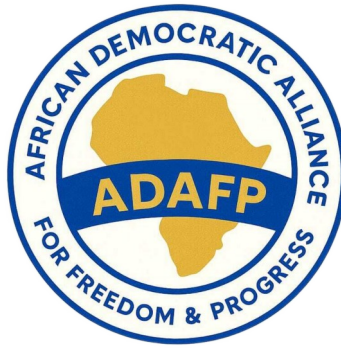




AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE FOR FREEDOM AND PROGRESS

ADAFP

POLICY PAPER

Xenophobia in South Africa: Why African Integration Is the Only Sustainable Answer

Issued by the African Democratic Alliance for Freedom and Progress (ADAFP)

1st July, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy paper, produced by the African Democratic Alliance for Freedom and Progress (ADAFP), addresses one of the most urgent crises facing South Africa and the continent: the recurring, escalating cycle of xenophobic violence against African nationals.

ADAFP's core argument is this: **xenophobia is not a migration problem — it is a governance and development failure.** Its solution is not walls, deportations, or vigilante violence. It is African integration, legal and orderly immigration management, and the economic transformation that makes South Africa's African partnerships its greatest asset rather than a political liability.

Key Facts

406 verified xenophobic incidents recorded between 2022 and 2025, including **151 in 2025 alone** — the highest annual figure on record. *(Xenowatch / Mobility Governance Lab, 2026)*

South Africa's youth unemployment stands at **32.9%** — a product of governance failure and structural economic stagnation, not immigration. *(Statistics South Africa, 2025)*

African travellers account for **4 in every 5** of South Africa's 10.5 million tourists (2025). Xenophobia is directly damaging the sector that supports **over 1 million jobs**. *(South African Tourism, 2025)*

Under full AfCFTA implementation, South Africa's GDP will be **9% larger by 2043** — an additional **\$54 billion** and millions of new jobs. This is the economic prize xenophobia is putting at risk. *(ISS African Futures / UNECA, 2025)*

Core Findings

- Xenophobic violence in South Africa follows a well-documented cycle of political scapegoating and state complicity. It is a **political enterprise**, not a spontaneous community response.
- The real drivers of South African unemployment, crime, and service delivery failures are **governance failure, corruption, and an unreformed economic structure** — not the presence of African migrants.
- **African integration delivers for South Africans first.** Vehicle exports to Africa grew 12.4% in 2024. The AfCFTA offers access to a \$3.4 trillion, 54-country market. Xenophobia corrodes precisely the goodwill this strategy depends upon.
- **Legal, orderly, and digitally managed immigration** — not open borders — is what ADAFP advocates. The current bureaucratic chaos fuels irregular migration and the vigilante movements that exploit it.
- **Ubuntu and Human Dignity** — enshrined in South Africa's Constitution — demand that all persons on South African soil be treated with respect, regardless of nationality. Xenophobia is not merely a political failure; it is a civilisational one.

Key Recommendations (Summary)

- **BOSA:** Develop a costed, rights-based immigration platform; activate the UJ Think Tank; lead AU Free Movement Protocol ratification campaign.
- **Democratic and liberal parties (DA, GOOD):** Formally condemn vigilante organisations; refuse anti-migrant electoral rhetoric; champion AfCFTA as a jobs strategy.
- **South African Government:** Prosecute perpetrators; withdraw legitimacy from vigilante groups; implement a credible National Action Plan; ratify the AU Free Movement Protocol.
- **Civil society:** Expand documentation; pursue strategic litigation; build continental advocacy networks.
- **African Union:** Invoke peer review mechanisms; accelerate AfCFTA infrastructure; protect Africans abroad.
- **African Heads of State:** Speak with one voice at the AU Summit; invest in domestic development; champion intra-African free movement.

PREAMBLE

The African Democratic Alliance for Freedom and Progress (ADAFP) is a continental democratic alliance of over 45 political parties and movements in 25 African countries, committed to the ideals of individual liberty, social justice, rule of law, and Pan-African solidarity. ADAFP is a founding advocate of the acceleration of African integration and has consistently championed the free movement of people, goods, and capital across the continent as a fundamental right and an economic imperative.

