

STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH LEADERS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

**TO BE DELIVERED AT THE SACC NATIONAL PRESS CONFERENCE
29 JUNE 2026**

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
Fellow South Africans,
Members of our congregations,
Citizens of our country,
And all who live within our borders,

We, the leaders of the member churches of the South African Council of Churches, gather today not merely as representatives of our denominations and communions, but as servants of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shepherds of our people, and witnesses to both the pain and the promise of our nation. We are called to balance our pastoral and welfare interventions with our prophetic work for justice.

We speak today because South Africa stands at a critical moment. Our purpose is to speak with love, care, justice, compassion and truth. This is rooted in our commitment not to diminish the genuine concerns being expressed by communities across our country. We speak because the Church is called to stand where Christ has always stood: alongside truth, justice, human dignity and peace. At moments of deep national anxiety, the Church cannot remain silent.

Tomorrow, some South Africans intend to march in protest against the presence of undocumented foreign nationals.

We hear the cries of unemployed young people searching for opportunity. We hear the frustrations of families living with failing public services, crime, corruption and the rising cost of living. We hear communities that feel overwhelmed by overcrowded schools and clinics, deteriorating infrastructure, hijacked buildings, the scourge of drugs, human trafficking, organised crime and the exploitation of the

most vulnerable. We hear citizens who believe that government has not acted decisively enough on matters of migration, border management and the rule of law.

These concerns are real. They deserve to be heard. They deserve to be addressed.

The Church will never dismiss the lived experiences of our people. To ignore their pain would be pastorally irresponsible.

We recognise the constitutional right of every South African to make their voice heard through peaceful and lawful demonstrations. Yet we must also say that no frustration, however deep, can justify actions that inflict suffering upon another human being.

The deeper crisis facing our nation is not simply the presence of undocumented migrants. It is the deep and growing woundedness of our society — a woundedness born of poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption, weak governance, the neglect of managing our migration policy with discipline and consistency and the erosion of public trust. These realities have left many South Africans feeling frustrated, abandoned, unheard and uncertain about the future.

This moment therefore calls not only for law enforcement, but for moral leadership. It calls for a renewed national commitment to justice, the fight against poverty and exclusion, responsive leadership and the restoration of hope.

In building this new future, violence, intimidation and the dehumanisation of others can never become the language through which our nation speaks to itself or presents itself to the world.

Though we recognise the constitutional right to protest, tomorrow cannot become a day of fear.

It cannot become a day of destruction.



It cannot become a day of intimidation.
It cannot become a day in which neighbour turns against neighbour.

Our Constitution protects the right to protest, but it rejects hatred. It protects dissent, but it neither promotes nor protects violence.

Our Constitution enjoins us beyond legality into a moral vision, it invites us into a world of inclusion, compassion, solidarity and working together in our diversity.

As the Church of Jesus Christ, we are guided by the truth that every person is created in the image of God and possesses inherent dignity. The Scriptures remind us: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt” (Leviticus 19:34). Again, we are commanded: “Love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19).

These commandments do not diminish the responsibility of the State to enforce the law, nor do they diminish the responsibility of every person living in South Africa to respect the laws of our country. Rather, they remind us that justice and compassion, accountability and mercy, belong together.

It is from this Christian witness that we call upon every person participating in tomorrow’s demonstrations to conduct themselves peacefully, lawfully and with restraint.

No grievance, however genuine, can justify violence, intimidation or the displacement of another person.

No frustration justifies the destruction of homes, businesses or places of worship.

No anger justifies the humiliation or dehumanisation of another human being.



And there can be no justification for the loss of any more lives — South African or foreign national.

For every person bears the image of God. Every life is precious in His sight.

*Sereti sa motho, mang kapa mang, se tswa kwa go Modimo.
Isidima somuntu, noma ungubani, sivela kuNkulunkulu.*

We now speak directly to every stakeholder, grouped according to their grievances and responses.

