

Press Release



Unit for Risk Analysis

Data • Analysis • Forecasts

*The Unit for Risk Analysis was established under
the South African Institute of Race Relations*

For immediate release

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The Unit for Risk Analysis at the South African Institute of Race Relations has urged senior leaders in Government to make a series of concerted public statements condemning threats of xenophobic violence.

The Institute said that it was receiving information that casual threats and insinuations of violence against foreign African migrants were increasing. An Institute spokesperson, Catherine Schulze, said that it was a frustrating environment, as all the information at hand was anecdotal. It was very difficult to find hard facts on the extent to which the threats were escalating.

Schulze said that the Institute was not predicting an outbreak of violence as there was not enough information at hand to make such a prediction. Rather it was cautioning that the environment that gave rise to the attacks of 2008 was largely unchanged. Poverty, unemployment, and incomes indicators had not shifted significantly since 2008, while high levels of crime and violence were an everyday reality in many poor communities. At the same time, reports of increased threats, some disguised as jokes and idle banter, created an enabling environment for a renewed series of attacks.

Schulze said there was no point in the Government's denying the presence of xenophobic prejudice in the country as attacks had continued to occur since 2008, although not on the same scale as those of that year. The Institute had previously been told that the police were unable to devote resources to determining the exact extent of these attacks.

The Institute now urged the Government and the ANC to use their leadership positions in the country to change the perceptions that many black South Africans harboured towards foreign African immigrants. The Institute described this discrimination as possibly the most prevalent form of overt racism in the country.

In the main, this prejudice appeared to revolve around the view that foreign Africans 'stole' jobs, services, and even women that should belong to South Africans. Schulze said that on balance the presence of migrants had a positive economic impact on the

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countries that received them. Migrants introduced new skills and levels of entrepreneurship, formed new consumer markets, and contributed to tax revenue through VAT and in some cases even income and company taxation.