



7<sup>th</sup> January 2009

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **CoRMSA Calls for Strong Action on Vigilantism**

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) calls on the South African Police Service (SAPS) and local and national government officials to take a strong stance to combat vigilantism in the country. This follows the death of one man on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009 who was allegedly forced to jump from the sixth floor window of a block of flats in Durban by a mob allegedly including members of the local Community Policing Forum.

Strong action is needed by the SAPS and government officials to hold those responsible for vigilantism accountable. The current lack of widespread condemnation of such attacks is extremely concerning. South Africa's Constitution provides for the protection of the rights of all in the country yet its provisions are consistently undermined by individuals who choose to take the law into their own hands. It is further concerning that acts of vigilante violence are not routinely strongly condemned by local ward councillors.

Aside from the widespread vigilante action targeting foreign nationals and other vulnerable individuals in 2008 which left 62 people dead, some of the other notable incidents of vigilantism include the stripping and beating of a woman at Noord Street taxi rank in Johannesburg for wearing a miniskirt and the beating of a woman in Umlazi for wearing trousers. In the past week alone, vigilante violence has taken place in Cresta near Johannesburg and Harrismith in the Free State. If we continue to fail to take a strong stance against vigilantism, this violence will escalate and it is innocent individuals that will suffer.

If members of a community feel that they cannot trust the SAPS or elected officials to take effective action on their behalf, then this issue must be addressed by government officials with the community. But individuals cannot be allowed to take the law into their own hands. It is up to the SAPS, government officials and all leaders to take a strong stance to eradicate vigilantism. These means sending out a strong message by holding all those responsible for vigilantism accountable for their actions.

CoRMSA has written to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Police Commissioner requesting an urgent investigation into the Durban incident.

For further information, please contact:

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*The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) is the South African national network of refugee and migrant service providers. It is mandated to co-ordinate the national network and advocate on behalf of its member organisations to bring about social change. Its members are Amnesty International, Black Sash, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Christians for Peace in Africa, Co-ordinating Body of Refugee Communities, Durban Refugee Service Providers Network, Forced Migration Studies Programme, Jesuit Refugee Service, Lawyers for Human Rights, Musina Legal Advice Office, Refugee Children's Project, Refugee Ministries Centre, Refugee Pastoral Care, South African Red Cross, Southern African Centre for the Survivors of Torture, Tutumike Network, University of Cape Town Law Clinic and University of Witwatersrand Law Clinic. For more information, please visit [www.cormsa.org.za](http://www.cormsa.org.za).*