TO OUR COMMUNITIES WHO ARE SUFFERING

To our sisters and brothers who share this burden with us; who are frustrated, who feel forgotten, unheard and abandoned, we begin by saying: we hear you, because we live among you. These are not only your struggles; they are our struggles too. Our churches are present in these communities every day, and together we carry this burden before God and our nation.

The Church knows the burdens that many communities carry every day. We see the unemployment that robs young people of hope. We see families struggling to put food on the table. We see overcrowded clinics, schools under pressure, unreliable public services and communities living in fear of crime. We know the devastation caused by drugs, human trafficking, organised crime, hijacked buildings and the exploitation of women, children and other vulnerable members of society.

These realities have left many South Africans asking whether the promises of our democracy have been fulfilled.

At the same time, we urge our communities not to direct their anger towards those who are themselves vulnerable. Violence against



migrants will not create jobs. Intimidation will not restore public services. Hatred will not make our communities safer.

We, therefore, call upon government, business, organised labour, faith communities and civil society to confront honestly the deeper causes of poverty, unemployment and inequality that continue to wound our nation.

Justice begins by hearing the cries of those who suffer. Peace begins by refusing to create new victims.

TO THOSE WHO WILL MARCH TOMORROW

We recognise and affirm your constitutional right to peaceful protest. Many of you march because you believe your concerns have not been heard. Many feel that government has failed to respond adequately to the challenges of migration, crime, unemployment and deteriorating public services.

We ask you to remember that leadership carries responsibility. The words spoken from public platforms have consequences. They can calm communities or inflame them. They can restore hope or deepen fear.

We, therefore, appeal to every organiser, speaker, marshal and participant to ensure that tomorrow's demonstrations remain peaceful, lawful and disciplined.

Reject violence.

Reject intimidation.

Reject vigilantism.

Reject inflammatory language that dehumanises others.

Ensure that no innocent person is harmed.

Ensure that no family is displaced.

Ensure that no home, business or place of worship is destroyed.



The Church believes that justice can never be built through fear, and that the suffering of another human being must never become the price of social change.

TO OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS FROM OTHER NATIONS

To those who have made South Africa their temporary or permanent home, particularly those who now live with fear and uncertainty, we say this:

The Church sees your anxiety.

The Church recognises your dignity.

The Church condemns every act of violence, intimidation, displacement and hatred directed against you.

Many among you have fled conflict, political instability or economic hardship in search of safety and opportunity. We recognise the courage it takes to leave behind one's home, family and country in search of a better future.

The Church remains a place of refuge, prayer and pastoral care for all who suffer. Even as we provide care, shelter and comfort for those in need, we must speak courageously against wrongdoing wherever it is found, holding everyone accountable to their actions.

As such, we encourage every foreign national living in South Africa to respect the laws of our country, to regularise their status wherever possible, and to contribute positively to the wellbeing of the communities in which they live. Compassion and accountability belong together.

We reject the false choice between protecting human dignity and upholding the rule of law. The Gospel calls us to both.

TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

We acknowledge the steps that government has taken to engage this matter, including recent public engagements and commitments.

However, this moment calls for more than maintaining public order. It requires courageous leadership capable of addressing the deeper wounds of our society.

We, therefore, call upon government to act decisively against corruption, strengthen border management, improve law enforcement, restore public confidence in the criminal justice system and ensure that those who violate the laws of our country are dealt with fairly and consistently. There is now a desperate need to overhaul the various elements of our immigration policy into one coherent, humane and manageable policy that takes into account all of the challenges that have been experienced over the last three decades.

We call on our President to demonstrate with urgency how underperforming ministers and government departments are held accountable when failing in service to our people. We have also observed that leaders and institutions across different spheres of government sometimes fuel hostility towards foreign nationals or undermine social cohesion through rhetoric or conduct that is discriminatory; this is inflammatory and is part of the problem.

Furthermore, we need more visible, decisive and prompt action against corruption, at all levels, including corruption in the security cluster and the police services.

This will allow government to confront the deeper realities that have brought us to this moment.

