



41 Fox Street
Edura Building
Johannesburg
2017

Tel: (011) 838 2010
Fax: 086 649 0944

MEDIA STATEMENT
23 APRIL 2015

CHIEF JUSTICE MOGOENG CALLS FOR PEACE AND RESTRAINT

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed an outbreak of acts of violence against foreign nationals in our country. Some of those were fatal. As a result many of them and their families were displaced from their homes and business, often their only source of livelihood. The overwhelming majority of South Africans are peace-loving and therefore deeply saddened by these terrible acts of violence which could undermine the country's human rights track record.

Enshrined in our Constitution are the right to dignity and bodily integrity, the right to life, the right to equality and the right to freedom of movement and association for everyone. We, including foreign nationals, have the responsibility to uphold these fundamental human rights and not to take the law into our own hands so as not to threaten, hurt or take other people's lives. Additionally we have the duty to respect every person, accept and coexist peacefully with them irrespective of their place of origin. We should treat others as we would have them treat us and our loved ones in their own country of origin when circumstances beyond our control have forced us to be there.

When our interests and rights are in conflict with those of others and result in a dispute, our justice system provides a legal mechanism to resolve these disputes in a manner that is consistent with our Constitution. It is to these mechanisms that we must turn for the resolution of these disputes whenever they arise.

It is imperative for all South Africans to promote and uphold human rights in order to obviate a recurrence of these regrettable developments. South Africa is a diverse country. We must learn to

live in peace with, respect and care for people of different cultures, languages and religions. It is therefore required of us to appreciate diversity and be tolerant of other people.

As we condemned the atrocities of our past, we equally reject the violence that has resulted in the loss of lives and the unlawful displacement of fellow human beings. All South Africans should respond positively to the clarion call for peace and stability in the affected areas in fulfillment of our constitutional commitment to establish “a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights”. As the Preamble to our Constitution states: “We, the people of South Africa, believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”

We support the call for the restoration of peace, stability as well as the observance of the fundamental human rights.

Ends.

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Issued by the Office of the Chief Justice

Media enquiries: Mr Nathi Mncube, Cell: +27 (0) 84 814 8364, NMncube@judiciary.org.za