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**Press Release:**

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### **CoRMSA calls for Political Parties to adhere to the Electoral Code of Conduct**

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) would like to wish all voters in South Africa who will be casting their votes in the 2021 Municipal Elections taking place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2021, a responsible and progressive voting. This is a much valued Constitutional Political Right in a democratic society. Therefore, exercise it judiciously with responsibility for a better tomorrow and the five years to come.

CoRMSA is a national network of twenty-six (26) member organisations in good standing whose main objectives and mission are the promotion and protection of the human rights of asylum seekers, refugees and international migrants in ways that promote the well-being of all in South Africa, the SADC region and globally.

The South African Constitution under the Bill Rights Chapter 2, section 19 comprehensively points out all political and voting rights for both the voters and the political parties. These enshrined political rights come with responsibilities. CoRMSA would also like to remind and caution the voters and the political parties that these political rights come with binding responsibilities. As the elections date is fast approaching, the respective political parties and voters will be engaging and participating in the activities of, or recruit members for a political party; campaign for a political party of which, it is constitutionally permitted. However, since the announcement of the elections day by the President of South Africa and during the past weeks, CoRMSA has been monitoring and observing the political parties' manifestos and their undemocratic and scapegoating campaigning strategies and messages.

The Electoral Code prohibits the following (amongst others):

- Using language which provokes violence;
- Generally abusing a position of power, privilege or influence to influence the outcome of an election.

CoRMSA notes with disappointment that, 27 years into our democracy, some political party leaders are still blaming and scapegoating migrants, refugees and asylum seekers for the failings of the State, including shocking levels of poverty and systemic unemployment, poor and often non-existent service delivery, corruption and mismanagement of tax-payers' money. This cannot be blamed on the presence of non-nationals who live within the South African borders. We believe this is not a true reflection and representation of the facts on the ground. these division sow deeper hatred, and entice unsuspecting voters to vote for their political parties with false promises.

If our democracy is to work, we need a state that addresses inequality and poverty and opposition parties are also failing to ensure the values and ethos of our Constitution are



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implemented so that the lives and livelihood of those who live in South Africa are protected and improved.

CoRMSA strongly condemns electioneering at the expense of non-nationals through hate speech and xenophobic utterances and derogatory terms which are dehumanising to gain and win the hearts of the voters. The IEC has a role to ensure that the Electoral Code is enforced. We are tired of unsubstantiated statements that the removal of foreign nationals and migrants is the solution to all our problems in South Africa. This is totally unacceptable and undemocratic and it not only fuels social divisions but it is dangerous as it can lead to xenophobic violence in our communities. We remember the horrific violence of 2008.

CoRMSA encourages political leaders to engage the relevant authorities and organisations like CoRMSA to learn the facts. It is unconstitutional to have politicians making wreckless statements on issues that they don't understand or utter deliberately. The consequence is that the lives of our brothers and sisters from the African continent are subjected to danger, distress and discrimination based on one 's nationality status. This is unafrican at best! And Xenophobic and afro phobic at worst.

CoRMSA would like to send a strong warning to all political party leaders. Our members representing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers will continue to monitor and engage all political parties' s campaigning messages and manifestos and we will ensure they respect the electoral code of conduct, if rules and regulations are not upheld, and if not, we will ensure that those who not observe same are held to account.

We remind all political leaders of their responsibility to make sure that campaigning is **democratic and responsible**. CoRMSA will take it upon itself to monitor and report to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) any electioneering by any political party's leaders that infringe the Electoral code of conduct by targeting and infringing on the rights of migrants. We will not tolerate the promotion of hatred and hate speech, scaremongering and blaming foreigners for many of South Africa's woes and social ills that politicians must take responsibility for. CoRMSA working in alliance with civil society and the broader movement for social justice in our country, will contribute to make sure that accountability and the rule of law prevails during these municipal elections. All negative xenophobic rhetoric and prejudice will be documented and reported to the IEC and the SAHRC for their intervention and to uphold the rule of law. We will also raise our concerns publically in the media. Let the voters be allowed to vote on truth and merit of your political party and not lies as none of these anti-immigrant rhetoric is based on evidence.

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