



Dear Partners and supporters of Volunteer Africa 32° south,

I'm taking this opportunity to write and express our concerns about the recent violence and xenophobic attitudes which have been widely publicised around the world. The images of violence in some of our townships are horrific and there is no doubt that human rights violations run high in parts of the country at the moment.

As a South African I am extremely upset by what is happening. VA32 joins our government, church leaders, NGO's and the majority of our population in condemning the behaviour of a minority. South Africa is a country of extremes and it has overcome some massive challenges in its recent history, with many a challenge still to be addressed. In recent history we have overcome a racist regime, attained a democracy with one of the globes strongest recognised constitutions and, as a nation, showed a remarkable tendency towards reconciliation. Our post apartheid era has been around positive growth, foreign support and a genuine enthusiasm to honestly become a rainbow nation.

The wave of xenophobia is happening in some of the larger townships of South Africa. Here poverty is rife, living conditions extremely poor and unemployment high. Dissatisfaction amongst certain South Africans has been exacerbated by the influx of Zimbabweans, Somalis and Nigerians who have sought refuge from atrocious conditions in their home countries by coming to South Africa. These foreigners, like South Africans, need to survive and are often very active and entrepreneurial in their attainment of survival despite the challenges of being in a new country. Sadly a sector of South Africa's lower socio-economic population become envious of foreign success and instead of being proactive see it as a threat to their security, a threat to their survival and resort to unacceptable levels of violence in which they target the foreigners.

It is important for our partners to recognise the localised nature of the violence and xenophobia. Headlines and images in the media too easily misconstrue the reality and distort the nature of what is happening. Our current negative trend is not random and it is not directed at foreign travellers in South Africa. Too many foreigners are in this country making exceptional contributions to the well being of the country and its road to recovery.

VA32, like many other organisations who have become vital to local communities, education initiatives and humanitarian concerns, are requesting that those of you who support the work we do are not feeling threatened by what has happened. Our work is essential and ingrained into the day to day operations of schools and communities. Volunteers are not at risk, and communities are requesting that the support they receive is not jeopardised by the violence that has shocked our nation.

This letter is really a short attempt to place the current unrest into context, let you know that we are not ignoring our reality, and should we ever feel reason for concern in regard to volunteer safety, we will be the first to act.

Thanks for taking the time to read this and should there be any questions or concerns, please give us a call.

Regards,

Michael Denison
Director Projects

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