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GRAPE Media statement

GRAPE Condemns Anti-Migrant Violence in South Africa, Calls for Systemic Economic Justice and Institutional Accountability

The Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE) expresses deep concern over recurring incidents of xenophobia, anti-migrant sentiment, and violence directed at foreign nationals in South Africa and elsewhere on the African continent.

As people of faith committed to justice, human dignity, and the flourishing of all people, we unequivocally reject all forms of discrimination, exclusion, intimidation, and violence based on nationality, ethnicity, gender, language, or migration status. Every person is created in the image of God and possesses inherent dignity and worth.

Scripture speaks clearly about our responsibilities towards foreigners and strangers. In Leviticus 19:33-34, God commands: *"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."* Exodus 22:21 reinforces this: *"Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt."*

These commands are not optional acts of charity but expressions of God's justice. They call us to remember our shared humanity and our common experience of vulnerability.

We recognise that xenophobic attitudes have emerged within contexts of deep poverty, unemployment, inequality, and social exclusion. Yet migrants and refugees are not the cause of South Africa's structural economic challenges. Scapegoating vulnerable groups neither creates jobs nor addresses inequality — it diverts attention from the systemic injustices that deny millions access to economic opportunity and a life of dignity.

GRAPE therefore affirms transformative economic justice as an essential response to both poverty and social division. Transformative economic measures— especially a Universal Basic Income (UBI) — quality public services like healthcare and education, and robust social protection are critical for building a society in which all people can live with dignity and security—and for reducing the conditions that fuel xenophobia. A just economy that guarantees a basic level of economic security for all can help strengthen social cohesion and reduce the conditions that often fuel xenophobia.

The New Testament reinforces this call to radical hospitality. Hebrews 13:2 teaches: "*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers.*" Paul declares in Galatians 3:28 that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. And Jesus, through the Parable of the Good Samaritan, taught that our neighbour is not defined by nationality or race, but by our shared humanity and mutual obligation to care for one another.

While we stand firmly against hatred, we must couple our condemnation of violence with an equally strong validation of local community struggles. South Africans in townships and villages face severe daily pressures, systemic poverty, and devastatingly high unemployment.

However, we must separate legitimate frustration from unlawful and contradictory to the christian faith behaviour. While community grievances regarding service delivery and the rule of law are entirely valid, violence linked to those protests and directing this violence against foreign nationals are unacceptable.

GRAPE calls upon government, civil society, faith communities, labour, business, and community leaders to reject xenophobia in all its forms, promote social cohesion, and address the root causes of poverty and inequality through rights-based, evidence-informed policies. We stand in solidarity with migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and recommit ourselves to a society where every person is treated with dignity, protected by the rule of law, and free from poverty, discrimination, and violence.

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