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Press Release

## **Collective Voices against Health Xenophobia strongly condemns Operation Dudula's attack on patients at the Jeppe Clinic**

The Collective Voices against Health Xenophobia condemns Operation Dudula's recent illegal attacks on [patients at Jeppe Clinic](#) in Johannesburg that not only endanger individual health, but also public health.

The Collective is a consortium of progressive civil society organisations, activists, health care workers, and researchers working on issues of social justice and challenging xenophobia within the health care sector. We uphold South Africa's comprehensive human rights legislation and international obligations that recognise and facilitate the [right to health for all](#).

Migrants have been made scapegoats for a public health system in crisis and are targeted to divert attention from severe challenges facing the governance of public health. South Africa's health care system is not buckling because of the provision of services to a small minority of patients who were born outside South Africa's borders, but because of massive government corruption, [mismanagement, state capture and apathy](#) over many years.

This is not the first time Operation Dudula has [infringed on people's right to access health care](#) which is a right enshrined in Section 27 of the country's [Constitution](#). Nor is it the first time that non-nationals have been [scapegoated](#) for the failures of the state to address challenges with service delivery and the critical state of many of the country's key institutions. However, the misrepresentation of data and anecdotal evidence not only fuels xenophobic rhetoric and violence, but can increase the burden on the health care system as those seeking treatment are turned away and placed at risk of falling sicker and thus needing higher levels of care.

We are in the middle of a drawn out COVID-19 pandemic. Operation Dudula's illegal actions result in foreign nationals staying away from public health facilities including preventing them from accessing the COVID-19 vaccine. This will impact on the ability of our country and the region to bring the continued spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases including TB and measles under control. This is putting everyone's lives at risk.

We also note with extreme concern the escalation of public comments supporting health xenophobia and that have been met with little condemnation or government action. Examples include Limpopo Health MEC [Dr Phophi Ramathuba](#) who in 2022 publicly chastised a migrant patient for “killing [her] health care system”, and Minister of Home Affairs [Aaron Motsoaledi](#) who stated that non-South African patients “cause overcrowding, [which means] infection control starts failing.” Civil society organisations, such as the [Helen Suzman Foundation](#) and [Socio-Economic Rights Institute](#), have also come under attack, sometimes by government officials and politicians, for challenging xenophobia.

The state opportunistically remains silent allowing these acts of vigilantism to take place with impunity.

We believe we should all be mobilising to hold the state to account by demanding the eradication of corruption by government officials, more investment in public health care, and increasing the number of health care and social workers.

The coalition therefore calls on:

1. **The Gauteng Department of Health** to open criminal cases against Operation Dudula for its illegal disruptions of health services at Jeppe Clinic and [Kalafong Hospital](#).
2. The **Minister of Health** to publicly condemn the actions of Operation Dudula and uphold the country’s constitution, domestic and international legal obligations which ensure the right to health for all.
3. **The South African Police Service** to condemn and quickly act to prevent groups such as Operation Dudula from violating people’s rights to health and fuelling xenophobia.
4. The **Minister of Health** to set up a mechanism for health care facilities and patients to anonymously report any form of xenophobia and interference with health services and receive a rapid response.
5. **All health care facilities** to ensure that all staff – medical and non-medical - recognise the right to health for all, as well as that all migrants, refugees and asylum seekers - regardless of documentation status - have the same access to health care services as South Africans as set out in the Uniform Patient Fee Schedule (UPFS).
6. **All health care facilities** to increase security and provide training to security personnel on how to deal with those who act illegally and ensure that everyone living in South Africa can access health care facilities safely and without fear.
7. **All health care facilities** to ensure that anyone who prevents a person from accessing their facility, or who tries to illegally remove anyone from the premises, be dealt with immediately by the facility’s security and the police.
8. **The Department of Justice and Correctional Services** to train all public servants to eradicate institutionalised xenophobia as set out in [South Africa’s National Action Plan \(NAP\) to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance](#).

We call on all who live in South Africa to denounce vigilantism and xenophobia.

We stand in solidarity with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

**Endorsed by:**

1. Africa Revival Foundation
2. African Solidarity Campaign (AfriSoC)
3. Africa Solidarity Network
4. African Legal Students Association and Justice Chapter
5. Ahmed Kathrada Foundation
6. Amnesty International South Africa
7. Black Sash
8. Botshabelo unemployed movement
9. CCC- Students for Change, Diaspora (SA)
10. Congolese civil society of South Africa
11. Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA)
12. Doctors Without Borders South Africa (MSF)
13. Equal Education Law Centre
14. Health Justice Initiative
15. HURISA
16. Inchanga Community Resource Centre
17. International Commission of Jurists
18. Johannesburg Migrant Health Forum
19. Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia (KAAX)
20. Lawyers for Human Rights
21. PASSOP
22. People's Health Movement South Africa (PHMSA)
23. Refugee Social Services
24. Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town
25. School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape
26. SECTION27
27. Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)
28. Sophiatown Community Psychological Services
29. South African Jewish Board of Deputies
30. UTRS

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