

[Print](#)

Stop vigilantism now - Cormsa

07/01/2009 17:07 - (SA)

Durban - The need to address vigilantism is essential to avoid a repeat of the xenophobic attacks that rocked South Africa last year, the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (Cormsa) said on Wednesday.

Advocacy officer Duncan Breen said strong action needed to be taken to combat vigilantism to ensure peace.

Earlier, Albert Park councillor Vusi Khoza said a Durban attack, which claimed the lives of two foreign nationals and critically injured a third foreigner, was not xenophobic.

At a meeting convened on Tuesday night, it was established that the attacks were "a reaction of the community to crime", he said.

"Opportunists were beginning to paint a picture that it was xenophobia but it was not," said Khoza, who condemned the attack and pleaded for maximum restraint.

'Not a unanimous decision'

Some foreigners, however, argued that decisions taken at the meeting were not unanimous as they (the foreigners) were not given enough opportunity to voice their concerns.

A Zimbabwean and a Tanzanian fell to their deaths on Sunday when they tried to escape from a group wielding bush knives.

Superintendent Vincent Mdunge said media reports confirming three deaths were incorrect. "Only two people had died."

Victor Zowa, 25, and Omar Said, 24, were confirmed dead while a 23-year-old Mozambican, who was also forced off the building, survived.

He is currently in critical condition at a local hospital.

Omar Osman, chairperson of the International Refugee Service said he disagreed with Khoza.

"I feel these attacks were xenophobic because if the mob was targeting criminals, why not South African criminals?"

"If it was criminals they were after, why not go to each and every building? Why are they only coming to buildings where foreigners live? Why when they enter do they shout for amakwerekwere?" he questioned.

Amakwerekwere is a derogatory term for foreigners used by South Africans.

Police rule out xenophobia

Mdunge said police had ruled out xenophobia.

No arrests had been made.

Khoza said decisions taken at the meeting included setting up street committees at every block of flats.

"Each flat will have two representatives who will be the eyes and ears of the police."

It was also agreed that the community policing forum would no longer patrol alone.

"If they patrol, they must do so with the police to make sure there is no deviation from the law," said Khoza.

"We have also discouraged people from congregating at street corners."

The meeting was attended by at least 500 people including police officers, non-governmental organisations, foreigners, and businesses in the area.

Another meeting has been scheduled for next week.

"At the next gathering, we will look at resolutions and formulate an implementation plan," said Khoza.