This Policy Paper addresses one of the most urgent crises threatening Africa's democratic project: the recurrent and escalating waves of xenophobic violence in South Africa. ADAFP does not view this crisis merely as a domestic law-and-order problem. We view it as a political, economic, and civilisational challenge — one that strikes at the heart of the continent's integration agenda, undermines liberal democracy, damages South Africa's international reputation, and causes measurable harm to its economy, its tourism sector, and its trade and diplomatic relationships with African partners.

This paper draws upon ADAFP's official statement condemning anti-immigrant violence in South Africa (issued May 2026), the ADAFP Africa Day Statement (25 May 2026), the first edition of the **African Integration Review**, Dr. Mmusi Maimane's Africa Day address at Constitution Hill, the ADAFP Annual Report on Security and Democracy in Africa 2026, and a body of academic and policy research coordinated by the **ADAFP Think Tank at the University of Johannesburg** under Director **Dr. Khulu Mbatha**. It makes the case that deep African integration — not walls, deportations, or vigilante violence — is the only path capable of addressing the structural roots of xenophobia while delivering prosperity for South Africans and all Africans alike.

I. THE CRISIS: XENOPHOBIA AS A SYSTEMIC THREAT TO SOUTH AFRICA

1.1 The Scale and Pattern of Violence

Xenophobia in South Africa is not a new phenomenon. Since the transition to democracy in 1994, violence against foreign nationals — particularly African migrants — has become a tragically recurring feature of South African life. The major episodes of 2008 (at least 62 people killed), 2015, 2019, and now the escalating crisis of 2025–2026 follow a well-documented cycle: economic anxiety, political scapegoating, vigilante mobilisation, state ambivalence, and sporadic violence, followed by inadequate institutional response.

The most recent phase is qualitatively more alarming. Research organisations tracking incidents of xenophobic discrimination documented **406 verified incidents between 2022 and 2025**, with **151 incidents in 2025 alone** — the highest annual figure on record. In the first five months of 2026, a further 22 verified incidents were recorded, of which 14 were violent attacks directly following anti-migrant protests. At least four people were killed in this period, and hundreds more were displaced from their homes, shops, and workplaces.

Anti-immigrant organisations such as **Operation Dudula** (now registered as a political party) and **March and March** have conducted systematic blockades of public health facilities across KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and Gauteng, denying migrants access to at least 53 clinics. These are not spontaneous acts of community frustration. They are organised, politically directed campaigns that deliberately exploit legitimate public concern about service delivery and unemployment.

1.2 The Structural Drivers: Governance Failure, Not Immigration

ADAFP notes with deep concern the well-documented tendency of South African political actors — including at senior government level — to attribute the country's structural problems to the presence of foreign nationals. The evidence does not support this narrative.

South Africa faces genuine and severe socio-economic challenges: an unemployment rate of approximately **32.9% among youth in 2025**, weak economic growth averaging barely **1% annually**

between 2012 and 2021, rising crime, deepening inequality, and a persistent failure of public service delivery. These are the products of decades of governance failure, corruption, inadequate investment in human capital, and an unreformed economic structure that continues to exclude the majority.

ADAFP addresses directly the concern of South African voters: with youth unemployment at 32.9%, talk of open borders can feel threatening. Our message is clear — African integration is not a gift to others. It is the only credible strategy to create the jobs and tax revenues South Africa needs to fund its own schools, hospitals, and services. The AfCFTA scenario adds \$54 billion to South Africa's GDP and millions of jobs by 2043. Xenophobia puts that prize at risk. South Africans who want more jobs, better services, and a stronger economy have every reason to champion integration — and every reason to reject the false promise of anti-migrant politics.

Research consistently shows that citizens who express anti-immigrant sentiment are, at root, frustrated with **government underperformance** rather than harbouring genuine ethnic hostility toward foreigners. The scapegoating of migrants as the cause of crime, unemployment, and resource scarcity is what researchers describe as the result of **false narratives promoted under conditions of economic scarcity** — narratives that conveniently redirect public anger away from the state and its failures and toward a vulnerable population unable to defend itself politically.

"The packaging of illegal immigration as a national security threat, which often relies on unsubstantiated claims about the inherent criminality of foreign nationals, provides an official gloss on deeply entrenched governmental xenophobia." — Southern African Migration Project

1.3 State Complicity: A Democratic Emergency

Perhaps the most alarming development of the 2025–2026 cycle is the growing evidence of **state complicity** in xenophobic violence — not merely through inaction, but through active legitimisation of anti-migrant movements.

