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CoRMSA Strongly Condemns the Growing Climate of Fear and Hostility Against Refugees and Migrants in Durban and Across the Country.

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA), through media reports as well as information received from member organisations and partners, has learned and observed with grave concern the deeply disturbing developments unfolding in recent days, marked by growing hostility, intimidation, and violence directed at refugees and migrants in Durban and across the country.

CoRMSA strongly condemns the unlawful conduct, acts of intimidation, threats, and vigilante-style actions reportedly carried out during recent marches and demonstrations targeting foreign nationals. Equally alarming and unacceptable are reports and visual evidence suggesting the excessive use of force by members of law enforcement agencies against refugees and migrants, many of whom are vulnerable persons seeking protection and safety under the very institutions mandated to uphold and protect their rights.

In addition to the above, CoRMSA remains gravely concerned that uncontrolled and unmonitored inflammatory rhetoric, misinformation, and unlawful mobilisation against migrants and refugees continue to fuel xenophobic tensions and expose vulnerable communities to serious risks of violence, displacement, intimidation, and other human rights violations. Experience and history in South Africa have repeatedly demonstrated that such hostility, if left unchecked, can rapidly escalate into widespread violence and attacks with devastating humanitarian and social consequences.

These developments offer no progressive benefit to the country but stand in direct contradiction to the values enshrined in South Africa's Constitution, which is founded on the principles of human dignity, equality, freedom, and the rule of law, and is supported by other valuable pieces of legislation. No individual or group has the authority to unlawfully target, harass, assault, intimidate, or forcibly remove another person on the basis of nationality, migration status, race, or ethnicity. The actions witnessed in Durban and other parts of the country represent a dangerous erosion of constitutional democracy and pose a serious threat to social cohesion, public safety, and the rule of law.

The South African Police Service and all relevant authorities have a constitutional duty to protect all persons within the Republic without fear, favour, or prejudice, and must not participate in, enable, or tolerate unlawful acts against vulnerable communities. Therefore, we call for the immediate end to all acts of intimidation, violence, and xenophobic mobilisation targeting refugees and migrants, as well as urgent accountability for any abuse of power or excessive force by law enforcement officials, especially members of the South African Police Service, and unlawful conduct by anti-migrant social movements.

CoRMSA further urges government leaders, UN agencies, public representative institutions, the Independent Police Investigative Directorate and all sectors of society to uphold constitutional values and international values, reject vigilantism and hate-driven actions, and ensure the protection, dignity, and equal treatment of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants in accordance with South African and international law.

We also encourage leaders within refugee, migrant, and local communities to continue exercising calm, responsible, and constructive leadership, including promoting messages that foster peace, restraint, and social cohesion, while avoiding actions or rhetoric that may unintentionally heighten tensions or place vulnerable community members at greater risk.

Issued by the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) on behalf of its 33 member organisations across South Africa. For media enquiries and further information, please contact: communications@cornsa.org.za | info@cornsa.org.za. Website: www.cornsa.org.za