Our people long not only for security.
They long for work.
For functioning schools.
For safe communities.
For accessible healthcare.
For municipalities that serve.
For leaders who are accountable.
For a future that offers hope rather than despair.



No nation can police its way out of hopelessness.

Building long term answers of ethical leadership, economic justice, service delivery, accountable governance and the restoration of public trust begins today. Many of the problems we face today can be resolved sooner rather than later. Taking action against proven corruption does not need the country to wait for years

TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Business has an indispensable role in shaping the future of our country. The Church calls upon employers to reject every form of exploitation, particularly the exploitation of undocumented and vulnerable workers whose circumstances are sometimes used to undermine fair labour standards and human dignity.

The pursuit of profit must never come at the expense of justice. We encourage business leaders to see themselves not only as generators of economic growth, but also as partners in building a nation where opportunity is shared more equitably, decent work is protected and every worker is treated with dignity and fairness.

The dividends of business should not be measured only in financial returns, but also in the hope, stability and human dignity that businesses help to create.

TO POLITICAL LEADERS

We call upon every political party and every public representative to exercise restraint and responsibility in this moment. The pain of communities must never become an instrument for political gain.

We urge all political leaders to resist rhetoric that deepens division, fuels hostility or exploits the fears of vulnerable communities. Leadership must unite rather than divide.

The public interest must always take precedence over electoral advantage.



TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF OUR NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES, SADC AND THE AFRICAN UNION

Migration is not solely South Africa's challenge. It is a regional challenge that requires regional solutions. Conflict, poverty, political instability, economic decline and unemployment continue to compel many people to seek opportunities beyond their own borders. South Africa cannot carry these responsibilities alone.

We, therefore, call upon governments throughout our region, together with SADC and the African Union, to strengthen regional cooperation, promote economic development, improve governance and create conditions in which citizens may flourish within their own countries.

African solidarity cannot mean ignoring the struggles of ordinary South Africans. Neither can it mean treating fellow Africans as enemies.

True solidarity requires shared responsibility, mutual accountability and a common commitment to the flourishing of every nation on our continent.

TO THE MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCHES

To every member of our churches, we offer this pastoral exhortation. The Gospel does not ask us to ignore our fears or deny the realities facing our communities.

But neither does it allow fear to become hatred. Christ calls us to love our neighbours.

To pursue justice.

To protect the vulnerable.

To speak truth.

To reject violence.

Jesus Himself knew what it meant to flee danger. The Holy Family sought refuge in Egypt. The Good Samaritan reminds us that neighbourliness is measured not by nationality, but by compassion.



Jesus calls us to treat those in need as though it were Him.

We, therefore, ask every congregation across our country to pray for peace, reject rumours and misinformation, care for those who are vulnerable, and become visible witnesses of reconciliation within their communities.

This is not a moment for the Church to retreat from society.

It is a moment for the Church to lead by example.

To this end, we have established a **National Crisis Centre (NCC)** on behalf of our members churches, to provide practical and humanitarian support to this national effort. Through the NCC, the SACC will have hands on the ground in our major cities, at various stages and points of the repatriation process. In this way, the pastoral and prophetic work of the Church extends beyond our pews, and God's love is given a visible expression in this difficult time.

CONCLUSION

The state of our nation presents us with an opportunity for renewal. It calls us to a coordinated national effort in which government, business, faith communities, civil society and every South African work together to confront the deep challenges before us, in an effort to restore hope, rebuild trust and renew our shared commitment to the common good.

Let this be the moment in which the promises of our democracy, the opportunities of our economy and the dignity of every person are experienced more justly by all, especially the poor, the vulnerable and those who have waited too long to share in the promise of a better South Africa.

*A re tshwaraneng ka matsoho, re hahe naha ya rona.
Masibambaneni ngezandla, sakhe ilizwe lethu.*

ENDS



support@sacc.org.za



+27(0)11 241 7800



Khotso House, 62 Marshall Street,
Johannesburg, South Africa