Researchers who founded Xenowatch and the Mobility Governance Lab — who have studied xenophobic mobilisation in South Africa for over 20 years — have documented that xenophobia in South Africa is not merely a grassroots phenomenon driven by frustrated communities. It is a **political enterprise co-produced by vigilante groups and the state** through acts of both commission and omission. These include: failure to censure those who exclude through violence; migration policies and practices that demonise foreign nationals; and the granting of political legitimacy to anti-migrant organisations.

On 25 May 2026 — Africa Day itself — senior government ministers convened a high-level meeting at the Union Buildings with the leadership of March and March and similar organisations. In granting these groups access to the highest political office, the state lent them legitimacy, allowing their ultimatums to be broadcast on national television and radio as if they represented legitimate political demands. The police service (SAPS) and Metro Police reportedly reached informal agreements not to interfere with March and March operations in certain areas.

The government's principal policy response — the **National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance** — has been characterised by independent analysts as, in essence, an action plan without a plan. Of its 67 pages, only nine outline actual actions. It focuses on public education and dialogues rather than dismantling the criminal networks and political formations that organise and profit from xenophobic violence. Its largest operational initiative, **Operation Fiela**, resulted in police extorting bribes from migrants, a loss of economic activity and tax revenue, and only a marginal reduction in the number of undocumented migrants — at great cost to South Africa's constitutional values and international standing.

This state of affairs constitutes a democratic emergency. As ADAFP stated in its official May 2026 statement, when a government simultaneously condemns xenophobic violence and validates the political framing that produces it, it creates conditions in which the next outbreak of violence is inevitable — and occurs without the political will required to prevent it.

II. LEGAL ORDER, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND UBUNTU: THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Legal and Orderly Immigration: What ADAFP Actually Advocates

ADAFP's position is frequently misrepresented, and it is important to state it with clarity. **ADAFP does not advocate for open borders or unlimited, unmanaged immigration.** We advocate for immigration that is **legal, orderly, digitally managed, and transparently administered** — and for an immigration system that is actually capable of delivering these outcomes.

The fundamental problem with South Africa's current immigration system is not that it is too permissive. It is that it is **dysfunctional**. The Department of Home Affairs operates with chronic backlogs, opaque procedures, unworkable administrative requirements, and pervasive corruption within its own ranks. The result is that many migrants who would qualify for legal status cannot obtain it — not because they lack entitlement, but because the system makes regularisation practically impossible. This bureaucratic chaos is what drives irregular migration. It is also what provides the political oxygen that vigilante movements exploit.

The answer to irregular migration is not vigilante violence — it is a functional, digital, transparent immigration system. When people can regularise their status efficiently and affordably, irregular migration declines. When the system is broken, it creates the very conditions that anti-migrant movements exploit. Reform the system; dismantle the militias.

ADAFP therefore calls for the complete **digitalisation and modernisation of South Africa's immigration administration** — online applications, biometric registration, clear processing timelines, independent oversight, and zero tolerance for corruption within the Department of Home Affairs. A migrant who is legally registered, paying taxes, and contributing to the economy is not a problem. A broken system that makes registration impossible is the problem.

South Africa has both the right and the responsibility to know who is present on its territory, to enforce its immigration laws, and to remove those who have no legal right to remain — through due process, with dignity, and without violence. These are legitimate state functions. What is not legitimate is the delegation of these functions to armed civilian groups operating outside any constitutional framework, without judicial oversight, and with the acquiescence of the state. Immigration enforcement is a state function. It must remain so.

2.2 Human Dignity, Ubuntu, and the Constitutional Imperative

South Africa's Constitution — among the most progressive in the world — places **human dignity** at the very apex of its value system. Section 10 declares that "everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected." Section 9 guarantees equality before the law to "everyone" — not merely to citizens. These are not aspirational statements. They are justiciable rights, enforceable in court, applicable to every person on South African soil regardless of nationality, immigration status, or country of origin.

