



Statement of the CHE on the Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is saddened and shocked by recent reports of acts of violence deliberately targeted at foreign nationals in some parts of the country. The consequent displacement of helpless people, loss of property and sources of livelihoods, as well as loss of life that the country has witnessed in the wake of these recent incidents of hate, are despicable. The CHE conveys condolences to the families that have lost their beloved ones, and sympathises with all those that have been affected in one way or another by these incidents. The CHE further condemns these attacks in the strongest terms.

The CHE is also concerned about reports that the spectre of these attacks is creating a climate of fear and anxiety among foreign students and academics at institutions of higher education in the country. By its nature, the business of academia does not thrive in a climate of fear and anxiety, and thus the attacks on foreign nationals have the potential to reverse the gains made by higher education institutions in attracting sizeable numbers of foreign students, academics and research fellows. The international standing of the country's higher education would be adversely affected if our institutions fail to maintain their attractiveness to foreign students, lecturers and researchers.

The efforts made by a variety of stakeholders towards halting these attacks and in providing humanitarian assistance to the victims are commendable. The CHE wishes that permanent peace and stability be speedily restored in the affected areas, and that all South Africans and foreign nationals in the country emerge from these unfortunate incidents having re-learned lessons on the non-negotiable fundamentals of humanity such as respect for human dignity, upholding of the sanctity of human life, belief in human equality, and appreciation of the beauty of diversity. The CHE further encourages higher education institutions to increase significantly their efforts in internationalisation in order to make their campuses as cosmopolitan as possible, as one way of countering potential xenophobic tendencies, and in order to allow the academic project to flourish for the good of all.