussions currently underway by respective national leaders, whose endeavours are aimed towards, what we hope to be, a lasting solution to the persistent problem of Xenophobia. We must remember that we are **ONE BIG AFRICAN FAMILY** and we must strive to achieve the UNITY aspiration at all costs. Our call is anchored on the Word of God that should be the basis for promoting unity in South Africa and all affected countries, as repositied in **Leviticus 19:33-34** of the Holy Bible:

***"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God."***

*We also take the opportunity to express our deepest condolences to the people of Zimbabwe on the passing away of the country's Founding Father and African Statesman Robert G. Mugabe. We trust that former President Mugabe will be mourned in peace and unity.*

We call upon the Church to pray unceasingly for the above biblical ideal to be realized on the entire continent of Africa. Further, we encourage churches to collaborate with relevant State Actors to reach out to needy families in affected communities, as we trust God for full restoration of peace and normalcy.

May God bless our great continent.

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