Xenophobic violence is therefore not merely a political failure or an economic miscalculation. It is a **constitutional violation** — a direct assault on the foundational values of the democratic order that South Africans built through their liberation struggle and enshrined in 1996. Every attack on a foreign national, every blockade of a clinic, every eviction under threat of violence is an act that contradicts the constitutional identity of the South African state.

But the case against xenophobia in South Africa does not rest on constitutional law alone. It rests equally on **Ubuntu** — the indigenous African philosophical and ethical framework that South Africa has adopted as one of its defining national values. Ubuntu — *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, "a person is a person through other persons" — is not a parochial or ethnically bounded concept. It is a philosophy of radical human

interdependence. It holds that the dignity of each person is inseparable from the dignity of all. It cannot coherently be invoked in support of a project that denies the humanity of African neighbours.

Ubuntu does not stop at the border. An African philosophy of human solidarity — one that recognises the personhood and dignity of all — cannot be selectively applied only to citizens. A South Africa that truly lives Ubuntu is one that sees in every African migrant not a threat, but a neighbour, a fellow human being, and a partner in the shared African project.

The link between Ubuntu, human dignity, and African integration is not incidental. It is foundational. The vision of a borderless, integrated, prosperous Africa — the Africa of Agenda 2063 — is, at its core, an Ubuntu vision: a continent that recognises the common humanity and shared destiny of its people. South Africa, as the home of Ubuntu's most celebrated articulation in modern political life, has a particular responsibility to live that vision — not merely to invoke it rhetorically while tolerating the violence that denies it.

III. THE ECONOMIC, TOURISM AND TRADE DAMAGE

3.1 The Broader Continental Backlash

The consequences of South Africa's xenophobia crisis extend far beyond its borders. The continental backlash to the 2025–2026 violence threatens South Africa's tourism industry, its trade relationships, its diplomatic standing, and its investment environment. Multiple African governments — including Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Malawi — have been compelled to assist or evacuate nationals affected by anti-immigrant violence. In Ghana, public protests have called on the government to reconsider major South African business interests, including Gold Fields' mining operations.

South Africa received **10.5 million tourists in 2025**, with African travellers accounting for **four in every five arrivals**, predominantly from SADC countries and increasingly from Kenya and Ghana. The violence in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban has alarmed tourism operators because these cities are precisely the primary destinations for African visitors. The tourism sector contributes approximately **9% to South Africa's GDP** and supports **more than one million jobs**. Every outbreak of xenophobic violence — broadcast across social media and international news networks — functions as a deterrent to African visitors and investors alike.

Academic research from the University of Johannesburg (2024) has confirmed that **xenophobia has made South Africa measurably less attractive as a tourist destination**, resulting in verifiable income loss. Xenophobia contradicts South Africa's marketing of itself as the 'rainbow nation' and the spiritual home of Ubuntu — a contradiction not lost on African visitors, governments, or investors.

3.2 Trade and Investment at Risk

South Africa is the **largest outward investor among African countries** and the continent's biggest exporter of manufactured products — vehicles, machinery, processed food, electrical equipment. It is Africa's only individual member of the G20 and a leading voice in BRICS+. It is, by any measure, the economic anchor of southern Africa and one of the continent's primary investment destinations.

This position is now under structural threat. Critics and business leaders across the continent warn that repeated outbreaks of xenophobic violence risk undermining South Africa's trade and investment relationships with its African partners. The crisis tests — and may ultimately undermine — the trust and people-to-people connectivity on which economic integration depends.

It is profoundly ironic that South Africa's own trade strategy has, in recent years, pivoted decisively toward **expanded African market access** — precisely because its traditional export markets are increasingly constrained. Vehicle exports to the African continent grew by **12.4% in 2024**; the AfCFTA offers South Africa access to a \$3.4 trillion, 54-country market. Yet xenophobic violence against African nationals

corrodes precisely the goodwill, diplomatic relationships, and Pan-African solidarity on which expanded African market access depends.

3.3 The Democratic Dividend at Stake

Xenophobia, as it has evolved in South Africa, poses a direct threat to the country's liberal constitutional democracy. The normalisation of vigilante enforcement of immigration law — outside any constitutional framework, without judicial oversight, and with police acquiescence — represents a fundamental erosion of the rule of law. When armed groups can blockade public health clinics, evict people from their homes under threat of violence, and issue ultimatums to government ministers who comply, the constitutional order is being hollowed out from within.

