



14 June 2026

Statement by the South African BDS Coalition Against Xenophobia: Nobody is “illegal”

The South African BDS Coalition, rejects xenophobia in all its forms. We are appalled by the rise of inhumane acts of vigilantism that are wreaking havoc and harming innocents in our communities. These behaviours echo the darkest days of apartheid, when ordinary people were turned against one another, when division was enforced through violence, and when fear was weaponised to maintain oppression. To see such patterns re-emerge is to witness our society moving backwards, undoing the sacrifices of those who fought for liberation.

Why should Europeans enjoy seamless passage across borders, while Africans are treated as “illegal” on African soil? This double standard reveals how borders function not to protect people, but to protect capital and privilege.

The borders in our continent that divide us were drawn by colonisers, and to enforce them uncritically continues their project of domination. South Africa’s liberation remains incomplete, and our struggle is bound up with the freedom of all Africans. True liberation demands economic justice, redistribution of wealth, and the reparation of land across our continent. We are not free until all of us are free.

Our anger must be directed at the real culprits: the companies retrenching workers, the factories exploiting migrants as cheap labour, and the elites who profit from division. Migrant workers are not our enemies, they are exploited alongside us. The same corporations that underpay migrants are the ones destroying jobs for South Africans. It is exploitation, not migration, that robs us of dignity. We must unite as one working class, refusing to fall for the divisive rhetoric of political parties that seek to fracture our communities for their own gain.

We are deeply alarmed that instead of addressing the real issues raised by the people - unemployment, inequality, and corporate exploitation - our president has chosen to focus on tightening migration controls. **This is not leadership; it is scapegoating.** Restricting movement will not create jobs, will not redistribute wealth, and will not bring dignity to our people. It only deepens division and fuels xenophobia. Even more disturbing is that this is the same government whose members in parliament have openly threatened to “go to Rahima Moosa and unplug machines.” Such reckless statements show a disregard for human life and dignity, and they normalise cruelty instead of solving the crises our people face.

What South Africans need is not tighter borders, but jobs. We need children to be fed and kept warm this winter. We need housing, healthcare, and dignity. We need a government that listens to the cries of the poor instead of blaming the vulnerable.

We must not listen to those who are not on the ground, who do not share our daily struggles, and who exploit our pain for political gain. The solutions will come from us, from communities organising together, from workers standing shoulder to shoulder, from solidarity across Africa.

We must also recognise the hypocrisy of global border regimes. In Europe, citizens move freely across dozens of countries without visas or restrictions, a freedom of movement celebrated as progress. Meanwhile African refugees are denied access to European countries turning the Mediterranean Sea into a graveyard of black bodies. According to the UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM), at least 827 people have died so far this year attempting this deadly crossing.

As a pro-Palestinian coalition, we see the parallels between the fragmentation imposed by Apartheid Israel in Palestine and those being forced upon Africa. Capitalist powers have openly admitted their desire to fracture our continent, to keep us divided and weakened. We reject this agenda.

No human being is more deserving of dignity and rights than another. South Africans have every right to feel anger at a government that has failed to deliver justice and equality. But that anger must be redirected toward the 1% who hoard wealth and power, not our fellow Africans who share our struggle.

We call on all communities to resist xenophobia, to stand against division, and to unite in the fight for liberation, justice, and equality. Our strength lies in solidarity, across Africa, with Palestine, and against the fortress borders of Europe, until freedom is achieved for all. To turn against one another is to betray the vision of a free South Africa. To unite is to honour it.