



'Xenophobic attacks point to tribalism'

The lack of a "legitimate elected leadership" was behind much of the May xenophobic attacks, Cormsa said on Monday.

Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (Cormsa) spokesperson Duncan Breen said in many areas local leaders were actively involved in fuelling the violence that left 62 people dead in May 2008.

"Therefore their involvement in strategies to address xenophobia is of grave concern.

Unless these leaders are held accountable, they will continue to base their campaigns and positions on an agenda of hate and violence," he said.

'Unless we take action now, we will all be at risk' As the deaths of more than 20 South Africans during the May attacks indicated, not only foreigners were at risk. Before long, the Pedis, Shangaans, Vendas, or anyone "undesirable" may be attacked, Breen said.

"Unless we take action now, we will all be at risk," he said in a statement.

Cormsa has since called on the SA Human Rights Commission to hold an inquiry into the xenophobic violence of mid 2008.

Breen said the need for such an inquiry stemmed from the fact that more than six months after the violence broke out, little had been done to address the structural and political causes.

"With national elections on the horizon, there is an urgent need to ensure that political mobilisation does not result in repeated attacks on foreigners or other 'outsider'," he said.

With Cormsa believing that anti-foreigner violence continues, albeit "at a lower level", the organisation said to curb it, it was necessary to identify and address the root causes.

The HRC has been given until January 15 2009 to respond to Cormsa's request for an inquiry into the attacks that also left scores of people displaced. -Sapa

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