More broadly, the weaponisation of anti-migrant sentiment as a political strategy — pioneered by movements like Operation Dudula but increasingly adopted by mainstream parties — introduces the logic of ethnic exclusion into South Africa's democratic politics. This is precisely the 'language of democracy used against democracy' that researchers have identified as characteristic of contemporary far-right and populist movements globally.

ADAFP affirms that South Africa cannot build a prosperous, integrated, and borderless continent under Agenda 2063 if socio-economic challenges are allowed to destroy the shared future of Africans living and working across borders.

IV. ADAFP'S POSITION: THE HISTORY AND LESSONS

4.1 ADAFP's Official Statement, May 2026

On 2–4 May 2026, ADAFP issued a formal continental condemnation of the surge in anti-immigration protests and violent attacks against African nationals in South Africa. Signed by Secretary-General **Eddie D. Jarwolo** and issued from Casablanca and Johannesburg, the statement reflected ADAFP's role as a continental body founded on the ideals of individual liberty, social justice, and Pan-Africanism. ADAFP expressed "profound disappointment" over the growing hostility toward African migrants and warned that these actions "directly undermine the spirit of unity and cooperation essential to the continent's future."

The statement made three core arguments. First, that South Africa has both the right and the responsibility to enforce immigration law — but that vigilante violence and hostility are not lawful enforcement. "The answer to disorder is not open borders or vigilante violence, but lawful, transparent, and humane enforcement." Second, that blaming migrants for unemployment, crime, and service delivery failures is untenable. Third, that African leaders must address the structural issues — inequality, corruption, limited economic opportunity — that fuel anti-immigrant sentiment rather than exploiting them for political gain.

Crucially, the statement drew lessons from history. ADAFP specifically referenced **Ghana's 1969 Aliens Compliance Order** and **Nigeria's 1983 expulsion** of undocumented migrants — two episodes that resulted in devastating humanitarian and economic consequences for the expelling countries, not just the expelled. South Africa must not repeat these historical mistakes.

4.2 ADAFP's Africa Day Statement and the African Integration Review, May 2026

On Africa Day (25 May 2026), ADAFP published both a continental statement and the **first edition of the African Integration Review**. ADAFP President and BOSA Leader **Dr. Mmusi Maimane** delivered a major address at Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, titled "*South Africa, Africa and the Future of Migration: Responding to Xenophobia with Law, Leadership and Continental Vision*."

In the African Integration Review, ADAFP put forward a bold agenda: the **acceleration of African economic and political integration**, with specific proposals to establish one unified African market by **2031**, abolish visa requirements for all Africans travelling within Africa by **2031**, and strengthen the institutional

architecture of the African Union to make integration irreversible. ADAFP saluted the **Republic of Togo, Ghana, and the Republic of Congo** for their decision to lift visa requirements for all African nationals — a concrete model for others to follow.

4.3 ADAFP's Position on Free Movement as a Liberal Value

ADAFP's commitment to the free movement of persons across Africa is not merely a tactical response to xenophobia. It is a foundational liberal and Pan-African principle. Individual freedom of movement — including the freedom to seek better economic opportunities across borders — is a fundamental human right and the bedrock of economic dynamism: **labour mobility, knowledge transfer, entrepreneurship across borders, and the cross-pollination of cultures and ideas** are the lifeblood of any genuinely integrated economic space.

ADAFP also notes that the free movement of people is a **legal obligation** to which African Union member states have formally committed under the African Union Free Movement Protocol. South Africa's failure to ratify and meaningfully implement this protocol represents a significant gap between its international commitments and domestic political practice.

V. THE CASE FOR AFRICAN INTEGRATION AS THE STRUCTURAL SOLUTION

5.1 Why Walls and Deportations Cannot Work

The instinctive political response to xenophobia — tighter border controls, mass deportations, walls — is not only morally problematic; it is economically counterproductive and strategically self-defeating, particularly for a country like South Africa.

South Africa shares long, porous borders with Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, eSwatini, and Namibia. The structural drivers of migration — poverty, conflict, lack of opportunity in neighbouring countries — are not diminished by deportation operations; they merely redirect the flow. Deportees frequently return. Every country that has attempted mass expulsion of foreign Africans — Ghana in 1969, Nigeria in 1983 — suffered significant economic consequences, including the loss of skilled labour, disruption of trade networks, and long-term diplomatic damage.

5.2 African Integration: The Economic Case for South Africa

African integration — specifically, the full and accelerated implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the AU Free Movement Protocol, the Single African Air Transport Market, and associated initiatives — offers South Africa's most credible path to the sustained economic growth needed to address unemployment and inequality.

The modelling is unambiguous. Under the full AfCFTA scenario, **South Africa's total trade as a percentage of GDP** is projected to increase from 57% in 2023 to **72% by 2043**. South Africa's GDP would be **9% larger by 2043**, equivalent to an additional **\$54 billion**, with GDP per capita rising to approximately **\$15,600**. These represent millions of additional jobs, tax revenues sufficient to fund improved public services, and the expanded economic base that makes the social contract sustainable.

AfCFTA's continental potential is equally compelling. The agreement has the potential to increase Africa's GDP by around **\$141 billion**, boost intra-African trade by approximately **\$276 billion (a 45% increase)**, and lift over **30 million Africans out of extreme poverty** by 2043.

Under the AfCFTA scenario, South Africa's GDP will be 9% larger by 2043 — an additional \$54 billion. This is the economic prize that xenophobia is putting at risk.

5.3 Integration Addresses the Root Causes of Migration

The deepest insight available from the scholarship on African migration is that **the free movement of labour and the development of regional economic opportunities are complementary, not contradictory**.

As the AfCFTA drives industrial development, job creation, and income growth across the continent — lifting countries out of the poverty that forces emigration — the volume of desperate, irregular migration declines naturally. The experience of the European Union demonstrates the pattern clearly: as living standards converged through integration, migration within the Union normalised. Africa must build its own version of this convergence.

5.4 Integration and the Democratic Dividend

Beyond economics, African integration is the most powerful available antidote to the political dynamics that produce xenophobia. When African countries are embedded in binding economic and political relationships — when their citizens trade, study, travel, and invest together — the dehumanising of 'the foreigner' becomes politically more difficult and less electorally rewarding. The architecture of integration also provides institutional frameworks for accountability: an integrated Africa has more tools to respond collectively to a member state that systematically violates the rights of other Africans.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

ADAFP issues the following targeted recommendations to each of the key actors in the South African xenophobia crisis and the continental integration project.

6.1 To BOSA (Build One South Africa) — ADAFP's Principal South African Member

- **Maintain and deepen its explicit commitment to Ubuntu and non-discrimination** as core party values, including in the context of the Unite for Change coalition and the 2026 local government elections. Xenophobia must not be appeased for electoral advantage.
- **Develop a comprehensive, fully costed BOSA immigration policy platform** that distinguishes clearly between lawful immigration enforcement, unconstitutional vigilantism, and the positive economic contribution of African nationals. Crucially, frame integration advocacy around **South African jobs and revenues first** — making clear that the AfCFTA is South Africa's growth strategy, not a concession to outsiders.
- **Lead the campaign for South Africa's ratification and implementation of the AU Free Movement Protocol**, making this a flagship legislative priority in the National Assembly.
- **Activate the ADAFP Think Tank at the University of Johannesburg**, under Director Dr. Khulu Mbatha, to produce rigorous, accessible research on the economic contribution of African migrants to South Africa — countering the false narratives used to justify xenophobia with scientifically credible data.
- **Convene a national dialogue** under BOSA's leadership — bringing together civil society, African diaspora organisations, business, and academia — to build a South African consensus for a humane, lawful, and integration-oriented approach to migration.

6.2 To South Africa's Democratic and Liberal Parties (Including the Democratic Alliance and GOOD)

- **Formally and publicly condemn** Operation Dudula, March and March, and any other organisation that uses illegal violence, intimidation, or blockades to enforce anti-migrant policies — regardless of their electoral support or popular appeal.
- **Refuse to adopt anti-migrant rhetoric** for electoral purposes. The temptation to court Operation Dudula voters with tough immigration language must be resisted as both unprincipled and ultimately counterproductive.

- **Build an opposition coalition for constitutional governance**, making the protection of the constitutional rights of all persons in South Africa — regardless of nationality — a shared platform priority.
- **Champion AfCFTA implementation** as an economic priority, and use DA and GOOD's position in the Government of National Unity to advocate for a genuinely evidence-based National Action Plan on Xenophobia.
- **Engage with ADAFP and the Africa Liberal Network** to coordinate continental-level advocacy for the rights of African nationals and for the advancement of African integration.

6.3 To South African Human Rights and Civil Society Organisations

- **Continue and expand the documentation of xenophobic incidents**, publishing regular, accessible reports that hold the state accountable for its response — and non-response — to violence and discrimination against migrants.
- **Challenge, through litigation, the state's complicity** in xenophobic violence — including the agreement between SAPS and March and March not to enforce the law, and the failure to prosecute perpetrators of documented attacks.
- **Build bridges with African diaspora communities and their home-country civil society counterparts**, creating a continental civil society network that can amplify advocacy beyond South Africa's borders.
- **Engage in proactive public education** — schools, universities, community radio, social media — to counter false narratives about migration and build public understanding of the positive contributions of African nationals to South Africa's economy and culture.
- **Advocate for South Africa's ratification of the AU Free Movement Protocol** and for an immigration system that is transparent, fair, digitally managed, and accessible.

6.4 To the South African Government

1. **Establish genuine accountability for xenophobic violence.** Perpetrators of violent attacks on migrants must be prosecuted. Police officers who extort migrants or fail to enforce the law must face consequences. Impunity is the single greatest driver of the cycle of violence.
2. **Formally and unambiguously withdraw legitimacy from anti-migrant vigilante organisations** by refusing to meet with them as legitimate policy stakeholders, and by publicly reaffirming that immigration enforcement is an exclusive function of the state.
3. **Fully digitalise and modernise South Africa's immigration administration** — online applications, biometric registration, clear processing timelines, and zero tolerance for corruption within the Department of Home Affairs. A functional system reduces irregular migration; a broken system produces it.
4. **Fund and implement a credible, evidence-based National Action Plan on Xenophobia** — one that allocates actual resources, establishes clear performance benchmarks, and is subject to independent monitoring by civil society and the Chapter 9 institutions.
5. **Ratify and implement the AU Free Movement Protocol**, beginning with pilot arrangements for SADC member states.
6. **Make AfCFTA implementation a national economic priority**, including full tariff reduction schedules, investments in border facilitation infrastructure, and the promotion of South African businesses — particularly SMEs — in African markets.
7. **Commission a national economic audit of the contribution of African migrants** to South Africa's economy and publish the results widely. Accurate data is the antidote to false narratives.

6.5 To the African Union

- **Invoke the AU's peer review and diplomatic mechanisms** to engage South Africa formally on its compliance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Continental Free Movement Protocol.
- **Accelerate the establishment of the AfCFTA's operational infrastructure** — including the PAPSS, the African Investment Bank, and trade facilitation mechanisms.
- **Strengthen the continental framework for protecting Africans living and working across borders** including through the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- **Launch a continental public education campaign on African identity, migration, and integration**, promoting the positive narrative of an Africa that moves, trades, and prospers together.
- **Fast-track the ratification and implementation of the AU Free Movement Protocol** by all member states, with South Africa as a priority case.

6.6 To African Heads of State and Government

- **Speak with one voice** at the next AU Summit, formally condemning xenophobic violence against African nationals in South Africa.
- **Resist the temptation to deploy economic leverage punitively** against South Africa. Diplomatic engagement, coordinated through the AU, is the appropriate and more effective mechanism.
- **Invest in the development of their own countries' economies**, recognising that economic development at home reduces the volume of desperate migration.
- **Champion the AfCFTA** at home and across the continent, making the case that a more integrated Africa is a more prosperous Africa for everyone, including South Africans.
- **Engage South Africa's democratic and liberal opposition** — particularly BOSA and the ADAFP alliance — as partners in building the continent-wide political coalition needed to advance integration and combat xenophobia.

VII. CONCLUSION

Xenophobia in South Africa is not an inevitable consequence of migration. It is the product of governance failure, political exploitation, economic inequality, and the normalisation of scapegoating — all of which can be changed. But they cannot be changed by walls, deportations, or the accommodation of vigilante politics. They can only be changed by good governance, honest political leadership, a functional and digitally managed immigration system, and the progressive deepening of African integration.

The argument for African integration is not a moral appeal to South African generosity. It is a hard economic case: \$54 billion in additional GDP, millions of jobs, and the tax revenues needed to fund the schools, hospitals, and services that South Africans need. It is also a constitutional and civilisational case, grounded in the values of human dignity and Ubuntu that South Africa has enshrined in its founding documents and its national identity.

Ubuntu does not stop at the border. A South Africa that truly lives its own values — that sees in every African migrant a neighbour, a fellow human being, and a partner in the shared African project — is a South Africa that will be stronger, more prosperous, and more secure. The path of integration, solidarity, and shared prosperity leads to the Africa that Agenda 2063 envisions: one market, one people, one future.

ADAFP stands firmly behind those in South Africa — in government, in the opposition, in civil society, and in communities — who are fighting to uphold these values. And we call on every African government, the African Union, and the international community to support them.

"Africa cannot successfully pursue economic unity while Africans live in fear in other African countries." — ADAFP Continental Statement on Xenophobia, May 2026

SELECTED REFERENCES

1. African Union Commission. **Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want**. Addis Ababa: AU Commission, 2015.
2. Afreximbank. **Africa Trade Report 2024**. Cairo: Afreximbank, 2024.
3. Brookings Institution. 'The Future of African Trade in the AfCFTA Era.' **Foresight Africa 2024**. Washington, DC: Brookings, 2024.
4. Chisadza, C. 'Xenophobia and Quality of Life: Evidence from South Africa.' **Social Forces** (2025).
5. Economic Commission for Africa. **Economic Report on Africa 2025: Advancing the Implementation of the AfCFTA**. Addis Ababa: UNECA, 2025.
6. Ferreira, S. and Perks, M. 'Xenophobia as a Hindrance to South Africa's Tourism Economy.' **African Tourism Research** (2016).
7. ISS African Futures. **South Africa Development Futures: AfCFTA Scenario Analysis**. Pretoria: ISS, 2025.
8. Lawyers for Human Rights, ICJ et al. 'Statement on SA President's Condemnation of Xenophobia.' Johannesburg, June 2026.
9. Mbatha, K. (Dr.). **Research Coordination, ADAFP Think Tank, University of Johannesburg**. Johannesburg, 2026.
10. Selelo, O.T. 'A Systems Thinking Approach to Mitigating Xenophobia in South Africa.' **Systems Research and Behavioral Science** (2026).
11. South African Tourism. **Annual Tourism Report 2025**. Pretoria: SA Tourism, 2025.
12. Southern African Migration Project (SAMP). **Migration and Xenophobia in South Africa**. Cape Town: SAMP, 2004.
13. Statistics South Africa. **Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4 2025**. Pretoria: Stats SA, 2025.
14. Trimikliniotis, N., Gordon, S., and Zondo, B. 'Xenophobic Violence as a Political Enterprise.' **Political Geography** (2022). doi:10.1080/14650045.2022.2078707.
15. UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD). **Economic Development in Africa Report 2024: Unlocking Africa's Trade Potential**. Geneva: UNCTAD, 2024.
16. University of Johannesburg. **Impact of Xenophobia on South African Tourism Sector**. Johannesburg: UJ, 2024.
17. World Bank. **Africa Pulse** (2024). Washington, DC: World Bank, 2024.
18. Xenowatch / Mobility Governance Lab. **Xenophobia in South Africa: State Complicity with Gangs and Vigilantes**. Johannesburg, June 2026.
19. ADAFP. **Official Statement on Anti-Immigration Protests and Xenophobic Violence in South Africa**. Casablanca/Johannesburg: ADAFP, May 2026.
20. ADAFP. **Africa Day Statement 2026**. Johannesburg: ADAFP, 25 May 2026.
21. ADAFP. **The African Integration Review — First Edition**. Johannesburg: ADAFP, 25 May 2026.
22. ADAFP. **Annual Report on Security and Democracy in Africa 2026**. Johannesburg: ADAFP, 2026.
23. Maimane, M. (Dr.). 'South Africa, Africa and the Future of Migration: Responding to Xenophobia with Law, Leadership and Continental Vision.' Africa Day Address, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, 25 May 2026.

Issued by the African Democratic Alliance for Freedom and Progress (ADAFP)

June 2026 | adafp.org